

# LEIDEN UNIVERSITY STYLE GUIDE

This guide contains basic information on some of the most frequently asked questions about writing in English.

## CAPITAL LETTERS

### Names/titles

Use capitals for titles in combination with the name of the person or in combination with his position:

- . Professor John Smith
- . He is Professor of Human Biology

But not for general use

- . He is a professor at Leiden University

### Abbreviations

Dutch often uses lower case for abbreviations, whereas English uses upper case:

Dutch	English
De tv	TV
De pc	PC
Per eft	EFT
Een pdf	PDF

### Headings

Capital letters for headings are becoming less common. Often it is enough to just capitalise the first word.

If you do decide to capitalise, then use capitals for all the important words (not for words such as articles (a, the, etc.), prepositions (in, on, at, etc.) or conjunctions (and, but, etc.)

- . Harry Potter and the Chamber of Horrors
- . Around the World in Eighty Days

### Headlines, journal article, chapter titles and lecture titles

Only capitalise the first word and any proper nouns

- . Eight recommendations for writing titles of scientific manuscripts

## **University**

A capital letter is only used for the official name of a university:

- . Leiden University
- . The University of Oxford

A capital is also used to indicate Leiden University when the full name is not written out:

- . Leiden University has locations in Leiden and The Hague. The University has seven faculties.

## **NUMBERS**

Numbers 1 to 10 should be written in full in a running text. Numbers above 10 should be written as numerals.

## **THE TIME**

Use either the 12-hour or 24-hour clock, but not a mixture of the two, particularly within the same document or website.

- . 12.30 p.m. / 12.30 hrs.
- . 8.30 a.m. / 08.00 hrs.

## **DATES**

The preferred style for writing dates is:

- . 11 March 2017

(When speaking, this would be 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2017)

## **PUNCTUATION**

### **Apostrophe**

To indicate possession:

- . John's house
- . The girl's book (one girl)
- . The girls' mother (more than one girl)

An apostrophe is never used with 'it' to indicate possession. *It's* can only ever mean 'it is' or 'it has'.

### **To indicate omission:**

- . It's been raining (It has)
- . It's time to go. (It is )
- . I don't know where to go. (I do not...)
- . He hasn't been in class this week (He has not...)

### **Not to indicate plural**

Unlike Dutch, an apostrophe is not used to indicate plural:

Dutch	English
Video's	videos
Cd's	CDs

### **In numbers**

English uses a comma for numbers:

- . 10,000

English uses a full stop for decimals:

- . 10.3 per cent

### **Punctuation in direct speech**

When citing speech, in English the punctuation is within the inverted commas:

- . 'It's time to get down to work,' my lecturer said.
- . My lecturer told me, 'It's time to get down to work.'

### **ACADEMIC TITLES**

In English-speaking environments it is not common to include all a person's title in a text. Only the highest title is used:

- . Professor J. Smith (Not: prof.dr.ir. John Smith)

Certain Dutch titles are not understood outside the Netherlands (drs., mr.)

This is usually resolved by adding the equivalent qualification after the person's name:

- . Mary Smith, LL.M. (rather than mw.mr. M. Smith)
- . Wendy Williams, M.A. / M.Sc. (rather than drs. Wendy Williams)

## BRITISH VS AMERICAN SPELLING

Some time ago the Executive Board decided in favour of British spelling. This mainly affects the following spellings:

<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
. specialisation	specialization
. programme	program
. colour	color
. metre	meter
. licence (noun) license (verb)	license (noun) license (verb)
. defence	defense
. practice (noun) practise (verb)	practice (noun) practice (verb)

## OTHER POINTS

### Plurals of currencies:

- . He was awarded a subsidy of 500,000 euros (not euro)

### Compound nouns

Dutch tends to join (several) nouns together to form a compound, or connect them with a hyphen.

Both are much less common in English.

#### **Dutch**

#### **English**

PhD-candidaten

PhD candidates

Opleidingscommissie

programme board

### Sums of money

Dutch tends to add numbers after the decimal, even where this is zero, whereas English would not:

- . The book costs € 300 from Amazon. (Dutch: Het boek kost € 300,- van Amazon)