



ELSA LAW REVIEW LANGUAGE MANUAL

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The European Law Students' Association



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The ELSA Law Review has been a platform for the academic minds to bring their own thoughts and analysis to the legal issues we face in the world today. This Manual has been created for the benefit of the ELSA Law Review, the participants and the Network.

This Manual is intended to provide a clear and concise reference to properly follow the stipulated ELSA Law Review guidelines. The Manual also aims to give an overview of the elements of British English, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, use of different parts of the speech (nouns, pronouns, verbs, etc.) and the use of non-discriminatory language.

We hope that this Manual serves its purpose and is a practical tool for all users!



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1. Spelling

There are several differences between British and American English. Some of the linguistic differences to be aware of are:

- The use of 's' instead of 'z' in the words ending with :
 - *-ise*
 - *-yse*
 - *-isation*
- The use of *-ou* instead of *-o* in the words that might include either *o* or *ou*.
- The use of *-re* instead of *-er*.
- The use of *-ogue* instead of *-og*.
- The use of *-ll-* instead of *-l-*, most frequently in the endings:
 - *-lling*
 - *-lled*
 - *-ller*
- The use of *-cable* instead of *-able*, when forming some adjectives with a suffix

Please be aware of spelling differences of common words. An exception to the change in spelling is when it concerns the names of institutions from other English-speaking countries. Therefore, any institutional names from e.g. American or Australian English retain their original spelling, e.g. the World Trade Organization.

Refer to the table below for further reference for the examples of spelling differences.

American	British
recognize	recognise
analyze	analyse
categorization	categorisation
favor	favour
honor	honour
behavior	behaviour
color	colour
favorite	favourite
meter	metre
liter	litre
center	centre
fiber	fibre
catalog	catalogue
analog	analogue
traveling	travelling





traveled
counseled
traveler

likable
unshakable

travelled
counselled
traveller

likeable
unshakeable

1.1 Difference in spelling verbs and nouns/pronouns

Certain verbs and nouns are used differently in British English compared to other variations of English. These may sound the same though have slightly different spelling.

Examples

American noun	American verb	British noun	British verb
license	license	licence	license
pretense	pretend	pretence	pretend
offense	offend	offence	offend

1.2 Difference in use of past tense

British English is more inclined to use *-t* rather than *-ed* for the irregular verbs in their second form (past verbs), used in the past simple tense when choosing between the two options.

To know whether a verb is regular or irregular, a dictionary may be consulted. Do not forget to pay attention to the difference between American and British English.

Examples

Infinitive	American	British
to dream	dreamed	dreamt
to learn	learned	learnt
to burn	burned	burnt
to teach	tached	taught
BUT		
to plead	pled	pleaded



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2. Quotation marks

Quotation marks, also known as inverted commas, can be either single or double:

- Single quotation marks are used when highlighting a word in text or for marking direct speech.
- Double quotation marks are used when inserting a quote within said speech.

Quotation marks should be curly and not straight. Quotation marks can be used to make ironic statements (for example ‘so-called’) however this is advised against in academic writing. There must be a full stop at the end of quotation marks unless there is already one within the quotation marks.

Examples

Correct	Incorrect
‘I love Dutch mini pancakes,’ she said, ‘they are called “poffertjes” in Dutch.’	“I love Dutch mini pancakes” she said, “they are called ‘poffertjes’”
Is it sufficient to use the word ‘shall’?	Is it sufficient to use the word “shall”?

3. Apostrophes (possessives and contractions)

The apostrophe has the following uses: 1) to form possessives, 2) to show the omission of letters - contractions, 3) to form plurals of letters, numbers, symbols.

3.1 Possessives

Possessives are used to show the relationship between two things, in other words when someone/something has something. Plural possessive represents the ownership of more than one person, place or thing. Singular possessive is used to indicate if one person, place or thing owns something.

The usage of the apostrophe in the singular and plural possessives is summarised below.



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singular	plural
Jane's umbrella (an umbrella that belongs to Jane)	the cooks' hats (the hats that belong to 2 or more cooks)
professor's book (a book that belongs to a professor)	Leo and Anne's house (the house that belongs to Leo and Anne)
	BUT when the plural of the nouns is formed irregularly, that is without -s at the end of the word (e.g. men, women, children, etc), the apostrophe is put before the s: the women's rights (the rights that belong to women)

The apostrophe is **not used** in possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives.

possessive adjectives (followed by nouns)	possessive pronouns (not followed by nouns)
my	mine
your	yours
his	his
her	hers
its	-
our	ours
your	yours
their	theirs



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3.2 Contractions

An apostrophe is used in contractions where letters have been removed between two words so that they become one word. These contractions are used when writing and talking in an informal manner. It is strongly advised against contractions when writing a formal/academic piece.

Contraction	Uncontracted	Example
-n't	not	isn't (is not); hasn't (has not)
-re	are	they're (they are)
-d	had, would	they'd (they had, they would)
-ll	will	they'll (they will)
-s	is, has	he's (he is), she's (she has)

3.3 Plurals of letters, numbers and symbols

The apostrophes are normally not used to form the plurals, but are inserted when a plural is formed with a letter, number or symbol.

Examples

- Two A's (two letter both of which are A)
- Three 5's (three numbers that are each 5)
- Several &'s (several ampersands)

4. Comma

The comma has many uses. It is important to use commas correctly in legal writing, otherwise it can potentially misconstrue the meaning of the text. Here are some rules on how to use a comma or when to omit it. Please note, the information below is not exhaustive, but rather serves as an overview of some essential punctuational points, and you may refer to other sources for more details and further information.

- Comma is used before a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) that separates two independent clauses. The independent clauses are clauses/sentences that stand on their own as separate sentences. If the second independent clause is very short, or if it is an imperative, the comma can be omitted.

Example: John was looking forward to the debate, but he still did not know the topic.



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— Commas are put after introductory words, phrases, or clauses that introduce a sentence.

- Some common introductory words are: *yet, however, meanwhile, suddenly, besides, still, etc.*

Example: Yet, the results might not be satisfactory.

- Common introductory phrases:

Examples: Having finished the test, John left the room.

To get a seat, you should arrive earlier.

- Common introductory clauses:

Examples: Because Mark's alarm clock was broken, he was late for class.

While Jane was eating, the dog was howling at the door.

— Commas are used for non-defining clauses in a sentence. Non-defining clause is essentially a piece of information that is not essential and can be taken out of the text without changing its meaning. When deciding whether the information is essential or not, consider the following questions:

- If you leave out the part of the sentence in question (i.e. the clause, phrase, or word), does the sentence still make sense?
- Does the element in question interrupt the flow of words in the original sentence?
- If you move the element to a different position in the sentence, does the sentence still make sense?

If you answer affirmatively to one or more of these questions, then the part of the sentence in question is non-essential.

Example: Uluru, which is also known as Ayers Rock, is an important Australian landmark.

— Commas are **not used in defining clauses**, when the piece of information is essential to the meaning of the sentence. Most commonly such examples include:

- *that* clause after nouns

Example: The law book that was recommended by our professor is excellent.



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- *that* clause following a verb that express mental action (e.g. think, dream, wish, believe, etc)

Example: Luisa believes that the interconnection between law and technology is a fascinating topic.

- some other examples:

The candidate who had the least money lost the election.

Students who cheat at the exams only harm themselves.

- A comma should be used when listing two or more items as well as adjectives in a series.

Example: The government promised to lower taxes, protect the environment, and reduce unemployment.

The Constitution establishes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

- A comma **should not be used** when adjectives are non-coordinate, in other words, their order cannot be rearranged or 'and' cannot be inserted between them.

Example: Mr Rowles often wears a gray woolen suit.

N.B. In the above-mentioned situations, the adjectives follow a specific order (see the table below).

	Fact Adjectives								
	opinion	size	age	shape	colour	origin	material	used for/ be about	noun
That's a	wonderful	large	old	square	black	Chinese	wooden	linen	chest

BUT! Mr Rowles has a nice, happy smile.

5. Hyphens

- Hyphens can be used for temporary and permanent uses. Hyphens need to be clear and precise.
- The permanent hyphen is used to turn a verb into a noun. It is also used for certain prefixes and when the prefix form ends with a vowel and the next word begins with the same vowel.





- The hyphen is used temporarily to avoid the misunderstanding of the meaning of certain words, distinguish similarly spelt words or when the coming letter is capital.

Examples

Permanent	Temporary
break-in (to break in)	part-time
pile-up (to pile up)	long-term
a set-up (to set up)	up-to-date

6. Dashes

Dashes are used in British English with the n - dash not the m — dash. A dash can be used to replace a colon (:), to express some concepts or a range of numbers. The n dash can be used in places of brackets or commas, linking two parts of a sentence, a range of numbers or joint authors etc.

Examples

n dash -
Age range is 16 - 20 years old.
She is of Dutch - English nationality.
Their room - which was very dirty - needed to be cleaned.
m dash —
not used in British English

7. Capitalisation

Capital letters are used for:

- Proper nouns, the pronoun I, acronyms and titles of organisations, institutions and committees, as well as some legal documents (e.g. Treaties, EU Regulations, Directives, Decisions, etc).
- Nouns and adjectives when stating the full title of international agreements/conventions.
- Days, weeks, months, years and holidays.



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- The word State in legal writings, when referring to a specific country, or replacing its name in the context, when referring to the Member States (countries - members to a specific organisation, treaty, commitment, etc).
 - Please note, the word ‘state’ may have a general meaning, e.g. the state of affairs, in this case, it is not necessary to be capitalised unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence.
- Political parties and divisions.

Lower case should be used for:

- Policies, action plans and other similar areas.
- When referencing an institution in a foreign language, keep the original capitalisation, unless it can be directly translated to English and then English rules apply.

Examples

Capitalisation
European Commission
Commission action plan on financing sustainable growth
United Nations
Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
Jane Citizen
Cour administrative d’appel
Australian Labour Party

8. Spelling of institutions, acronyms and abbreviations

8.1 Spelling

Always use the official designated English name for an organisation/institution. Keep the original spelling for an organisation/institution if it is spelt in English but is a variation of the English language. This is seen with the American English spelling of the *World Trade Organization*. In certain cases, if the foreign word/title/body is widely known, it is then acceptable to use the original spelling. In legal acts, use the original spelling.

8.2 Acronyms and abbreviations

If there is an abbreviation for a certain party/institution/body, use the original abbreviation (not the English one) and then follow with the English name of party/institution/body. This is seen



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with the *International Federation of Association Football (FIFA)*, whose abbreviation comes from French *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*

When using plural abbreviations only use -s and not -'s. There is no apostrophe before, unless it is a possessive.

When using acronyms, the rule is that acronyms with up to five letters are written in uppercase, and when there are more than five letters, they are written in lowercase with the first letter being capitalised. There are certain exceptions to this rule which are usually seen when the institution/organisation uses all capitals. For example, *NATO* and *Benelux* follow the above-mentioned rules, whereas *UNCITRAL* is an exception. Examples of acronyms include:

- NASA
- EEC
- TRIPS
- UNCTAD
- Helios
- Interreg

9. Foreign quotes or spelling in British English text

If quoting foreign words or phrases with no quotation marks, then *italics* need to be used with all original accents in place. Keep the original English variation of direct quotes, institutions and bodies.

Italics should also be used for Latin; yet, avoid using Latin, where English can be used.

10. Use of point of view in academic writing

When writing an academic piece avoid using first and second person. The third person point of view should be used as often as possible. First and second person point of view should only be used when absolutely necessary.

11. Verbs with collective nouns

British English will use both singular and plural verbs when referring to a collective noun (nouns that denote a group, e.g. assembly, police, family, crew).. This means that in British English both *-is* and *-are* can be used.

Be aware this rule may not apply when referring to either an individual or a body. For example, 'International Board *is*' refers to the International Board as a body, and the 'International Board *are*' refers to the International Board as a group.





Examples

American	British
The government is doing a good job	The government is/are doing a good job
My family is coming from London	My family is/are coming from London
Which group is leading the competition?	Which group is/are leading the competition?

12. Verbs in legal texts

Verb usage in legal texts can differ from their everyday language. When using verbs in legal texts, be aware of how they should be used in the declarative, imperative and permissive sense. The imperative and permissive provisions are either positive or negative. This is seen in the EU legislation with the main clauses and enacting terms. Positive imperative is used to impose an obligation or a requirement. Negative imperative is used to impose a prohibition, and positive imperative is used to give permission to do something.

Examples

Positive Imperative	Negative Imperative	Positive Permission	Negative Permission	Declarative
shall	shall not	may	need/may not	hereby/shall

13. British legal terms

In British English, there are certain legal terms that are not found in other English-speaking legal systems. Be sure to be aware of what they mean and do not interchange or replace them with other various legal English definitions (such as American legal terms).

Examples

Legal terms	Definition
Solicitor	A lawyer who gives legal advice, prepares legal documents and cases, deals with all the paperwork and communication involved with their clients' cases, such as writing documents, letters and contracts tailored to their client's



	needs; ensuring the accuracy of legal advice and procedure, and preparing papers for court. Solicitors represent clients in disputes and in court if necessary. In complex disputes, however, solicitors will often instruct barristers or specialist advocates to appear in court on behalf of their clients.
Barrister	A lawyer who generally represents individuals and organisations in courts and tribunals and may provide a specialist written legal advice. Barristers in England and Wales are referred to by solicitors to represent a case in court and only become involved once advocacy before a court is needed.
Queen's Counsel (QC/Silk), or King's Counsel (KC)	A lawyer, usually a barrister or an advocate (who may also be a solicitor who has obtained certain qualifications) appointed to Counsel to the Crown on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor and entitled to sit within the bar of the court wearing a silk gown.
Crown Prosecution Service	Prosecutes criminal cases investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales.
Crown Court	Court where serious criminal cases such as murder, rape, robbery are tried by a judge and a jury. The Crown Court also deals with the appeals against conviction or sentence of the magistrates' court.
Chambers	Can refer to the private office of a judge or the offices of a barrister or group of barristers.
Magistrates' court	Lower court that deals with summary offences (less serious cases, e.g. motoring offenses, minor criminal damage, etc.) and also deliberates if there is sufficient evidence to send a defendant to the Crown Court. The magistrates' court, in certain situations, can

	also deal with more serious offences such as burglary and drug offences. The magistrates' court may also hear family cases involving the arrangements for a child to be taken into care or put up for adoption, orders to prevent domestic abuse, etc.
Magistrate	Volunteers who hear cases in courts (criminal court, family court, or both) in their community.

14. Writing dates

In British English dates are written as day/month/year. It is imperative to be written this way in order not to confuse readers. Do not use 'th' with dates, only the number and month and do not add 'the' before the date. The use of 'th' is for ordinal numbers, or if you write a date in such a way as 'the 4th of May'.

Example

American version	British version
02/24/2019 (February/24/2019)	24/02/2019 (24/February/2019)
April 24, 2019	24 April 2019
	on the 24th of April 2019

15. Writing Numbers

There are variations of how to write numbers, and here are some explanations and examples:

- When writing numbers, spell out numbers one to ten and use digits afterwards (e.g. eight euros and sixteen cents). Use a combination of digits and words for very large round numbers (such as 18 billion euros).
- When writing with hundreds and thousands, you may use figures or words but not a mixture (only 800 or eight hundred).
- Billions and trillions can be combined with figures (such as 5 million, 14 trillion).

16. Non-discriminatory language

When writing, use gender-neutral titles as often as possible, as well as neutral vocabulary to avoid discriminatory language. Use alternatives, where they exist, and the gender specific form only when it is absolutely necessary for the context. The same is to be said for titles such as Miss or Mr. Avoid using gender biases and pronouns. This is a frequent problem but the one that can be easily solved.

Examples

His/Her form	Neutral form
barman/barmaid	bar staff
manpower	human resources/personnel/workforce
female/male scientist	scientist
husband/wife	spouse/partner
himself/herself	themselves
his/her	their
and he/she is	and is
his or her	individual(s)

17. Links to dictionaries and other tools

- https://www.lexico.com/en?search_filter=dictionary
- <https://www.thesaurus.com>
- https://www.lexico.com/en?search_filter=ote

18. Sources used

- **English Style Guide:**
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf
- **CERN English Language Style Guide:**
<https://translation-council-support-group.web.cern.ch/sites/translation-council-support-group.web.cern.ch/files/styles/CERN%20TM%20English%20language%20style%20guide.pdf>



- **University of Oxford Style Guide:**
https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/University%20of%20Oxford%20Style%20Guide.pdf
- **Purdue University, Extended rules for using commas:**
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/extended_rules_for_commas.html



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