

# Style Guide for English-Language Texts at Technische Universität Berlin

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This style guide is intended for all members of the University as well as visitors as an aid when composing English-language texts. Its aim is to help achieve consistency regarding the University's external presence in English-language texts.

Terminology relating specifically to the University as well as general higher education terminology can be found in the TUB [glossary](#).

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## 1. American English

Please note that American English is used at TU Berlin.

## 2. Name of the University

The University should be referred to as Technische Universität Berlin, even in English-language texts ([see circular from 26.10.2015](#)). The abbreviation TU Berlin can be used as an alternative. Both options should be used without the definite article “the”.

### *Examples:*

TU Berlin has seven faculties.

34,000 students are enrolled at Technische Universität Berlin.

## 3. Address details

Postal addresses should, as a rule, not be translated (e.g. for letterheads and job advertisements).

Contact details and email signatures should be in both German and English ([see circular from 26.10.2015](#)) with the international format used for telephone numbers.

### *Example:*

Jane Public

German job title

English job title

Technische Universität Berlin

[German name of your faculty/department]

[German name for your institute]

[English name for your faculty/department]

[English name for your institute]

Any Street 23, 10857 Berlin

GERMANY

Tel: +49 (0)30 314-12345

Fax: +49 (0)30 314-12347

jane.public@tu-berlin.de

[www.tu-berlin.de](http://www.tu-berlin.de)

## 4. Academic qualifications

**German academic qualifications** (e.g. *Diplom, Master, Habilitation* etc.) are **not** to be translated and should either be italicized or placed within inverted commas (please be consistent in usage within a text).

*Example:*

Megan just earned her *Habilitation*.

Points may be used in English for the abbreviations of academic titles

*Example:*

Bachelor of Arts = B.A.

## 5. Quotation marks

In English, unlike in German, quotation marks are always positioned above.

*Example:*

He said, “The new edition of Fundamental Astrophysics will be published next year.”

In German the opening quotation marks are positioned below, meaning that if German is selected as the document language, or is the default language, then the opening quotation marks will automatically be placed below. Please make sure to change these accordingly.

## 6. Dates and times

Date (as a number) month (written as a word) year (as a number) and not separated by commas

*Example:*

30 May 2013

24-hour clock system with hours and minutes separated by colon and without *am* or *pm*

*Example:*

The lecture starts at 19:15.

## 7. Building names

The official names of buildings are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

Mathematics Building  
Main Building

Some building names are not translated easily. In such cases, we recommend writing the original building name and including additional helpful information in English.

*Examples:*

Treffpunkt ist am Eingang des **Architekturgebäude Flachbau**.  
Meet at the entrance of the **two-story architecture building (Architekturgebäude Flachbau)**.

Zentraler Abfallplatz auf der **Schleuseninsel (Müller-Breslau-Straße)**  
Central waste dumping point on „**Schleuseninsel**“ (**Müller-Breslau-Straße**)

## 8. Gender-neutral language

Gender-neutral language in English differs from German as nouns do not have genders. The principles of gender-neutral language must, however, be observed:

*Examples:*

- The suffix -man at the end of a noun should be replaced by the suffix -person: chairman → chairperson
- In some cases there are alternatives for gender-specific nouns or adjectives:  
policeman → police officer  
mankind → the human race / human beings  
man-made → synthetic

### “They” as a gender-neutral singular pronoun

The pronoun “they” is increasingly being used as a singular pronoun. This avoids the inconvenience of writing more complicated formulations such as “he/she” or “she or he”.

Using “they” as a singular pronoun is particularly useful when multiple pronouns are used in a row.

*Examples:*

- A researcher has to be completely objective in his or her findings.  
A researcher has to be completely objective in **their** findings.
- The goal is to support him/her with his/her career and reaching his/her individual goals.  
The goal is to support **them** in **their** career and reaching **their** individual goals.

In the above examples “his or her” and “him/her” are correct. However, they make the sentence longer and more cumbersome. Using “they” shortens and simplifies the sentence. Generally, the remaining text provides the context as to who is meant and whether the pronoun is being used in the singular or plural. Despite the grammar rules you may have learned, the singular use of “they” is commonly grammatically acceptable. Additionally, it is a neutral variation for individuals who do not identify in the binary genders of female/male.

## 9. Quoting laws

Laws should be quoted as follows:

<b>German</b>	<b>English</b>
Paragraph (§)	Section
Absatz	subsection
Satz	sentence
Nummer	number
Buchstabe	letter

*Example:*

German: § 31 Abs. 1 Satz 1 Nummer 1 Aufenthaltsgesetz  
English: Section 31 (1) sentence 1 no. 1 of the Residence Act  
(Aufenthaltsgesetz)

If a legal text is referenced, the title of the law is to first be written in English followed by the German name in italics and the abbreviation thereof. Both the German name and abbreviation are to be put in parentheses. Should the text be referenced again within the same document, either the English translation or the German abbreviation can be used.

*Example:*

Der Fakultätsrat hat gemäß § 71 des Berliner Hochschulgesetzes  
(BerlHG) die folgende Studienordnung beschlossen.

The Faculty adopted the following study regulations in accordance  
with Section 71 of the Berlin State Higher Education Act (*Berliner  
Hochschulgesetz – BerlHG*).

## 10. Use of upper and lower case

### 10.1. Academic and non-academic institutes and institutions

**Only the official and complete names** of universities, schools, departments and agencies are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

Colorado Center for Policy Studies  
School of Dental Medicine  
Department of Biology  
Department of Aerospace Engineering  
Office of Admissions  
School of Education & Human Development

Universities

As an exception to the above-mentioned rule, the **U** in **University** is to be **written in upper case** (when it appears on its own and not as part of the full official name) when referring to **TU Berlin**. When referring to a university other than TUB, then lower case is to be used.

*Example:*

TU Berlin introduced the Council for Sustainability last year. Since then the **University** has succeeded in reducing its environmental footprint by 20%.

This is an important year in the history of Bath University. On 22 March the **university** will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Organizational units

When referring to specific organizational units (e.g. a faculty, institute or department) upper case is to be used. When referring to departments etc. in a general sense, then use lower case.

*Example:*

The **Faculty of Humanities** (specific faculty) comprises seven **institutes** (institutes in general). The **Faculty** (specific faculty) includes the **Institute for Language and Communication** (specific institutes).

Buildings

The official names of buildings are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

Mathematics Building  
Main Building

**10.2. Academic disciplines / Subjects**

Degree programs at TU Berlin

The names of specific degree programs offered at TU Berlin are capitalized, for example in program descriptions and regulations.

*Examples:*

The Brewing and Beverage Technology bachelor's program is taught in German.

In the Biotechnology bachelor's program, you gain the necessary knowledge to handle and solve biotechnological problems.

Generic disciplines and subjects

In general, academic disciplines and subjects (main/subsidiary subjects) are neither to be written in upper case nor placed in inverted commas.

*Examples:*

I studied history, sociology, and law in Berlin.

He studies biology and math, but his minor is music.

I completed my master's in social and economic history in Berlin.

The University is looking to appoint a professor of civil engineering and some postdocs in kinetic studies.

**10.3. Titles of events, courses and modules**

The official titles of events, courses and modules are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

She was required to take Fundamentals of Nursing during her first year.

The Long Night of the Sciences is an annual event in Berlin.

Please note: Non-specific descriptions of events, courses and modules are to be written in lower case.

*Example:*

Professor Ross teaches a really interesting course on the economics of pop-up stores.

**10.4. Academic qualifications**

If the title of an academic qualification is **written in full**, then **lower case** is to be used.

*Example:*

She earned a bachelor of science degree from UCCS.

**Abbreviations** for qualifications are to be written in upper case.

*Example:*

He has a Ph.D. in applied geosciences.

## 10.5. Job titles / official titles

Job titles / official titles (also external) are to be written in lower case unless the title occurs immediately before the name of the person or if it appears as a part of a listing. Even if the job title appears immediately after the name, it is to be written in lower case.

*Examples:*

the chancellor of the university

John Smith, biology professor

Mathew Jones is professor of history at UCLA.

*But:*

Title before the name

Professor Ann Williams

Dean and Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs Richard Krugman

I have informed Professor Brown about the matter and he was none too pleased.

Listing

**Professor Dr. Christian Thomsen**

*President*

**Professor Dr.-Ing. Christine Ahrend**

*First Vice President*

**Professor Dr. Hans-Ulrich Heiß**

*Vice President*

## 10.6. Main headings

Within the title of documents (e.g. flyers, forms, brochures etc.) and the main headings of texts, the first letter of all words is to be upper case (exceptions: articles and prepositions shorter than five letters such as **from** and **the** or **a** are to be written in **lower case**. BUT: For additional sub-headings in the document, only the first letter of the first word is to be in upper case, with all other words in lower case.

*Examples:*

Main headings

Mastering Berlin: International Postgraduate Programs

Introduction to the Fundamentals of Financial Accounting

Application to Withdraw from an Examination

### Subheadings

English-language master's programs

Key terms in financial accounting

#### **10.7. After a forward slash**

If two words are separated by a forward slash, then the second term is to be in lower case (unless the use of upper case is required by the rules of grammar, such as for proper nouns).

*Example:*

Corporate finance/accounting

## **11. Correspondence**

### **11.1. Salutation**

**Mr.** and **Ms.** (pronounced \‘miz\ ) are the equivalents of Herr and Frau.

Please note: The use of **Mrs.** to refer to married women in correspondence is outdated!

The following salutations are possible in letters:

Name of contact person unknown

Dear Sir or Madam,

Dear Editor/Service Representative/Spokesperson,

Name of contact person known

Dear Mr./Ms. Wilson,

Dear Professor Adams,

The following salutation is to be used for employment references:

To Whom It May Concern,

### **11.2. Opening of text**

The first letter of the first word in the line after the salutation in letters and emails is to be written in upper case.

*Example:*

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter...

### 11.3. Complimentary close

**Formal:** Sincerely / Yours sincerely

**Somewhat less formal:** Best wishes / Kind regards

“i. A.”/“im Auftrag” (on behalf of) is generally not used in an English letter.

### 11.4. Titles

The German titles **Dr.**, **Prof. Dr.** or **Prof. Dr. h.c.** should not be translated in written correspondence. It is also possible to use only the highest title, e.g. **Prof.** in running text after the initial mention of the full title (e.g. Prof. Dr. h.c.).

## 12. Titles of texts

### 12.1. Books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, websites, brochures and flyers

Titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, brochures and flyers are to be italicized in running text:

*Examples:*

I never met anyone who actually finished *Finnegan’s Wake*.

Lots of people have read *Ulysses*.

### 12.2. Single articles in periodicals, magazines or newspapers

Titles of individual articles in journals, magazines or newspapers as well as unpublished texts (academic works, speeches, manuscripts) are to be placed in inverted commas:

*Example:*

*The Journal for Climate Science* has an interesting article this month entitled “Climate Predication Technologies of the Future.”

## 13. Days of the week

The days of the week are to be abbreviated as follows:

*Example:*

Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun

(always three letters and no period)

## 14. Currencies

Currencies can be designated by either writing the name of the currency in full after the amount, or by using the international [ISO code norms](#) placed before the amount:

*Examples:*

300 euros  
210 US dollars

*or:*

EUR 300  
USD 210 (with a space between the currency and the amount)

## 15. Numbers

Numbers and ordinal numbers from zero to nine are to be written as words. The numbers 10 and above are to be written as numbers.

*Examples:*

Numbers: zero, one, two ... 10, 11 etc.  
Ordinal numbers: First, second, third, fourth ... 10th, 11th etc.

Should several numbers occur in a text, however, all related to the same theme (for example a ranking list), then all numbers referred to in this context should be presented in the same format (either numbers or words) in order to ensure clarity and continuity.

At the start of a sentence, numbers should always be written as words.

Please note: In English the use of commas and points is different to German:

*Example:*

German: 100.898,32 = English: 100,898.32

## 16. Translation of organizations, titles of laws, political offices etc.

Should an official English translation already exist, then always use this, placing the German abbreviation or, if no abbreviation exists, the full German title in brackets after the translation.

*Example:*

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

If there is no official English translation, the German title is to be used and an English translation is to be provided after the German term in brackets as an explanation. Should it not be possible to provide a meaningful translation, then a short English

text should be provided in brackets, again after the German term, briefly explaining the function or tasks of the organization etc.

*Example:*

Verwaltungsakademie (Berlin Academy of Administration)

General non-English terms which are not part of standard use of language, and which are not to be translated should be italicized for their first usage in a text and thereafter not. Non-English words which form a standard part of the language (for example words which have an entry in a dictionary) should not be italicized.

## Sources

This style guide is based upon the style guide of [Universität Hamburg](#). We would like to thank Universität Hamburg for its kind permission to use its style guide.