

Editorial guidance

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BAE SYSTEMS

Editorial guidance

Editorial policy, tips and sign off

This document provides contributors and editors with a consistent style to use for submissions to BAE Systems publications.

All publications should use clear, plain English, obeying all rules of grammar and punctuation and avoiding slang and colloquialisms.

Editorial policy

News stories should be linked to the Integrated Business Plan (IBP) or individual business unit strategies. They should be factual, to-the-point and avoid 'marketing speak' (eg: 'world class', 'leading edge', 'strategy')

The title of the publication should not be over-used for recognition purposes. Permissible use includes:

- Customer or other external feedback
- Genuinely outstanding achievement
- Reporting on official recognition such as, Chairman's Award (CA) or industry awards.

Quotes should be used when they add to the value and not to "pat on back". Permissible use includes expressing a valid and expert view, so that matters of opinion are not reported as fact. Such assertions should be backed up with hard evidence.

Quotes should be opened or closed in the past tense: He said: "... – or," said Joe Bloggs. Do not use present tense: says Joe Bloggs.

In printed materials and publications, avoid using second-person plural ("we" and "our"). Restrict its use to quotes or editorial to avoid compromising "editorial independence".

Try to avoid use of BAE Systems as a possessive noun. For instance, use "BAE Systems people have raised £xx for charity", rather than "BAE Systems' people have... etc". Where inevitable, use BAE Systems' – ie. apostrophe after the final s with no further s needed.

Capitalisation

The company is BAE Systems in body text and BAE Systems in headlines – do not abbreviate the name. Remember the BAE Systems Logo must not be altered in any way.

Do not use too many upper case letters (they make text hard to read). Use lower case initial letters for the company, the customer, operating group/business, department etc. If you are referring to a particular person's job title – eg. 'the Chairman of BAE Systems' - then use a capital letter. If you are referring to a generic job title or description – eg. 'The team leader' – then use lower case.

Capitalise the Army in context of the British Army, and the US Army. Always use lower case when used adjectivally (eg: an army helicopter) or referring to armies generally.

Use Royal Navy; the Merchant Navy; the US Navy etc; naval is lower case except in titles such as Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). Armed Forces, Armed Services, the Services (caps), but lower case serviceman, servicewomen.

Ins & outs

If you think a remark or observation might cause offence, leave it out – even if it is a quotation or attribution.

Avoid party political comment and be very cautious when making comments which might be construed as critical of governments or politicians.

Checking facts and figures

When incorporating facts, figures, project milestones or statistics within articles, ensure that:

- information is not confidential and can be used internally and externally
- all dates and milestones are cleared for public use with the customer and internally within project teams
- it does not include criticism of the workforce, programmes or products
- validate articles with the content provider to ensure they are correct at time of printing.

Sign off process

All articles should be signed off by the content provider/interviewee to ensure that all information is:

- factually correct at time of printing
- can be used internally and externally.

Heads of Communications should have final sign off of the internal magazines produced.

Readership/distribution

While internal magazines may be produced primarily for employees, all content that appears in a company publication when printed is in the public domain.

Use of internal articles externally

News stories that appear in internal magazines can be actively promoted externally in local media via the media relations team.

For more on writing style and tone of voice

Underpinning all of our communications should be our strategy, values and messages for that year:
Our brand >

Useful resources to help avoid jargon, and to communicate in a concise and objective manner:
Plain English Campaign >
Plain Language >

Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided if possible – but always spell them out first time if you are going to use them. Really well known abbreviations can be used without spelling out first, eg: BBC, RAF (not RN), NATO, MP, MOD.

Remember our publications have an international distribution, so refer to the UK MOD (not MOD) at first use unless nationality is clear from the context.

Abbreviated negatives (can't, don't, shan't etc, plus similar abbreviations such as I'll, you're) should be discouraged in all text except in direct quotes and occasional chatty pieces.

Use email, not E:mail or any other version. Use tel: for telephone details at the end of a story.

Typography

Use only one space when starting a new sentence after full stops.

Don't use a space before colons: (not :).

Don't underline and use bold very sparingly.

Titles

Take care with people's titles, particularly foreign or military ones. Some can be abbreviated – Dr doesn't need a full point but Prof. or Rev. does. Don't abbreviate military titles (except, if neater, for lists and tables.)

Don't use Mr/Mrs/Miss or initials instead of first names – use first names whenever possible, except for senior military, political, religious or other public figures.

A field marshal or air chief marshal will be either a peer or a knight, so after first mention, eg: Field Marshal Stephen Windsor, he would be called Sir Stephen. Similarly, any other officer with a personal title should be described in full at first mention, eg: Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Thompson, later Sir Charles or General Thompson.

Don't use academic or professional qualifications (M.Sc, MIPR), or military awards (DFC) as part of titles, but by all means mention them if they are relevant to the story. Avoid abbreviating titles except where part of lists (including captions).

If in doubt visit the Times online style guide: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/section/0,,2941,00.html>. They have a good military reference section.

Numbers/dates

Write dates as 23 November, 1 July, and 12 January.

Write the numbers one to ten as words and 11 and above as figures.

Take care with large numbers. Use 20 million rather than lots of zeros.

Use £20bn for financials (abbreviate bn and don't insert space between number and letters).

When checking your copy, make sure you have inserted the "million" or "bn". It is very easy – and embarrassing – to omit them by writing, for example: "The company has won a new £74 contract."

Sterling

£1,000 £10,000 £100,000
£1m £10m £1bn

Use per cent, not % in body text, but % may be used in tables.

Be careful to use £ or \$ in the right place.

Use "more than" £10m rather than "over" £10m. Use "fewer than" 250 people rather than "under" 250 people.

Temperature

°C

Captions

Captions are open ended, which means they finish without a full stop.

Pull quotes

Single quote mark without full stop:
'It's a great place to work'

Listed bullet points

- Lorem ipsum
- Lorem ipsum
- Lorem ipsum.

Newsletters

To see more about developing newsletters:
[Newsletters >](#)



Style

Get to the point immediately in a hard news article – try and tell the story in the first two paragraphs. If stuck, ask yourself “what will be the outcome of this development?” and lead with that. Put the background after you have dealt with what is new or different. Write about benefits, rather than features – particularly useful for avoiding complex technical detail.

Try to make the tone or “voice” of the article conversational but informed. Sometimes it helps to imagine that you are talking to a friend in a social setting. Although your friend is intelligent and understands the basics of business, he or she is not a specialist in the topic under discussion.

Avoid clichés – like the plague... and especially “corporate” clichés.

Avoid faddish words and jargon such as “empowerment” and “paradigm”.

Avoid unnecessary punctuation or too many exclamation marks!!!!!! Generally use dashes rather than brackets.

Keep the language and sentence construction simple. Use the active voice wherever possible. All issues – no matter how complex – should be written in a clear and concise form (note passive voice here...). Use short words, sentences and paragraphs. Full stops are good. They keep sentences short. This helps the reader.

Be careful not to state cause and effect if the link cannot be proven. Use other sentence constructions instead. (For example, not: The RAF is buying new weapons because its laser-guided bombs went astray in Kosovo, but: The RAF is buying new weapons after its laser-guided bombs went astray...)

Always check what you have written from the reader’s viewpoint and make sure it can be understood without having to be read twice. If you don’t understand, what chance has the reader? If in doubt, go back to your source and ask.

Include quotes wherever possible. The quote must say something useful, so use it to carry a key message. All comments (ie: anything which is not demonstrably a fact) should be attributed. Consider who the quote should come from – a technical expert may be better than a more senior general manager. A customer plaudit is worth far more than a manager congratulating his own team.

Submarines are called boats (not ships) in the Royal and US navies.

If referring to an internal website, it should be called an intranet not a website.

Avoid ‘formal’ words and long words (such as obfuscation): examples might include –

while	not whilst
among	not amongst
live	not reside
try	not endeavour
can	not able to
during	not in the course of
stop	not cease, discontinue
before	not prior to
by	not by means of
because	not as a consequence of
because	not owing to the fact that
from	not as from
now	not at present
although	not despite the fact that
lack	not deficiency

We do not utilise something (unless it is pressed into service for a purpose it wasn’t originally designed). We use it.

Adverbs qualifying adjectives (eg. ill-educated) are often better and avoid ambiguity with hyphens.

Adverbs qualifying verbs should be hyphenated. Alternatively, avoid the problem and don’t over-use them...

Headlines

Headlines in upper and lower case (not caps) – usual rules on caps apply. Keep short and concise and suggest several if inspiration strikes. Newspapers often use two headlines – one to GRAB ATTENTION, the other to explain.

Spelling

UK/North American differences in spelling can cause confusion. We use UK spellings – but when it comes to things like UK Ministry of Defence, US Department of Defense, use the correct national spelling.

Air Marshal, event marshal (not marshall).

Use focused, focusing, (not focussed, focussing).

Editorial guidance

Writing for online and on screen

There are some important differences in our ability to read on-screen text compared to printed text and these have significant implications for the way we write online communications.

Studies have shown that reading from a PC screen or TV, as opposed to scanning a paper document, demands more effort from our eyes and brain. Unlike printed text which is made up of dots of ink, all on screen text is made up of tiny dots of light called pixels and these do not appear as clearly. This has the effect of tiring our eyes by 25%, slowing our reading rate and reducing our attention span; 79% of people scan web pages rather than reading them and will do this only for a short amount of time if they cannot find what they are looking for.

Remember that visitors to a website are users not readers, and require information in the most time efficient manner.

Points to consider

- Aim to halve the text you would write for a printed publication.
- Bullet points where appropriate can highlight key points and reduce user eyestrain. Using the options available for boxed information will draw attention to important content.
- Effective headings and sub-headings, when read without their relevant content text, can provide an instant snapshot of your document topic and sequence. Headlines that contain information rather than sound bites or “teasers” which contain none will increase reader response.
- Shorten sentences and paragraphs, and simplify your wording whenever possible – use plain language and avoid jargon. Concise and objective language will improve usability significantly.

- Draw attention to specific words using formatting when appropriate but do not over use exclamation marks or upper case within text. Italics are not allowed in BAE Systems online style, as they appear less clearly in on-screen text than print.
- Keep information-heavy pages short to minimize vertical scrolling. This may mean splitting your text into multiple pages made up of screen-sized chunks. If scrolling cannot be avoided then ensure your most important elements are ‘above the fold’ so they can be seen with minimum effort.
- Never provide web pages that force your visitors to scroll horizontally as this is especially hard on the eyes.
- Order copy based on levels of interest, putting important information in the first paragraph. Then each subsequent paragraph has increasingly less important information that can be easily skipped without losing any vital information. People will often only scan the first two paragraphs, so bear this in mind when writing.
- Use white space (a graphic element that provides a break for tired eyes) combined with headings, bullets and images to avoid creating pages that are too ‘grey.’

Key words

One of the biggest factors in your search engine ranking are your keywords – the words that appear on your pages. Newer search engines analyse the text on your page checking not only for keywords or phrases, but also that they are in a proper form and not just repeated. However, the volume of keywords will still determine rankings so you do need to include as many keywords as possible, while still keeping a natural language structure. People will hopefully use more than one word or phrase to find your site so make sure you get some variation too.

Newer search engines are trying more and more to read a site as a human would so that they can better rank pages, so include keywords in page headings too. Many now treat text headings with more importance than other text so consider also that replacing text headings with images will affect your search engine rankings since search engines cannot read text from an image.

You should also never link to a page in your site with text like ‘Next’ or ‘Click Here’. All that this does is rob you of a spot to put keywords so try to use meaningful identifiers in your links and in everything else.

Finally, make sure that the keywords assigned to the page are correctly aligned with the page content. Keywords that do not appear in the content can cause a search engine to ‘blacklist’ a page. Also avoid the use of generic keywords that may result in your site appearing alongside sites whose content and nature run counter to BAE Systems.

For more on writing style and tone of voice

See the full section containing guidance on tone of voice, and specific editorial guidance as applied to newsletters:

[Our brand >](#)
[Newsletters >](#)

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[Plain Language >](#)

