Style Guide
New edition 2019

English Language Service

A handbook for authors and translators in the Federal Administration
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This guide is intended primarily for English-language translators, both in-house and freelance, working for the Federal Administration. It also aims to serve the native and non-native speakers within the Administration who draft texts in English.

This guide intends to provide a standard for conventions specific to the Federal Administration and the situation in Switzerland. It also draws attention to some of the common pitfalls involved in translating from German and French into English.

Please also refer to www.termdat.ch and the brochure ‘The Swiss Confederation. A Brief Guide’ for many terms specific to Switzerland.

As a standard dictionary we recommend you use the Oxford online dictionary www.oxforddictionaries.com or if that fails you, the Oxford English Dictionary www.oed.com

This guide is broadly based on the instructions and advice provided in the European Commission’s English Style Guide, but also draws on other sources.

As English is currently the world’s lingua franca, it is also important to take into consideration the many people who use English in the course of their work, even though English is not their first language. Be aware of who your target audience is. Who are you producing this information for? Make sure your text is written in clear English so that it can be understood by people who do not master the language.

Please be advised that this is a binding document for all English-language authors and translators working for the Federal Administration, despite the fact that

“Everyone has always regarded any usage
but his [or her] own as either barbarous or pedantic.”

(Evelyn Waugh)
Layout
For the sake of clarity we have sought to place the rules or guidelines on the left and the corresponding examples on the right. The table of contents should guide you to what you are looking for.

Contact details for corrections/suggestions:
If you have any questions or feedback regarding the contents of this guide, or if there are additional points that you would like to see included, please get in touch with us at the following address: english@bk.admin.ch
General. For reasons of stylistic consistency, the variety of English on which this guide bases its instructions and advice is the standard usage of Britain and Ireland (for the sake of convenience, called ‘British English’ in this guide). As a general rule, British English should be preferred. However, as a considerable proportion of the target readership may be made up of non-native speakers, very colloquial British usage should be avoided. Furthermore, if the target readership is known to be American, US English should be used.

1. Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British spelling. Follow standard British usage, but remember that influences are crossing the Atlantic all the time. Use a spellchecker, set to UK English, as an aid.</th>
<th>TV programme but computer program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retain original spellings in titles. These can be found on official websites.</td>
<td>International Labour Organization; US Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use British spellings for the English names of bodies within the Federal Administration (NB these may appear differently in TERMDAT).</td>
<td>IT Service Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exception: FDF financial statements and treasury reports use US English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words in -ise/-ize. Use -ise. Both spellings are correct in British English, but the -ise form is now much more common in the media.</th>
<th>organisation prioritise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-yse. The -yse form is the only correct spelling in British English.</td>
<td>paralyse, analyse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Digraphs.** Retain the digraph, but note that a number of such words (e.g. *medieval*) are now frequently spelled without the digraph in British English. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English Examples</th>
<th>American English Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aetiology, caesium, oenology, oestrogen, foetus etc.</td>
<td>but medieval, fetus (scientific texts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Double consonants.** In British usage (unlike US practice), a final *-i* is doubled after a short vowel on adding *-ing* or *-ed* to verbs (sole exception: *parallel*, *paralleled*) and adding *-er* to make nouns from verbs.

- A verb ending in a single vowel and a single consonant doubles the consonant when a suffix is added (*-ing, -ed*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English Examples</th>
<th>American English Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>travel, travelling, travelled, traveller</td>
<td>level, levelling, levelled, leveller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admit, admitting, admitted</td>
<td>refer, referring, referred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>format, formatting, formatted</td>
<td>handicap, handicapping, handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidnap, kidnapping, kidnapped</td>
<td>worship, worshipping, worshipped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exceptions:

- benefit, benefiting, benefited
- focus, focusing, focused
- combat, combating, combated
- target, targeting, targeted
- parallel, unparalleled
- develop, developing, developed

**Use** *-ct-* **not** *-x-*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English Examples</th>
<th>American English Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>connection, reflection</td>
<td>But note: complexion and flexion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write *gram, kilogram*. Use *tonne* not *ton* (*ton* refers to the non-metric measure).

Write *metre* for the unit of length, *meter* for measuring instruments.

**Judgement/judgment**

- Judgement – in a general context
- Judgment – in a legal context
A(n) historical. The use of ‘an’ rather than ‘a’ before words such as *historical* or *hotel* dates back to a time when the ‘h’ was never pronounced in these words. While you should now write *a hotel, an historical event* is still regarded as acceptable.

**Tricky plurals.** Follow this list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plurals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>addendum</td>
<td>addenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appendix</td>
<td>appendices <em>(books)</em>, appendixes <em>(anatomy)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bacterium</td>
<td>bacteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bureau</td>
<td>bureaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consortium</td>
<td>consortia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corrigendum</td>
<td>corrigenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criterion</td>
<td>criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum</td>
<td>curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus</td>
<td>foci <em>(mathematics, science)</em>, focuses <em>(other contexts)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formula</td>
<td>formulae <em>(politics)</em>, formulae <em>(science)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forum</td>
<td>forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genus</td>
<td>genera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>index</td>
<td>indexes <em>(books)</em>, indices <em>(science, economics)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum</td>
<td>maxima <em>(mathematics, science)</em>, maximums <em>(other contexts)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>mediums <em>(life sciences, art)</em>, media <em>(press, communications, IT)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memorandum</td>
<td>memorandums or memoranda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tricky plurals</strong> (cont.)</td>
<td>papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phenomenon</td>
<td>phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus</td>
<td>pluses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>premium</td>
<td>premiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>referendum</td>
<td>referendums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spectrum</td>
<td>spectra <em>(science)</em>, spectra <em>(politics)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symposium</td>
<td>symposiums or symposia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vortex</td>
<td>vortices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Interference effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusion between English words.</th>
<th>dependent (adj. or noun)</th>
<th>dependant (noun only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look out for errors involving the following pairs:</td>
<td>license (verb)</td>
<td>licence (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note also: all together <em>(in a body)</em>, altogether <em>(entirely)</em>; premises <em>(both buildings and propositions)</em>, premisses <em>(propositions only)</em>; discreet, discrete.</td>
<td>practise (verb)</td>
<td>practice (noun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal (adj. or noun)</td>
<td>principle (noun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stationary (adj.)</td>
<td>stationery (noun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusion between French and English.</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beware of interference effects when switching from one language to another.</td>
<td>adresse</td>
<td>address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appartement</td>
<td>apartment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compétitivité</td>
<td>competitiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connexion</td>
<td>connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correspondance</td>
<td>correspondence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exemple</td>
<td>example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existant</td>
<td>existent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environnement</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indépendance</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>médecine</td>
<td>medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>messager</td>
<td>messenger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>négligeable</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>négociation</td>
<td>negotiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recommandation</td>
<td>recommendation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexion</td>
<td>reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsable</td>
<td>responsible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tarif</td>
<td>tariff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusion between German and English.</th>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The instances are fewer.</td>
<td>Aggressivität</td>
<td>aggressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy End</td>
<td>Kriminalität</td>
<td>crime/criminality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See also False Anglicisms p. 46
### 3. Capital letters

**General.** In English, proper names are capitalised but ordinary nouns are not. The titles and names of persons, bodies, legal acts, documents, etc. are therefore normally capitalised.

Exception: when a descriptor follows the name and is clearly a title rather than an ordinary noun, it should be upper case.

NB: Unlike in some other languages, in English *all* the nouns and adjectives in names take capitals.

**Long names** that read more like a description than a real title use lower case:

The general rule is: ‘the longer the name, the fewer the capitals’.

**German capitalises all nouns**, including English words and Anglicisms. Translators need to bear in mind how these nouns would normally appear in an English text and refrain from unwarranted capitalisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Councillor Viola Amherd <strong>but</strong> Karin Keller-Sutter is one of three female federal councillors</th>
<th>The speaking points for the federal councillor were not translated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viktor Rossi, Vice Chancellor Martina Hirayama, State Secretary</td>
<td>The speaking points for the federal councillor were not translated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research</td>
<td>The speaking points for the federal councillor were not translated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP)</td>
<td>The speaking points for the federal councillor were not translated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The English Style Guide</td>
<td>The speaking points for the federal councillor were not translated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The federal programme for equal opportunities between men and women

Committee for the adaptation to technical progress of the directive on the introduction of recording equipment in road transport (tachograph)

Joint FA/EC working party on forest and forest product statistics

Die Speaking Points für den Bundesrat wurden nicht übersetzt.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subsequent references to names.</strong> If you mention a body or person subsequently in a text, you may truncate the name provided it is clear what you mean.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The [Seventh Framework] Programme The President [of the Commission] The Ruritanian Programme for Innovation and Research focuses on... The (research) programme is headed by...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Translations of names.</strong> Use initial capitals for official or literal translations but lower case for descriptive translations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court in Switzerland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capitals may also be used to indicate the name of a type of body, legal act, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission has several Directorates-General.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>However, if there is no risk of confusion or there is no need to draw attention to the name, lower case can be used instead.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was felt an act rather than an ordinance was the appropriate instrument.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>State or state?</strong> Use initial capitals for Member States of the European Union in legal documents. Use lower case in most other instances.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>state-owned, state aid, reasons of state, nation states, the Arab states (since ill-defined), but the Gulf States (defined group of countries), the State (in political theory and legal texts).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Parliament or parliament?</strong> Parliament as the institution is upper case.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In today’s session, Parliament debated the new health bill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When referring to a system of legislature, it is lower case.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The parliaments of Germany and France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Permanent and ad hoc bodies.** | Permanent bodies require capitals, while ad hoc groups do not. | The Commission Delegation in the United States [permanent]  
The Polish delegation to a meeting [ad hoc] |
| **Seasons, etc.** | No capitals for the seasons; capitals for days of the week, months and feast days. | spring, summer, autumn, winter  
Tuesday, Friday,  
January, September  
Ascension Day, pre-Christmas business |
| **Events.** | Initial capitals throughout for events.  
No capitals, however, for simple adjective + noun. | Swiss National Day, Gay Pride, the International Year of the Child  
The 2003/04 marketing year  
The 2015 budget year |
| **Celestial bodies and objects.** | Since they are proper nouns, the names of planets, moons, stars and artificial satellites are capitalised.  
However, ‘earth’, ‘moon’ and ‘sun’ do not normally take an initial capital unless they are specifically referred to as celestial bodies. | Venus, Rigel, Palapa B  
The Starship Enterprise returned to Earth.  
but  
The daydreamer returned to earth. |
| **Generic terms.** | Proper nouns that have become generic terms no longer call for initial capitals. | the internet, the web |
| **Proprietary names.** | Proprietary names (or trade names) are normally capitalised, unless they too have become generic terms, such as: | Airbus, Boeing, Land Rover, Dafalgan, Polaroid  
aspirin, hoover, linoleum, nylon |
| **Derivations from proper nouns.** | When proper nouns are used adjectivally they keep the initial capital. | Bunsen burner, Faraday cage, Sayre’s law |
| Initial capitals in quotations. Start with a capital in running text only if the quotation is a complete sentence in itself. | Walter Rathenau once said, “We stand or fall on our economic performance.”  
The American government favours “a two-way street in arms procurement”. |
4. Geographical names

**General.** Many place names have an anglicised form, but as people become more familiar with these names in the language of the country concerned, so foreign spellings will gain wider currency in written English. As a rule of thumb, therefore, use the native form for geographical names (retaining any accents) except where an anglicised form is overwhelmingly common.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography. Check carefully that you have used the correct English geographical name. For country names, refer to the UN official countries list: <a href="http://www.un.org/en/members/">http://www.un.org/en/members/</a></th>
<th><strong>GERMAN/FRENCH</strong></th>
<th><strong>ENGLISH</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapur, Singapour Peking, Pékin Hongkong Irak Zürich etc.</td>
<td>Singapore Beijing Hong Kong Iraq Zurich etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There may be political implications of the different name spellings, e.g. Kyiv (transliterated from Ukrainian) or Kiev (transliterated from Russian).

**Great Britain/United Kingdom.** In a geopolitical context, use ‘United Kingdom/UK’, not ‘Great Britain’, and certainly not just ‘England’. N.B. German texts often refer to Grossbritannien, meaning the UK.

**Geopolitical units.** Switzerland is divided into cantons which are divided into communes. In certain contexts it may be appropriate to use ‘local authority/council’ instead of ‘commune’.

‘Municipality’ should only be used in specific contexts, e.g. FDF and FSO financial statistics.

DE: Kanton/Gemeinde
FR: canton/commune
EN: canton/commune

There are currently 2,212 communes in Switzerland.

This instrument supports local councils wishing to form an Energy Region.
**Swiss cantons and towns.** Use the name in the language spoken in that canton. There are a few exceptions of cantons that have an anglicised form.

For a full list of all Swiss cantons as they should appear in an English text, please see Annex 1.

Write ‘the canton of’ (lower case c) when referring to the geopolitical area.

However, use a capital C for Canton when referring to the government of that canton.

Do not write ‘canton/Canton Bern.’

In the case of towns with both French and German names, always use the local language name.

In the case of towns with bilingual names, adopt the language form used in the source text.

**Linguistic regions.** Switzerland is divided into three main linguistic regions.

Not forgetting the fourth national language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swiss cantons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>I live in the canton of Neuchâtel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zurich</td>
<td>The canton of Bern is Switzerland’s second largest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucerne</td>
<td>The Canton of Basel approved the new legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>The German-speaking region of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>The French-speaking region of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>The Italian-speaking region of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romansh</td>
<td>Romansh is spoken in some parts of Graubünden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graubünden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Rivers.** Insert ‘River’ before Swiss rivers, so people know it is a river. | **l’Areuse** | the River Areuse  
die Aare | the River Aare  
the River Ticino  
the Rhine; the Rhone |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserve the local language name, with the exception of major European rivers (as these are well known, ‘River’ may be omitted).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Lakes.** See Annex I for a list of lakes in Switzerland and their English names. | **Lake Constance** (for Bodensee)  
**Lake Geneva** (for Lac Léman)  
**Lake Lucerne** (for Vierwaldstättersee) |  |  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use your discretion when translating the names of lesser-known lakes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Mountain ranges.** Some mountain ranges have established English names. | **The Alps, Apennines, Dolomites, Pindus Mountains and Pyrenees** (no accents).  
**Massif Central** (except for capital C), **Alpes Maritimes** (capital M), Schwäbische Alb or the Jura. |  |  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others retain their original name.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Valleys.** Unless referring to a major well-known river or region, words for valley should not be translated. | **The Valle d’Aosta**  
**Dientigtal**  
**Val de Travers**  
*but the Rhone valley* |  |  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See Annex 1 for a non-comprehensive list of other Swiss geographical designations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Non-literal geographical names.** Geographical names used in lexicalised compounds tend to be written in upper case, but note the distinction between proper adjectives (upper case) and non-geographical descriptors. | **Roman numerals**  
**Brussels sprouts**  
alpine flowers (flowers originating in the Alps), *but* Alpine rivers (the rivers in the Alps) |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
**Use of the word ‘Swiss’.** The Swiss like to emphasise their Swissness: often it is obvious from the context that something Swiss is being referred to, and the adjective can be omitted.

**Compass points.** Points of the compass (*north*, *north-west*, etc.) and their derived forms (*north-western* etc.) are not capitalised unless they form part of a proper name (e.g. an administrative or political unit or cultural entity).

- South Africa
- Northern Ireland
- South East Asia
- **but**
- northern Switzerland
- The sun sets in the west [geographical]; Posing a threat to the interests of the West [political/cultural]

Compass bearings are abbreviated without a point.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54° E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Compound words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Use hyphens sparingly</strong> but to good purpose: in the phrase crude-oil production statistics a hyphen tells the reader that ‘crude’ applies to the oil rather than the statistics. Sometimes hyphens are absolutely necessary to clarify the sense.</th>
<th>re-cover – recover; re-creation – recreation; re-form – reform; re-count – recount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following are examples of well-used hyphens:</td>
<td>user-friendly software; two-day meeting; four-month stay (but four months’ holiday); tonne-kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In adverb-adjective modifiers</strong>, there is no hyphen when the adverb ends in -ly.</td>
<td>an occupationally exposed worker; a beautifully phrased sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other adverbs, however, a hyphen is required.</td>
<td>well-known problem; above-mentioned report; hot-rolled strip, but a hotly disputed election; broad-based programme, but a broadly based programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>An adjective</strong> formed from a noun and a participle should be hyphenated.</td>
<td>drug-related crime; crime-fighting unit; oil-bearing rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compound phrases</strong> are only hyphenated when used adjectivally before the noun.</td>
<td>policy for the long term, but long-term effects; production on a large scale, but large-scale redundancies; measures for flood control, but flood-control measures; the information is up to date, but up-to-date information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nouns from phrasal verbs.</strong> These are often hyphenated or written as single words. The situation is fluid.</td>
<td>handout, takeover, comeback, but follow-up, run-up, spin-off, start-up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Present participles of phrasal verbs.** When used as attributes they are generally hyphenated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present participles of phrasal verbs.</th>
<th>cooling-off period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Avoiding double consonants and vowels.** Hyphens are often used to avoid juxtaposing two consonants or two vowels.

- However, the hyphen is often omitted in frequently used words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoiding double consonants and vowels.</th>
<th>aero-elastic, anti-intellectual, part-time, re-election, re-entry, re-examine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bookkeeping, coeducation, cooperation, coordinate, macroeconomic, microeconomic, radioactive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Numbers and fractions.** Numbers take hyphens when they are spelled out. Fractions take hyphens when used attributively, but not as nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers and fractions.</th>
<th>twenty-eight, two-thirds completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but an increase of two thirds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prefixes before proper names.** Prefixes before proper names are hyphenated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefixes before proper names.</th>
<th>pro-American, intra-EU, mid-Atlantic, pan-European, trans-European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note, however, that ‘transatlantic’ is written solid.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Note:** However, that ‘transatlantic’ is written solid.
**Coordination of compounds.** Hyphenated compounds may be coordinated as follows:

Where compounds are not hyphenated (closed compounds), they should not be coordinated but written out in full.

**Technology- and science-based start-ups.**

macrostructural and microstructural changes

or

macro- and micro-structural changes

**not**

macro- and microstructural changes

**One word or two?** This is often a question of personal preference, but for the sake of consistency, use the following:

- healthcare
- database
- email
- factsheet
- roadmap
- peacebuilding
- peacekeeping
- per cent
- master plan
- under way
- think tank
6. Punctuation

**Punctuation marks** in English are always – apart from dashes – closed up to the preceding word.

Stops (,.?!;:) are always followed by only a single (not a double) space.

Be aware that punctuation conventions in other languages differ from those in English, so when translating or when writing as a non-native speaker do not let the source language or your mother tongue interfere.

The use of punctuation marks may be superfluous in some cases, e.g. around capitalised names. See also 3. Capital letters.

He asked his assistant: “Did you book my flight?”
(and **not**: He asked his assistant, “Did you book my flight?”)
### 6.1 Colons

*Colons* are most often used to indicate that an expansion, qualification or explanation is about to follow (e.g. a list of items in running text). It stands in place of ‘that is (to say)’ or ‘such as’. The part before the colon must be a full sentence in its own right, but the second need not be. Colons do not require the next word to start with a capital.

Colons can also introduce a quotation or direct speech.

Watch out for the use of the colon in German in place of a relative pronoun; an alternative formulation is probably more appropriate in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A colon may be useful to edit a ‘heavy’ source text:</th>
<th>We made a few minor changes to the programme: [that is to say] different dates, a new venue and three new speakers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Die neuesten Prognosen zeigen: Die Abhängigkeit von wenigen, politisch instabilen Förderländern droht weiter zu steigen.</em></td>
<td>He declared: “English punctuation rules are so complicated!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The latest forecasts show that dependence on a few politically unstable producer countries is likely to increase.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E-Verkaufsapplikationen sind weniger stark verbreitet als die E-Beschaffung. Das erklärt sich aus dem aufgrund von Produktcharakteristiken eingeschränktem Anwendungspotenzial.</em></td>
<td>E-sales are less widespread than e-procurement: potential applications are limited by product characteristics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Semicolons

**Semicolon.** Use a semicolon rather than a comma to combine two closely related sentences into one without a linking conjunction:

You may also use semicolons instead of commas to separate items in a series, especially phrases that themselves contain commas.

The committee dealing with the question of commas agreed on a final text; however, the issue of semicolons was not considered.

The success of the programme hinged on the prompt and correct implementation of the initial project; the careful monitoring, updating and assessment of the agreed measures; and the ongoing cooperation among partner countries and with priority countries.

6.3 Commas

“I was working on the proof of one of my poems all morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon, I put it back.” (Oscar Wilde)

There are some comma rules in English:

**Items in a series.** Here, the comma may be considered to stand for a missing ‘and’ or ‘or’.

A serial comma (Oxford comma) may be inserted before the final ‘and’ (or ‘or’) if needed to clearly indicate items in a series.

John mowed the lawn, Mary did the cooking and Frank lazed around. He came, saw and conquered.

The committee considered sugar, beef and milk products.

sugar, beef and veal, and milk products

I dedicate this book to my parents, Nelson Mandela, and God.
A comma also comes before ‘etc.’ in a series:
but not if no series is involved.

Commas also separate adjectives in series:
but not if the adjectives do not form a series. Here, ‘stable’ modifies ‘agricultural prices’, i.e. the phrase cannot be read as ‘stable and agricultural prices’.

**Non-defining relative clauses.** These are special cases of parenthetic phrases. Non-essential information is added between commas, which have a similar parenthetic function to brackets (see Section 6.5). The relative pronoun is ‘who’ or ‘which’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Non-defining relative clause</strong></th>
<th><strong>Examples</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, beef, milk products, etc.</td>
<td>They discussed milk products etc., then moved on to sugar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They discussed milk products etc., then moved on to sugar.</td>
<td>moderate, stable prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderate, stable prices</td>
<td>stable agricultural prices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a **defining relative clause without commas**, the relative pronoun is ‘who’, ‘which’ or ‘that’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Defining relative clause</strong></th>
<th><strong>Examples</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The translations, which have been revised, can now be sent out.</td>
<td>(added detail – non-defining – all the translations have all been revised)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(added detail – non-defining – all the translations have all been revised)</td>
<td>Do <strong>not</strong> use ‘that’ as the relative pronoun in non-defining clauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use ‘that’ as the relative pronoun in non-defining clauses.</td>
<td>The translations which (or that) have been revised can now be sent out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The translations which (or that) have been revised can now be sent out.</td>
<td>(defining the subset that is to be sent out – only those that have been revised are to be sent out)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.4 Dashes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Short dashes</strong> or ‘en’ dashes look like this: –.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are used to join coordinate or contrasting pairs and to join ranges (see 11. Ranges) and for parenthesis (in pairs or singly).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brussels–Paris route, a current–voltage graph, the height–depth ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London – as you know – is a melting pot of cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland is world-famous for watches – and chocolate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Microsoft Word formatting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are various keyboard combinations for an ‘en’ dash in Microsoft Word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctrl + - on the numeric keypad Hyphen + spacebar (continue typing and the hyphen(s) convert automatically)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long dashes or ‘em’ dashes are rarely found in British English texts; they are used in American English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.5 Brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Round brackets.</strong> Also known as parentheses, round brackets are used much like commas, except that the text they contain has a lower emphasis. They are often used to expand on or explain the preceding item in the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARZOD (an employment service) is based in Ruritania.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Square brackets.</strong> Square brackets are used to make insertions in quoted material which do not appear in the original quotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Let them [the poor] eat cake.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.6 Inverted commas

**Bracketed sentences.** A whole sentence in brackets should have the final stop inside the closing bracket.

When translating e.g. names of institutions, place the translation in brackets after the original name.

(Do not forget the stop at the end of the preceding sentence as well.)

The Ecole polytechnique fédérale Lausanne (Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne) is hosting a conference on biotechnology.

**Footnote numbers** in the text should appear outside of punctuation, unless they refer to text within parentheses.

The consumption of raw materials (the majority of which are mined in Africa¹) is high.²

---

**Use ‘...’ or “...”.** Anything resembling „...“ or «...» does NOT belong in an English text. Use double inverted commas around direct speech and single quotation marks for speech within speech or to isolate a word or phrase in a text.

“Does the German term ‘Bund’ mean ‘Confederation’ in this context?”, he asked.

**Other punctuation and inverted commas.** Place a concluding punctuation mark after a single isolating inverted comma:

In reported speech, place punctuation inside the inverted commas. If the quotation itself contains a concluding mark, no full stop is required after the quotation marks.

The American government favours ‘a two-way street in arms procurement’.

Thatcher once declared: “There is no such thing as society!”

“Brexit means Brexit,” May announced.

„Ich habe einen Traum“, sagte Mr King (final comma outside quotation marks)

“I have a dream,” said Mr King (final comma within quotation marks)
**English text in source documents.** An English phrase cited in a foreign language text retains the inverted commas in the English target text. But if a single English word or phrase is put in inverted commas simply to show that it is a foreign element, remove these in the target text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In den letzten Jahren hat das Thema „Diversity“ stark an Bedeutung gewonnen.</td>
<td>The topic of diversity has become increasingly important in recent years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**So-called.** Inverted commas are preferable to ‘so-called’, which has pejorative connotations, to render *soi-disant*, *sogenannt*, etc. In some cases, ‘known as’ may be an appropriate translation. In many cases it can be omitted altogether (in particular when the thing ‘so genannt’ is a noun in English) and inverted commas are therefore also unnecessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ein Beispiel dafür ist die als Pilot eingeführte Kostengutsprache bei Fördergesuchen, der sogenannte CTI Voucher.</td>
<td>One example of this is the credit voucher introduced as a pilot for funding requests, the CTI voucher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other uses.** Generally, use inverted commas as sparingly as possible for purposes other than actual quotation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le Conseil ‘Agriculture’ das SCCER ‚BIOSWEET‘</td>
<td>the Agriculture Council the BIOSWEET SCCER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

French and German authors tend to make frequent use of inverted commas for nouns in apposition (often programme or committee names etc.). It is preferable to omit the quotation marks in English and reverse the order.
### 6.7 Apostrophes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Plurals of abbreviations</strong> do not take an apostrophe.</th>
<th>SMEs, PICs, UFOs, UASs, FITs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plurals of lower case single letters</strong> may, however, take an apostrophe to avoid misunderstanding.</td>
<td>Dot your i’s. Mind your p’s and q’s. cf: dos and don’ts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plurals of figures</strong>, including decades, do not take an apostrophe.</td>
<td>Pilots of 747’s undergo special training. Listen to the greatest hits of the 1980s on Radio Live 105.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Numbers

**General.** In deciding whether to write numbers in words or figures, the first consideration should be consistency within a passage. Numbers up to ten should be written out in full in continuous text.

Numbers above ten may be written in figures, unless they begin a sentence, in which case they should be written in words.

If the passage contains both kinds, however, use either figures or words for all the numbers.

The committee discussed ten items at the meeting.

They discussed 27 items at the meeting. **but**

Twenty-seven items were discussed at the meeting.

**Units of measurement.** Always use figures with units of measurement that are denoted by symbols or abbreviations.

The converse does not hold. If the units of measurement are spelled out, the numbers do not also have to be spelled out but may be written in figures.

EUR 50 or fifty euros

250kW or two hundred and fifty kilowatts

5 °C or five degrees Celsius

250 kilowatts, 500 metres

**Hundred and thousand.** There is a choice of using either figures or words.

Million and billion, however, may be combined with figures.

Use a hard space (CTRL + Shift + space bar) between numbers and their unit.

300 or three hundred, **not** 3 hundred

EUR 3,000 or three thousand euros, **not** EUR 3 thousand

2.5 million, 3 million, 31 billion
**Writing out numbers.** As a rule avoid combining single-digit figures and words using hyphens.

But note set phrases such as:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a three-year period, a five-door car</td>
<td>not a 2-hour journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-hour week, 24-hour clock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviating ‘million’ and ‘billion’.** Use the letters m and bn without a space for sums of money to avoid frequent repetitions of *million* and *billion*. This applies particularly to tables where space is limited.

In running text, such as in press releases, write million and billion out in full.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300m</td>
<td>5bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City has a population of 21.2 million people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decimal points and commas.** English uses a decimal point, not a comma.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE/FR/IT</td>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3'000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>30 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30'000</td>
<td>30 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thousands.**

In **running text**, use a comma:

In **tables and diagrams** use a hard space (Ctrl-Shift-spacebar), as the thousands separator.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE/FR/IT</td>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50kg</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 °C</td>
<td>120 °F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spacing.** No space between numbers and units of measurement with the exception of degrees Celsius and Fahrenheit, where a hard space (key combination: Ctrl-Shift-spacebar) is needed between numbers and the unit of measurement.
**Coordinates.** The symbols of measurement (degrees, seconds, etc.) are set close up to the figure. There is a hard space (key combination: Ctrl-Shift-space-bar) between the figure and the compass point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinates</th>
<th>50° N 15° 7’ 5” W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Ordinals.** Write ordinal suffixes on the line.

| Ordinals | 1st not 1st; 4th not 4th, etc. |
8. Currency

Always use the international currency codes (ISO 4217, see e.g. http://www.xe.com/iso4217.php), placing them before the number. In particular, EUR for euros and CHF for Swiss francs. Alternatively, if appropriate, write out in full.

Anything resembling Sfr. 20.-- in the source text should be written thus:

The franc is divided into 100 centimes; avoid ‘Rappen’ and ‘cents’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHF 50/fifty Swiss francs</th>
<th>not SFr. or Fr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EUR 200/two hundred euros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHF 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# 9. Fractions

**Written out.** Insert hyphens in fractions used as adverbs or adjectives but not if they are nouns.

Avoid combining figures and words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written out</th>
<th>a two-thirds increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>but</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an increase of two thirds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two-thirds completed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>not</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/3 completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Percentages

**Per cent.** Note that ‘per cent’ is normally written as two words in British English. Use per cent where the number is also spelled out in words and in running text.

With figures, use the per cent sign (%) with no space.

For aesthetic reasons, in a section of text with lots of instances of ‘per cent’ you may decide to use the per cent sign instead of the word.

Observe the distinction between per cent (or %) and percentage point(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Percentages.</strong> Express percentage relationships in running text economically, especially when translating:</th>
<th>twenty per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rates rose by two percentage points, from 40% to 42% (an increase of 5%).</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Un taux de 65% par rapport à la totalité des exportations en dehors de l’Union européenne* translates simply as: 65% of EU exports.
## 11. Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written out. When a range is written out, repeat symbols and multiples (i.e. thousand, million, etc.).</th>
<th>from CHF 20 million to CHF 30 million between 10 °C and 70 °C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated form. When a range is indicated by an ‘en’ dash, do not repeat the symbol or multiple if they do not change and close up the dash between the figures.</td>
<td>CHF 20–30 million 10–70 °C 9–11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the symbol or multiple changes, however, leave a blank space on either side of the dash.</td>
<td>100kW – 40MW 9am – 2pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 12. Dates and time

***Dates.*** Write out the month, preceded by a simple figure for the day (no th etc.). Use a hard space (CTRL + Shift + space bar).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 July 2007</td>
<td>9/11 or September 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the American convention is mm/dd/yy.

***Avoid redundancy.*** If the year in question is clear from the context, do not repeat the year number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On 19 January 2011 the government decided .... however, on 7 February it reversed the decision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Systems of chronology.*** The letters AD come before the number, whereas BC follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD 2000</td>
<td>347 BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Time spans.*** Use a closed-up en dash. For the second figure, you should not repeat the century if it is the same, but you should always include the decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

However, the century may be repeated in the first decade of a new century.

Note that 1990–91 is two years. Financial years etc. that do not coincide with calendar years are denoted by a forward slash, e.g. 1990/91, which is twelve months or less.

***Prepositions and conjunctions around year numbers.*** Make sure you always have a pair of words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

***Decades.*** When referring to decades, write e.g. the 1990s (no apostrophe).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 1990s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Time of day.** Use the 12-hour system unless the 24-hour system is necessary or preferable for clarity’s sake. The 24-hour system is usual in timetables. Separate the hours from the minutes with a point in the 12-hour system and with a colon in the 24-hour system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>1am, 4.30pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>16:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hours.** Abbreviate ‘hour(s)’ to hr(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2½ hrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The time allowed for the test</td>
<td>The time allowed for the test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Years in titles.** In the titles of reports, programmes etc., place the year in initial position, unlike in German, French and Italian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 2017 annual report.</td>
<td>The 2017 annual report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2018 Data Protection Shield Review.</td>
<td>The 2018 Data Protection Shield Review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Abbreviations

**General.** The prime consideration when using abbreviations should be to help the reader. First, then, they should be easily understood. So when an abbreviation that may not be familiar to readers first occurs, it is best to write out the full term followed by the abbreviation in brackets.

Do not use abbreviations needlessly. If space is not an issue, or if an abbreviation is needed only once or twice, use the full form or a truncated form of the title.

An abbreviation in the source text should not be rendered by an improvised one in English. If there is no established English abbreviation, the full form of the foreign language abbreviation should be spelled out in English.

Refer to TERMDAT for established abbreviations in English of Swiss institutions.

**Definitions.** Abbreviations in the broad sense can be classed into two main categories, each in turn divided into two sub-categories:

**Acronyms and initialisms**

*Acronyms* are words formed from the first (or first few) letters of a series of words, and are pronounced as words. They never take points. No article is required.

**The Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)** should enable the EU to meet its Kyoto target.

The Emissions Trading Scheme is now in operation throughout the EU ... The scheme will involve constant monitoring of emissions trading activities.

A reference to the EDK (for ‘Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren’) in a German text should be spelled out as ‘the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)’ rather than something like CCME, and the abbreviation EDK can be used thereafter.

**Acronym**

SECO, SEM, ENSI, OFCOM, FINMA, SERI, DETEC (not ‘the SERI’; ‘the DETEC’)

---

back to content
**Initialisms** are formed from the initial letters of a series of words, usually written without points, and each separate letter is pronounced. They are preceded by ‘the’.

NB Some organisations may not follow this rule. Respect each organisation’s usage but be aware of the unreliability of the English version of many Swiss websites. Apply the rule in all cases for the Federal Administration.

**Contractions and truncations**

**Contractions** omit the middle of a word and, in British usage, are not followed by a point.

Number is contracted to No (Latin ‘nume-ro’), plural Nos without a point.

**Truncations** omit the end of a word and sometimes other letters as well, and end in a point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The CTI, the FDFA, the FOEN, the BBC, the USA, the WEF*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Note: If you come across ‘WEF’ in a text it may be referring to the WEF Annual Meeting and not just the organisation. In which case, write it as such.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr, Ms, Dr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 1, Nos 2, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb., Tues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Writing acronyms.** Acronyms with five letters or fewer are written in upper case.

Acronyms with six letters or more should normally be written with an initial capital followed by lower case.

Note, however, that some acronyms eventually become common nouns, losing even the initial capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS, COST, EFTA, TRIPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benelux, Esprit</td>
<td>Exceptions: organisations that themselves use upper case (such as UNESCO) and other acronyms conventionally written in upper case (WYSIWYG).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laser, radar, sonar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writing initialisms.** Initialisms are usually written in capitals, whatever their length, and take no points.

If the full expressions are lower case or mixed case, however, the initialisms may follow suit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The EEA, FDFA, ICRC, WTO, also AD, NB, PS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCh, PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing truncations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing truncations.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truncations end in a point.</td>
<td>Truncations end in a point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note also:</td>
<td>Note also:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural forms are contractions and so do not take a point.</td>
<td>Plural forms are contractions and so do not take a point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truncated forms used as codes or symbols do not take points.</td>
<td>Truncated forms used as codes or symbols do not take points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor is there a point after the abbreviation of ‘versus’.</td>
<td>Nor is there a point after the abbreviation of ‘versus’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan., Sun., Co., etc.</td>
<td>St. Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(St Saint, contraction without a point)</td>
<td>(St Saint, contraction without a point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. page; pp. pages (with space before number: p. 6)</td>
<td>p. page; pp. pages (with space before number: p. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. line, ll. lines</td>
<td>l. line, ll. lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. following page, ff. following pages</td>
<td>f. following page, ff. following pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(do not use et seq., et seqq.)</td>
<td>(do not use et seq., et seqq.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figures figs (figure fig.)</td>
<td>figures figs (figure fig.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volumes vols (volume vol.)</td>
<td>volumes vols (volume vol.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN, kg</td>
<td>EN, kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roe v Wade</td>
<td>Roe v Wade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester United v YB</td>
<td>Manchester United v YB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Names.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Names.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note that first names should be abbreviated with a single letter only, followed by a point (in names, omit the second letter ‘h’, which is retained in German) (e.g. in the organisation charts of the federal offices).</td>
<td>Note that first names should be abbreviated with a single letter only, followed by a point (in names, omit the second letter ‘h’, which is retained in German) (e.g. in the organisation charts of the federal offices).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. W. Bush</td>
<td>G. W. Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne-Marie: A.-M.</td>
<td>Anne-Marie: A.-M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign-language abbreviations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Foreign-language abbreviations.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untranslated foreign-language abbreviations should retain the capitalisation conventions of the original.</td>
<td>Untranslated foreign-language abbreviations should retain the capitalisation conventions of the original.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GmbH; SA (don’t replace by inc. or Ltd.)</td>
<td>GmbH; SA (don’t replace by inc. or Ltd.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e.g. and i.e. Each letter is followed by a point. Use a comma, colon, or dash before ‘e.g.’ and ‘i.e.’, but no comma after them. If a footnote begins with them, they nevertheless remain in lower case. If a list begins with ‘e.g.’ do not end it with ‘etc.’

He talked about many things, e.g. the difficulties of life in Switzerland.
14. Lists

**Listing items.** Take care that each item is a grammatically correct continuation of the introduction to the list. Do not change syntax midstream, for example by switching from noun to verb. Avoid running the sentence on after the list of points, either by incorporating the final phrase in the introductory sentence or by starting a new sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The health centres are in charge of:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– providing primary healthcare for the local population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– taking measures to fight malaria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– cooperating with the local authorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(not ‘cooperation with local authorities’)*
## 15. Foreign words and phrases

**Font style.** Foreign words and phrases used in an English text should be italicised (no inverted commas) and should have the appropriate accents.

There are some exceptions of words and phrases that are now in common use and are considered part of the English language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal names</th>
<th>Dürrenmatt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Quotations.** Place verbatim quotations in foreign languages in quotation marks without italicising the text.

On his visit to Beijing Mr Kohl announced: “Ich bin ein Pekinese”.

**Chinese.** The pinyin Romanisation system introduced by the People’s Republic in the 1950s has now become the internationally accepted standard. Important new spellings to note are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>(Peking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guangzhou</td>
<td>(Canton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing</td>
<td>(Nanking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinjiang</td>
<td>(Sinkiang)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spelling of ‘Shanghai’ remains the same.

**False Anglicisms.** Beware of false Anglicisms which crop up in some German texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beamer</td>
<td>projector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobbing</td>
<td>bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homepage</td>
<td>website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Startseite)</td>
<td>homepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>spa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy End</td>
<td>happy ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 16. Singular or plural

| Collective nouns. Use the singular form of the verb when the emphasis is on the whole entity. | The government is considering the matter.  
The Commission was not informed.  
Use the plural when the emphasis is on a group of individuals.  
The police have failed to trace the goods.  
A majority of the Committee were in favour. |
|---|---|
| **Countries and organisations with a plural name** take the singular form of the verb.  
Groups of islands take a plural verb.  
The United States is reconsidering its position.  
The United Nations was unable to reach agreement.  
The Bahamas lie off the coast of Florida. | |
| **Multiple subject.** Use a singular verb when a multiple subject clearly forms a whole.  
Checking and stamping the forms is the job of the customs authorities. | |
| **Words in –ics.** These are singular when used to denote a scientific discipline or body of knowledge (mathematics, statistics, economics) but plural in all other contexts.  
Economics is commonly regarded as a soft science.  
The economics of the new process were studied in depth. | |
| **A statistic.** The singular ‘statistic’ is a back-formation from the plural and means an individual item of data from a set of statistics. | |
| **Data** can be construed as an uncountable noun and so takes a singular verb.  
Little data is available to support the conclusions.  
Big data is a new phenomenon.  
However, in scientific, statistical and financial contexts, it is likely to be found with a plural verb.  
The data come a day after the vote on monetary policy. | |
| **None.** When followed by an uncountable noun, ‘none’ takes a singular verb. | None of the water is polluted.  
None of the money is missing. |
|---|---|
| Otherwise it can take a singular or plural verb, depending on the desired emphasis (specifically ‘not one’ or ‘not any’), and when qualified (‘almost none’, ‘none but a few’) it must take a plural verb. | None of us is perfect.  
Almost none of the members are going.  
None but a few were able to go. |
| **Decimal fractions and zero.** When referring to countable items, they take the plural form of the verb. | Swiss people eat on average 2.5 kilos of chocolate a year.  
It weighs zero pounds. |
| When an amount is referred to, the verb is in the singular, although the subject may be plural. | Half a kilo is too much.  
2.5 kilos is too little.  
There’s 20 francs on the table. |
| **Sums of money** take a singular verb. | CHF 50 million is a lot of money. |
17. Gender-neutral language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>General.</strong> Using gender-neutral formulations is more than a matter of political correctness. Some methods of achieving gender neutrality in English are more successful than others.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>He/she.</strong> Avoid the clumsy he/she etc., except in legal documents (contracts etc.) and perhaps in non-running text such as application forms.</td>
<td>Avoid: If a student fails his/her exam, he/she must change his/her major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generic she.</strong> Avoid alternating use of ‘he’ and ‘she’ in the same text. It comes across as arbitrary and can lead to confusion.</td>
<td>Avoid: Just as a stonemason building the ground floor of a medieval cathedral might aspire to its completion even if he knows that he will not personally be around to be involved in its completion, a practitioner who aspires that awakening will be achieved need not believe that she will be around to see it, but only hope that her own conduct and practice will facilitate that (The Case for ‘Soft Atheism’ by Gary Gutting, The New York Times, 15 May 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Singular they** and associated pronouns. Do not be afraid of using this well-established form in order to avoid the clumsy he/she etc. **If possible, make the subject plural as well,** even though it may be singular in the source text.

However, in contracts and similar documents the singular ‘they’ should be avoided.

“*She kept her head and kicked her shoes off, as everybody ought to do who falls into deep water in their clothes.*”
(C.S. Lewis, Voyage of the Dawn-Treader, 1952)

“I know when I like a person directly I see them!”
(Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out, 1915)

One student failed their exam. They then decided to change their major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Second person or imperative form.</strong> In some texts, for example in manuals or sets of instructions, it is more natural in English to address the reader directly using the second person or even the imperative form.</th>
<th>You should first turn on your computer. or First turn on your computer. and <strong>not</strong> The user should first turn on his/her computer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun forms. Use your judgement in choosing noun forms to emphasise or de-emphasise gender.</td>
<td>chairman, chairwoman, chairperson or chair flight attendants/cabin crew instead of air hostesses firefighters instead of firemen police officer instead of policeman or policewoman tradesperson instead of tradesman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For certain occupations a substitute for a gender-specific term is now commonly used to refer to a person working in those occupations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 18. Correspondence

**Drafting and translating outgoing letters.** Remember the basic pairs for opening and closing letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addressee unknown:</th>
<th>Addressee known:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear Sir or Madam or To whom it may concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yours faithfully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee known:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Mr/Ms/Dr Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yours sincerely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do <strong>not</strong> write: ‘Dear Sir ... Yours sincerely’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aide memoire:** you cannot put two s’s together.

If you address the correspondent by their first name in an informal communication such as an email, you can sign off with the following:

However, this should generally be avoided in formal letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layout. Contrary to most CD Bund letter templates, in English the person’s title does not appear on a separate line.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Bill de Blasio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, 10035 NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>not:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill de Blasio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kind regards or Best regards**
**19. Names and titles**

**Titles.** As a matter of courtesy, use Ms in English unless you know the person concerned prefers otherwise (e.g. Mrs for a woman who is married and has taken her husband’s surname). Note that the French Mme and German Frau are likewise courtesy titles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms – Mme – Frau</td>
<td>A Mme or Frau is not necessarily a Mrs (i.e. married)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Names.** Avoid the non-English practice of repeating the first name in running text. Wherever possible spell out the first name the first time round and use a title thereafter. Also avoid repeating lengthy titles.

See Section 13 on abbreviating names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simonetta Sommaruga (first mention) Ms Sommaruga (thereafter)</td>
<td>Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation (first mention) Mr Maurer (thereafter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foreign-language titles.** Avoid titles not customary in English, but note that if you use Mr or Ms, you must obviously be sure of the gender of the person in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dr. H. Schmidt</td>
<td>Prof. H. Schmidt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipl. Ing. W. Braun</td>
<td>Mr W. Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frau B. De Bruyn</td>
<td>Ms B. De Bruyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Reuter</td>
<td>Mr Reuter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Doctor.** The title Dr should be given when it appears in the original (except in combined titles, as above), regardless of whether the holder is a doctor of medicine or not.
*Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter/collaborateur scientifique* is a one-size-fits-all title given to federal employees which generally says very little about what the person actually does.

As there is no decent equivalent for this catch-all term in English, it is worth checking with the client to find out what the person’s role entails.

In many cases, the descriptor could be left out entirely when the section/department clearly indicates the nature of the work.

In the Federal Office of Justice this person may be a ‘legal consultant’; in the Federal Statistical Office, a ‘data research specialist’, etc.

The FDFA frequently uses ‘desk officer’. A possible catch-all in English could be some sort of ‘officer’.

Kenneth MacKenzie, Terminology Section
# 20. Names of bodies

**Official names.** If a body, for example an international organisation, has an official name in English, always use that. If it does not, follow the tips below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Organisation for Animal Health (rather than Organisation Mondiale de la Santé Animale)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proper names.** If the name is essentially a proper name, such as a company name, leave it in the original form. However, at the first mention it may sometimes be useful to include an ad hoc or previously used translation or to give an explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The company’s name had by now been changed from Pfaffenhofener Würstli (Pfaffenhofen Sausages) to Bayrische Spezialitäten (Bavarian Specialties).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Freiburger Wanderverein (a local Swiss hiking association) offers activities year round.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Familiar foreign names.** If a body’s original language name is familiar to the intended readership, or the body uses it in its own English texts, use that rather than a translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UBS has issued a strict dress code guide to staff in Switzerland. Médecins Sans Frontières has long been active in this region.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## 21. Swiss political system

**The Confederation.** Switzerland is officially known as ‘the Swiss Confederation’. This name appears in international agreements, on the Swiss passport etc.

The federal state authorities are usually referred to as ‘the Confederation’.

The term ‘federal government’ may also be used, particularly when specifying its role.

**Federal Council.** The Swiss government comprises the seven members of the Federal Council.

The Federal Council is the highest executive authority of the country.

**Bundespräsident/Président de la Confédération** are translated as President of the Swiss Confederation.

This title is not, however, used in conjunction with a name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Confederation.</strong> Switzerland is officially known as ‘the Swiss Confederation’. This name appears in international agreements, on the Swiss passport etc.</th>
<th>Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on the Carriage of Goods and Passengers by Rail and Road.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The federal state authorities are usually referred to as ‘the Confederation’.</td>
<td>There are three levels of state: the Confederation, cantons and communes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term ‘federal government’ may also be used, particularly when specifying its role.</td>
<td>The federal government finances road construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal Council.</strong> The Swiss government comprises the seven members of the Federal Council. The Federal Council is the highest executive authority of the country.</td>
<td><strong>DE/FR:</strong> Bundesrat/Counseil fédéral <strong>EN:</strong> Federal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE/FR:</strong> die Exekutive/le pouvoir exécutif <strong>EN:</strong> the executive</td>
<td><strong>DE/FR:</strong> die Schweizer Regierung/le gouvernement suisse <strong>EN:</strong> the Swiss government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bundespräsident/Président de la Confédération</strong> are translated as President of the Swiss Confederation.</td>
<td>Bundespräsident Maurer/le Président de la Confédération Maurer is translated as: First use: the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr Ueli Maurer, today met his Turkish counterpart ... Thereafter: Mr Maurer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Swiss government titles.** These titles frequently appear in texts and are translated as follows:

When not used as a title, they should be lower case (see Section 3 on capitalisation)

Avoid ‘National Councillor’ etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DE/FR</th>
<th>EN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bundesrat/Conseiller fédéral</td>
<td>Federal Councillor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundeskanzlerin/Chancelière de la Confédération</td>
<td>Federal Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vizekanzler/Vice-chancelier</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ständerat/Conseiller aux États</td>
<td>Member of the Council of States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalrat/Conseiller national</td>
<td>Member of the National Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Federal bodies.** English titles exist for most federal agencies/offices. These are listed in Annex 2 and can also be found in TERMDAT and ‘The Swiss Confederation. A Brief Guide’.

After the first mention, the full name may also be shortened if there is no risk of confusion.
Parliament. Switzerland has a bicameral parliament: the National Council and the Council of States, which together constitute the Federal Assembly. The two chambers have equal status; there is no ‘upper’ or ‘lower’ house.
The National Council represents the general electorate.
The Council of States represents the cantons.

When sitting in joint session (to elect members of the Federal Council) it sits as the United Federal Assembly.

Swiss political parties. A list of the main Swiss political parties can be found in Annex 3.

References to Parliament:

The Federal Assembly

The Swiss parliament

but avoid ‘Swiss Federal Assembly’
**Courts.** The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court in Switzerland. There are three federal courts of first instance.

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<tr>
<th>DE/FR: die Justiz/la Justice</th>
<th>EN: The judiciary</th>
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<tr>
<td>DE/FR: Bundesgericht/Tribunal fédéral</td>
<td>EN: Federal Supreme Court</td>
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<td>DE/FR: höchste richterliche Instanz/ autorité judiciaire suprême</td>
<td>EN: highest judicial authority</td>
</tr>
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<td>DE/FR: das Bundesstrafgericht/ le Tribunal pénal fédéral</td>
<td>EN: The Federal Criminal Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE/FR: das Bundesverwaltungsgericht/ le Tribunal administratif fédéral</td>
<td>EN: The Federal Administrative Court</td>
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**Committees and commissions.** A distinction is made between parliamentary committees and extra-parliamentary commissions. The names of the parliamentary committees are listed in Annex 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary committees</th>
<th>Extra-parliamentary commissions (these do not all have established titles in English).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
# 22. Swiss legislation

A large selection of English translations of Swiss legislation is available on the Federal Administration website (www.admin.ch). The collection is steadily being expanded and updated. The following remarks provide some general advice on how to translate Swiss legislative texts. The examples are given in German and English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard titles. Most titles of federal legislation are available in English in the Federal Administration terminology database, TERMDAT. They follow the rules shown in the examples on the right. However, titles cited on some Federal Administration websites and on external sites may not follow these rules.</th>
<th>Examples of standard titles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Do not use ‘Federal Law on ...’ | Bundesgesetz  
Federal Act of 1 January 2005 on ...  
Verordnung  
Ordinance of 1 January 2005 on ...  
Bundesbeschluss  
Federal Decree of 1 January 2005 on ...  
Bundesratsbeschluss  
Federal Council Decree of 1 January 2005 on ...  
Botschaft des Bundesrates  
Federal Council Dispatch on ... |
Article, paragraph etc. Use the following translations and abbreviations:

Note that there are no commas inserted.

Also note that the abbreviated form and its reference in the *Classified Compilation of Federal Legislation (SR number)* immediately follow the citation in brackets.

Where reference is made to an article or paragraph in the body of the text, then the word ‘Article’ is not abbreviated. If the reference is made in brackets after the main text, then the abbreviated form is used.

Amended by No 1 of the Ordinance of 30 June 2010

Art. 11 para. 1 let. b BO

under Art. 4 para. 1 let. b of the Collective Investment Schemes Ordinance (CISO; SR 951.311).

This issue is addressed in Article 10.

The draft Federal CET Act implements the constitutional mandate on CET (Art. 65a of the Federal Constitution).
23. Translating Swiss legislation

| **Disclaimer.** Translations begin with the following disclaimer: | English is not an official language of the Swiss Confederation. This translation is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force. |
| Acts and ordinances generally start and end in the same way, first of all with the title, a short title, an abbreviation of the title, and a date. If the law has no short title or abbreviation in the Swiss languages, omit these in English too. | Federal Act on Gender Equality (Gender Equality Act, GEA) of 24 March 1995 (Status as of 18 April 2006) |
| In running text, the full title is usually cited as: Act of [date] on [topic]. | The Federal Act of 24 March 1995 on Gender Equality. |
| **Preamble.** Below the dates there is a ‘preamble’, which normally takes a standard form, citing the legislation that forms the basis for the act or ordinance in question. | The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, based on the Articles 4 paragraph 2, 34ter paragraph 1 letter a, 64 and 85 section 3 of the Federal Constitution¹, and having considered the Federal Council Dispatch dated 24 February 1993², decrees: |
| The preamble ends with the ‘verb’: in acts this is ‘decrees’ and in ordinances ‘ordains’. | Section 7: Criminal Provisions |
| The **key words** in main headings are in upper case. In article headings, only the first word is in upper case. | Art. 37 Violation of the duty to report |

¹ [BS 1 3; AS 1981 1243]
² BBl 1993 I 1248
Don’t add explanatory text or footnotes to your translation, even if the source text appears badly written or unclear. On the other hand, feel free to leave out words that add little or nothing to the sense. For example, the German adjectives ‘zuständig’, ‘verantwortlich’, ‘entsprechend’, ‘betreffend’, etc. often appear simply to be making weight.

**Final provisions.** Most legislative texts end with their ‘Final Provisions’. Here again the wording is fairly standard.

Note that the UK legislative terms ‘commencement’ and ‘come into force’ are generally preferred to the more cumbersome ‘entry/enter into force’.

---

**Chapter 7: Final Provisions**

**Art. 33** Implementing provisions

1. The Federal Council shall enact the implementing provisions.

2. It may assign implementation responsibilities to the cantons or to private legal entities.

3. It may delegate administrative responsibilities in the area of host state policy to private legal entities.

**Art. 34** Repeal and amendment of current legislation

The repeal and amendment of the current legislation is regulated in the Annex.

... 

**Art. 173** Transitional provisions

1. *Transitional provision relating to Art. 13 (Disciplinary measures)*

   Article 13 applies to infringements that are committed after this Act comes into force.
**Art. 36** Referendum and commencement

1. This Act is subject to an optional referendum.
2. The Federal Council shall determine the commencement date.

Commencement date: 1 January 2008

---

**Be careful of archaic vocabulary** never heard in modern everyday life, nor seen in any of your other translations, however formal. English translations of Swiss laws favour ‘in accordance with’ or ‘under’ rather than ‘according to’ or ‘pursuant to’, as they have a lower risk of ambiguity.

‘Hereby’ is usually unnecessary, and ‘hereto’, ‘therefrom’, ‘therefor’, etc. are also archaic, although they are often the neatest solution to a translation difficulty. ‘On’ should be preferred to ‘upon’.

If the disinherited person challenges the disinheritance on the grounds that the reason therefor is incorrect, any heir or legatee wishing to benefit from the disinher- itance must prove that the reason is correct. (CC Art. 479)

If the testator makes a will without expressly revoking a previous will, the later will supersedes the earlier unless it is manifestly no more than a codicil thereto. (CC Art. 511)

No rights of private ownership apply to public waters or to land not suitable for cultivation, such as rocks and scree, firn and glaciers, or to springs rising therefrom, unless proof to the contrary is produced. (CC Art. 664)

---

**Often **Article 2 or 3** contains a list of definitions. Here a fairly standard style used in the UK is recommended, rather than attempting to follow the original.**

**Art. 3** Definitions

In this Act:

a. Foreign national means ...
Many acts contain *criminal provisions*, which are generally worded in a similar style and structure.

Swiss law still makes reference to different categories of crime.

The principal penalties are a custodial sentence, a monetary penalty made up of daily penalty units and the fine.

Offences may be committed wilfully or through negligence. Most serious offences are prosecuted ex officio, while less serious offences are prosecuted on complaint.

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<tr>
<td>vorsätzlich</td>
<td>committed wilfully</td>
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<tr>
<td>fahrlässig</td>
<td>through negligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offizialdelikt</td>
<td>serious offence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auf Antrag</td>
<td>on complaint</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

---

## 24. Use of modal verbs

Swiss legislative texts in German use a variety of verb forms to convey the idea of obligation.

| Use ‘must do’ to translate ‘muss machen’, ‘hat zu machen’ and ‘ist zu machen’ forms. | […] so stellt die Behörde ihre Mitteilungen der von der asylsuchenden Person zuerst bezeichneten bevollmächtigten Person zu. |
| Where the German text uses a **present tense** but appears to impose an obligation (i.e. if it would make sense to use ‘must’ in the English version of the sentence), you can use ‘shall’ in English. | […] the authority shall address its communications to the first agent authorised by the asylum seeker. (Article 12, Asylum Act) |
| **Don’t use ‘shall’** where the Swiss text uses ‘muss’ or ‘kann’. | **1** Dieses Gesetz findet keine Anwendung auf Tatsachen und Beschwerden, die sich auf Wahlen und Abstimmungen vor seinem Inkrafttreten beziehen. |
| **Don’t use ‘shall’** when simply stating a fact. | **1** This Act does not apply to any matters or appeals that relate to elections or popular votes that have taken place prior to its coming into force. |
Be careful with the verb ‘können’; it is normally translated as ‘may’ (not ‘can’) in legislative texts as it expresses permission or a discretionary power. On rare occasions, it expresses ability, and so is translated as ‘can’.

4 Bei Einanlegerfonds können die Fondsleitung und die SICAV die Anlageentscheide an die einzige Anlegerin oder an den einzigen Anleger delegieren.

4 In the case of single investor funds, the fund management company and the SICAV may delegate the investment decisions to the single investor.

1 Die Fondsleitung und die SICAV dürfen Geschäfte mit Derivaten tätigen, sofern:

[...]  
c. die mit der Abwicklung und der Überwachung betrauten Personen qualifiziert sind und die Wirkungsweise der eingesetzten Derivate jederzeit verstehen und nachvollziehen können.

1 The fund management company and the SICAV may conduct transactions in derivatives provided:

[...]  
c. the persons entrusted with processing and monitoring are qualified to do so, and can at all times comprehend and track the effect of the derivatives used.

Footnotes also follow a fairly standard pattern.

Fassung gemäß Anhang Ziff.  
Amended by Annex No

in Kraft seit  
In force since
Aufgehoben durch  
Repealed by
Eingefügt durch  
Inserted by
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<td>statistics, singular or plural 47</td>
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<td>Swiss franc: centime 34</td>
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<td>punctuation 32</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>towns 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>truncations 41, 43</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


| U   | under way                       | 22 |
|     | United Kingdom                  | 16 |
|     | units of measurement: figures or words | 31 |
|     | spacing with numbers            | 32 |
| V   | valleys                         | 18 |
|     | Vice Chancellor                 | 56 |
| W   | wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter  | 53 |
| Y   | years, prepositions and conjunctions | 38 |
|     | -yse                            | 7  |
| Z   | zero, singular or plural        | 48 |
This part of the Style Guide provides some examples of translation challenges we face on a daily basis and suggestions on how to deal with them, in order to produce even better translations. They are presented in no particular order.

When translating, it is worth reminding ourselves over and again of the points below.

Many of these ideas are taken from the European Commission document ‘How to write clearly’. Other examples are taken from various Federal Administration documents translated by the Federal Chancellery English Service.
Clear up the text

Don’t be afraid to make changes in order to improve the source text:

Do not repeat dates unnecessarily (e.g. stating current year).

La stratégie constitue en outre une contribution importante de la Suisse à la Conférence de l’ONU sur le développement durable, qui aura lieu à Rio de Janeiro en juin 2012.

The strategy also forms an important contribution by Switzerland to the UN summit on sustainable development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June this year (if we are in 2012).

If an abbreviation is used, make sure this is written out in full the FIRST time it is used, and use the abbreviation thereafter. If the organisation, scheme etc. is only mentioned once in the text, an abbreviation may not be necessary.


For practical reasons, this meeting will take place on 2 May 2012 (1–3 pm) in Leipzig, during the International Transport Forum (ITF) in the Congress Centrum Leipzig (CCL) building… Although our meeting will be a side event to the ITF/OECD…

Be aware that the source text may contain redundant words which do not require translation; this may be because loan words are used side-by-side with words of Germanic origin:

‘die resultierenden Ergebnisse’
‘Events und Ereignisse’ (it may be necessary to establish whether the author is actually referring to two different concepts which appear the same in English or if this repetition is just for stylistic purposes).
**Avoid ambiguity**

Use one term to refer to one concept. You may find that the author of the source text has not kept to this rule.

**Do not use the same word to refer to different things:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>![Warning Icon]</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Checkmark Icon]</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ![Warning Icon] You must hand in your application by Tuesday. You may also submit an application for this deadline to be postponed. Your application ... *(what are we talking about now?)*
- ![Checkmark Icon] You must hand in your application by Tuesday. You may also ask for the deadline to be postponed. Your application...

**Do not use different words to refer to the same thing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>![Warning Icon]</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Checkmark Icon]</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ![Warning Icon] You must hand in your application by Tuesday. The committee may turn down your request. *(i.e. your application – or is it?)*
- ![Checkmark Icon] You must hand in your application by Tuesday. The committee may turn it down...

Be aware that French frequently uses synonyms for stylistic purposes; this may be inappropriate and lead to confusion in English.

**Also, where appropriate, use the positive rather than the negative form, even if the author has not done so:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>![Warning Icon]</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Checkmark Icon]</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ![Warning Icon] It is not uncommon for applications to be rejected, so do not complain unless you are sure you have not completed yours incorrectly.
- ![Checkmark Icon] It is quite common for applications to be rejected, so complain only if you are sure you have completed yours correctly.

*(Examples taken from EU Commission’s ‘How to write clearly’.*
Use verbs rather than nouns

„Die Zulässigkeit der Berücksichtigung der Unkenntnis der Tatsache der Existenz einer solchen Verordnung ist vom Gesetz nirgends versagt.“

Be aware that NOUNS are used a lot more in German and French than in English. Where possible, consider using a VERB:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German Verb</th>
<th>English Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>durch die Anwendung von</td>
<td>by using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eine Überprüfung durchführen</td>
<td>to review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eine Verbesserung bewirken</td>
<td>to improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example:

…avec *le retrait annoncé* de la Présidente de la Confédération, Micheline Calmy-Rey…

Since the President of the Confederation, Micheline Calmy-Rey, *announced her resignation*…

or

*Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt der Konferenz in Durban wird die *finanzielle Unterstützung der Umsetzung* der Klimamassnahmen in Entwicklungsländern sein.*

The Durban conference will also focus on *financial mechanisms to help implement* climate protection measures in developing countries.

etc.
Be active, not passive

In a similar vein, the active voice is more common than the passive voice.

⚠️ A recommendation was made by the European Parliament that consideration be given by the Member States to a simplification of the procedure.

✅ The European Parliament recommended that the Member States consider simplifying the procedure.

In the second example, the passive voice has been replaced by the active and the nouns by verbs, making the sentence more direct and clear.

HOWEVER, if the agent is not clear, it may not be possible to turn a German or French passive into the active voice in English.

Avoid the abstract

German especially has a tendency to be more abstract than English. When translating it may be necessary to add information to make a general term more specific. If in doubt, consult the client.

Be gender neutral

In most cases it is possible to use a plural noun so as to avoid the he/she conundrum.

⚠️ So wird der Leser angeregt, seine eigene Meinung zu bilden.

✅ This will encourage readers to form their own opinion.

(If you do this consistently, make sure you DON’T translate sentences such as the following that may appear at the beginning or end of a document:
 „Aus Gründen der besseren Lesbarkeit haben wir z. T. auf die Nennung der männlichen und weiblichen Form verzichtet. Es sind selbstverständlich immer beide Geschlechter gemeint.“)
Address the reader
In informative texts, e.g. manuals or websites, in English it is more common to address the reader directly. This often means replacing a German or French passive or impersonal form with an active form using ‘you’.

Zuerst schaltet der Benutzer den Computer ein.

First turn on your computer.

Um die Ehe schliessen zu können, müssen die Brautleute die gesetzlich vorgesehenen Voraussetzungen erfüllen.

In order to get married, you must meet the following legal requirements: (from www.ch.ch)

Syntax
Subject first
Standard English word order is subject-verb-object. Make sure your English sentence reads naturally by putting the subject at or reasonably near the beginning.

Compare:

Mit Mitteln für den Schweizerischen Nationalfonds, die Akademien, Forschungsinstitutionen ausserhalb des Hochschulbereichs, die Mitgliedschaft der Schweiz in internationalen Forschungsorganisationen und die Zusammenarbeit in internationalen Wissenschaftsprogrammen investiert das SBFI in die Qualität des Forschungsplatzes Schweiz.

SERI invests in the quality of Switzerland as a research location with resources for the Swiss National Science Foundation, academies, non-university research institutions, Switzerland’s memberships in international research organisations and cooperation in international scientific programmes.

And of course, don’t be afraid to split long sentences into two or even three in English.
## Annex 1 Topography

### Cantons and Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>ITALIAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Argovie</td>
<td>Argovia</td>
<td>Aargau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appenzell Ausser-rhoden</td>
<td>Appenzell Rhodes-Extérieures</td>
<td>Appenzello Esterno rhoden</td>
<td>Appenzell Ausser-rhoden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appenzell Inner-rhoden</td>
<td>Appenzell Rhodes-Intérieures</td>
<td>Appenzello Interno rhoden</td>
<td>Appenzell Inner-rhoden</td>
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<td>Basel-Landschaft</td>
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<td>Basilea Campagna</td>
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<td>Basilea Città</td>
<td>Basel-Stadt</td>
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<td>Solothurn</td>
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### Lakes

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<td>Bodensee</td>
<td>Lac de Constance</td>
<td>Lago di Costanza</td>
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<td>Genfersee</td>
<td>Lac Léman</td>
<td>Lago Lemano</td>
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<td>Langensee</td>
<td>Lac Majeur</td>
<td>Lago Maggiore</td>
<td>Lake Maggiore</td>
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<td>Luganersee</td>
<td>Lac de Lugano</td>
<td>Lago di Lugano</td>
<td>Lake Lugano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuenburgersee</td>
<td>Lac de Neuchâtel</td>
<td>Lago di Neuchâtel</td>
<td>Lake Neuchâtel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vierwaldstättersee</td>
<td>Lac de Lucerne</td>
<td>Lago dei Quattro Cantoni</td>
<td>Lake Lucerne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zürichsee</td>
<td>Lac de Zurich</td>
<td>Lago di Zurigo</td>
<td>Lake Zurich</td>
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### Regions

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<th>ENGLISH</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Alpennordhang</td>
<td>versant nord des Alpes</td>
<td>pendio nordalpino</td>
<td>northern Alps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpennordseite</td>
<td>Nord des Alpes</td>
<td>Nord delle Alpi; versante alpino settentrionale</td>
<td>(area) north of the Alps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berner Oberland</td>
<td>l'Oberland bernois</td>
<td>Oberland bernese</td>
<td>Bernese Oberland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutschschweiz</td>
<td>Suisse alémanique</td>
<td>Svizzera tedesca</td>
<td>German-speaking part of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engadin</td>
<td>Engadine</td>
<td>Engadina</td>
<td>Engadine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genferseebogen</td>
<td>arc/région lémanique</td>
<td>Arco lemanico</td>
<td>Lake Geneva region</td>
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<tr>
<td>italienische Schweiz</td>
<td>Suisse italienne</td>
<td>Svizzera italiana</td>
<td>Italian-speaking part of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die lateinische Schweiz</td>
<td>Suisse latine</td>
<td>Svizzera latina</td>
<td>French-, Italian- and Romansh-speaking parts of Switzerland</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mittelland, Flachland</td>
<td>Plateau suisse</td>
<td>Altopiano svizzero</td>
<td>Swiss Plateau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordwestschweiz</td>
<td>Suisse du Nord-Ouest</td>
<td>Svizzera nordoccidentale</td>
<td>north-western Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberwallis</td>
<td>Haut-Valais</td>
<td>Alto Vallese</td>
<td>Upper Valais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostschweiz</td>
<td>Suisse orientale</td>
<td>Svizzera orientale</td>
<td>eastern Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romandie; Westschweiz: französische Schweiz</td>
<td>Romandie; Suisse romande</td>
<td>Romandia; Svizzera romanda; Svizzera francese</td>
<td>French-speaking part of Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rüti</td>
<td>Grütli</td>
<td>Rütli</td>
<td>Rüti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeland</td>
<td>le Seeland</td>
<td>il Seeland</td>
<td>Seeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unterwallis</td>
<td>Bas-Valais</td>
<td>Basso Vallese</td>
<td>Lower Valais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voralpen, Alpenvorland</td>
<td>les préalpes</td>
<td>le Prealpi</td>
<td>Alpine foothills; foothills of the Alps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zentralschweiz, Innerschweiz</td>
<td>Suisse centrale</td>
<td>Svizzera centrale</td>
<td>central Switzerland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Valleys (keep original name)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>ITALIAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diemtigtal</td>
<td>Val de Travers</td>
<td>Valle di Maggia</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annex 2  Federal Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GERMAN</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>ITALIAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft</td>
<td>Confédération suisse</td>
<td>Confederazione Svizzera</td>
<td>Swiss Confederation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundesrat BR</td>
<td>Conseil fédéral CF</td>
<td>Consiglio federale</td>
<td>Federal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundesrat, Bundesrätin</td>
<td>conseiller/ère fédéral/e</td>
<td>consigliere/a federale</td>
<td>Federal Councillor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundespräsident/in des Bundesrates</td>
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<td>Dipartimento federale della difesa, della protezione della popolazione e dello sport</td>
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