



The National Archives

# **Editorial Guidelines**

Information Management and Practice Department  
March 2009

These *Editorial Guidelines* are for the use of staff in government departments who catalogue records for transfer to The National Archives. They are a quick reference tool concentrating on the style of the information supplied for each record rather than its content. As well as examples of the general style of descriptions, there is guidance on punctuation, spelling, plurals, acronyms and abbreviations, and the preferred citation of personal and place names and corporate bodies. By following these guidelines staff will ensure that their catalogue lists are authoritative, self-explanatory and consistent.

An electronic version of these *Editorial Guidelines*, the full guide to cataloguing, a transfer form and cataloguing templates are available from the website below.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/advice/cataloguing.htm>

For advice and training on cataloguing records for TNA contact your IMA or email [informationmanagement@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:informationmanagement@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

## Contents

Former Reference	4
First Date and Last Date	4
Scope Content:	5
Punctuation	5
Upper case	5
Lower case	6
Acts, Bills, Orders and Directives	6
Committees	6
Publications and reports	7
Personal names	7
UK place names	7
Foreign place names	8
Abbreviations and acronyms	8
Dates (in scope content)	9
Special characters	9

### Former Ref

<b>Rule</b>	<b>Example</b>
Keep spacing, punctuation and capitalisation consistent.	1/DRR/600/68
When a file is in parts or volumes put a space between the letters and numbers and put PART in capital letters. If a file is labelled as an annex include this in the field.	COM 2 COM 9 COM 19 PART A COM 19 PART B COM 19 ANNEX
When a file includes an earlier annexed file add the reference in brackets followed by the word annexed.	COM 20 PART 1 (DOM 222 annexed)

### First Date and Last Date

<b>Rule</b>	<b>Example</b>
Use zeros to meet format dd/mm/yyyy.	01/01/1970 (First Date) 31/12/1970 (Last Date)
When the date of a file cannot be estimated Undated should be used.	Undated

## Scope/Content

General formatting rules: do *not* use bold, italics, underlining, tabs, paragraphs, line breaks or page breaks, superscript or subscript, Greek letters or other unusual scripts.

**Avoid verbs where possible:** for example write ‘Police investigations of...’ rather than ‘The police investigated...’

**Avoid internal jargon:** over time the meanings may change or be forgotten and anyone not working in the department will not understand them.

Subject	Rule	Example
Punctuation	<p>In the natural language format of description use normal English punctuation.</p> <p>If using the keyword format of description a colon should follow the first element and semi-colons between subsequent phrases.</p> <p>Do not use a fullstop at the end of the description.</p>	<p>Security measures at the Bank of England, including alleged failures of security (natural language)</p> <p>Bank of England: security measures; alleged failures of security (keyword order)</p> <p>Anti-riot equipment: baton rounds and water cannon; Northern Ireland Office request to test riot control equipment; sale of equipment</p>
Upper case	Normal English usage, i.e. upper case initial for the first word in the scope content and any proper nouns, including people (and any titles), places, ships, corporate bodies, events, political, economic or period labels, titles of publications and reports, committees and acts.	<p>General de Gaulle</p> <p>New York</p> <p>HMS Valiant</p> <p>House of Lords</p> <p>The Industrial Revolution</p> <p>River Thames</p> <p>Prime Minister</p>

Subject	Rule	Example
		Edwardian New Forest French Tories ‘The Times’ Barry Jackson, US Ambassador, London ‘A Report on Human Resources in the NHS’ Committee on Financing the BBC Industrial Relations Act 1971
Lower case	Normal English usage, i.e. lower case should be used for non-specific group titles, general usage of the terms or generic use of titles or positions unless the positions are specific or there is a possibility of confusion.	socialists puritans governments rural district councils foreign ambassadors Kings of England (but medieval kings) US Ambassadors Chinese Secretaries (not secretaries of Chinese nationality) Home Secretaries (not secretaries working from home)
Acts, Bills, Orders and Directives	Legislation must be cited accurately and include the date of the Act or the Directive’s reference.	Road Traffic (Foreign Vehicles) Act 1972  Draft consultative document on proposed Health and Safety regulations to implement the EEC framework directive on pressure vessels (76/767/EEC)
Committees	The official or formal version should be given and if the committee was referred to by the Chairperson’s	Peacock Committee on Financing the BBC, <i>or</i>

Subject	Rule	Example
	name this should be included.	Committee on Financing the BBC (Peacock Committee): minutes of meetings 1-5
Publications and reports	Single quotation marks should be used around the name of the publication when it is useful to distinguish it from the rest of the description.	Security wings in prisons: internal discussions about press requests for further visits; articles by Norman Fowler, in capacity as Home Affairs correspondent of 'The Times'
	When possible the Command Paper number should be added in brackets after the name of White Paper. Be sure to use the correct Command Paper series (e.g. Cmd (for papers between 1919-1955/6) and (Cmnd for 1956/7-1985/86).	Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Normansfield Hospital (Cmnd 7357)
Personal names	<p>For case files: if an individual is the named subject of a record put the full name where known with the surname in upper case. Use initials if the full name is not known (see Abbreviations and acronyms).</p> <p>For all other files: when a name is worth including use normal capitalisation and add the person's post to help researchers understand the significance of the description.</p>	<p>John UNDERWOOD. Born Shiffnal, Shropshire. Served in 3rd Dragoon Guards. Discharged aged 41</p> <p>Confidential report on the coal industry in Great Britain to Sir Robert Louis Samuel, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Coal Industry</p>
UK place names	Place names should be written in their standard modern English spelling and most should be located to county or country. Exceptions to this are UK towns and cities that give their names to	<p>Southend-on-Sea, Essex</p> <p>Doncaster, South Yorkshire</p> <p>Durham</p> <p>London</p>

Subject	Rule	Example
	<p>counties or are large and well-known. See <i>Guidance</i> for a complete list of exceptions<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>County names should be given in full and should be contemporaneous with the record.</p>	<p>Nottingham Newcastle-upon-Tyne</p> <p>County Durham County Antrim Grinsdale, Cumberland (before 1974) Grinsdale, Cumbria (from 1974)</p>
Foreign place names	<p>Foreign place names should be written in their standard modern English spelling, identified to country and contemporaneous with the record.</p> <p>Exceptions to this rule are capital cities and areas that cross national boundaries.</p> <p>Country names should be given in full with some exceptions.</p>	<p>Munich, West Germany Zomba, Malawi Southern Rhodesia (1964-1980) Zimbabwe (1980 to present)</p> <p>Paris The Alps</p> <p>United Arab Emirates UK USSR USA or US (as in US Air Force)</p>
Abbreviations and acronyms	<p>Expand abbreviations and acronyms except for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any acronym which is used as the official name of the organisation - check the organisation's letterheads</li> <li>• Common abbreviations and acronyms for forms of address and for honours, titles, awards and qualifications</li> </ul>	<p>BBC IBM Mr Dr Rev HM the Queen The Hon Brig</p>

<sup>1</sup> TNA Guidance to Government Departments on Cataloguing Conventional Records (January 2008)

Subject	Rule	Example
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific abbreviations where the acronym is more commonly known</li> <li>• Ships categories</li> <li>• Money, weights and measures should have no space between the numbers and letters</li> <li>• Numbers in millions should have 'million' in words</li> </ul>	<p>OBE  MA  BSE  AIDS  HMS  60cm  3ft 6ins  16cwt  2lb 3oz  250g  £199 19s 11d  10/-  £120,000  £3.5 million</p>
	<p>If both the acronym and the full version might be useful search terms put them both. Write the full version first and then the acronym in brackets.</p>	<p>Commercial Fast Reactor (CFR)  London Underground Limited (LUL)</p>
	<p>Do not use full stops and spaces in abbreviations and acronyms. However, use spaces but not stops when giving a person's initials.</p>	<p>BBC (not B.B.C. or B B C)  P B Kershaw</p>
<p>Dates (in scope content only)</p>	<p>Single dates should be in the format: date month (in full) year. Do not use ordinals (e.g. 1st, 23rd, 18th).</p>	<p>23 March 1973</p>
	<p>When a period ends in the same month, the days (without days of the week) should be separated by a hyphen. If days of the week are included use words.</p>	<p>2-6 May 1636  Monday 2 to Friday 6 May 1636</p>
<p>Special characters</p>	<p>Use an ampersand (&amp;) only when it is part of an official name.</p>	<p>P&amp;O Ferries  Cable &amp; Wireless</p>

