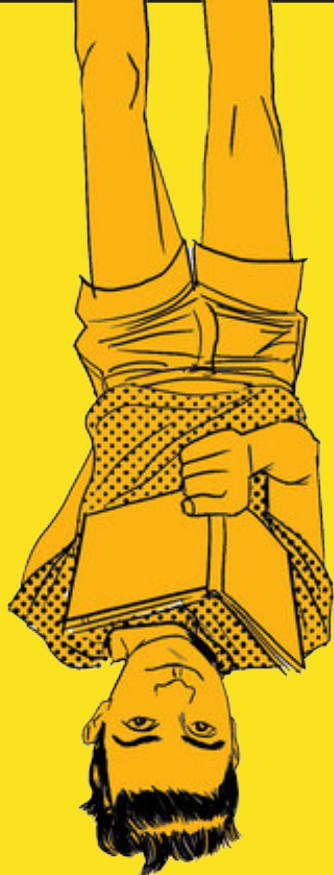




PRATHAM BOOKS



Style



Guide

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Note: Follow the rules —
unless they will get in the
reader's way.



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Indian/UK English

Colour, not color; dialogue not dialog, neighbour, not neighbor. Focused, not focussed. Archaeologist. Encyclopaedia. Foetus.

Pay attention to usage and idiom: a product may be free, not “for free”. The latter is an Americanism.

Jam, not jelly. Compound or garden, not yard. Things need not “suck” to be unsatisfactory. “Whatever” is not interchangeable with “I don’t care.”



Keep your cultural antennae extended.

Note: Many Americanisms are in wide use. With some authors, their use becomes a habit or tic. How to handle such occurrences is up to the editor. This Guide recommends that you keep **context and readership** in mind. If the Americanism is organic to context, you may choose to let it stand. The measures of this would be:

- The character is American, wishes to speak like an American, or is being self-consciously “cool”.
- The author clearly is aware of the provenance and cultural intensity of the word or phrase used.
- The use contributes to the reader’s experience *and* understanding of the story.

Many are so common that we editors may fail to spot them.

This crowd-sourced list from the BBC is useful, though probably out of date:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-14201796>

But don’t miss this (mostly for fun):

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-americanism-words-1688984>

Z-spellings



Realize,
scandalize

But: analyse,
arise,
devise,
surprise

Cosy (Ind/UK), *not* cozy (US)

Note: In the case of titles of organizations, always use the official spelling, regardless of the Z-spellings rule. In case of doubt, check the official website of the organization for the official spelling.

Pagination

Rectos, odd-numbered

Versos, even-numbered

Arabic numerals throughout: 1, 2, 3, 4...

The title page is page 1.

If a page has only an illustration or illustrations, or is intentionally left blank, you may omit the page number. If there is any text on the page, do use the page number. Ideally at least one of a pair of facing pages should carry a page number.



Numbers

One to ten spelled out
11 onwards in Arabic numerals

Commas: 1,00,000 elephants, not 100,000 elephants.

If a number is at the beginning of a sentence, it is always spelled out. Even years:

Nineteen eighty-six was a long, long year.

Percentage

Avoid where possible.

One alternative is **fractions**: one out of seven, three out of five

Per cent is two words.

What percentage of Indians are South Indian? About 20 per cent, or one in five Indians.

Time

Time can be shown in numbers or words.

For each book, pick one system and keep it consistent.

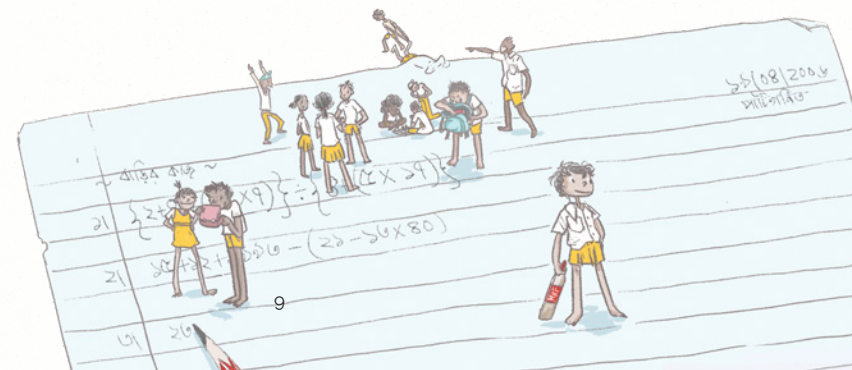
(See instructions for each reading level, below.)

Money

Re1, Rs2, Rs34, Rs5,678.90, Rs12,34,56,789. No word space between currency symbol and value. (See, however, instructions for Level 1 and Level 2, below.)

Stick to rupees, as far as possible. For other currencies, where unavoidable, use the symbol: \$12, £34. At first occurrence, however, spell the currency's name out fully, and identify the country it is associated with.

Chacha gave Mukund 12 British pounds in new, green notes. Baba said that £12 was equal to Rs1,200. Mukund felt very, very rich.



Lakhs and crores. Format: Rs12 lakh, Rs34 crore. Single word space between number and unit. The following examples are styled for Level 1 and 2, but could apply to Level 3 as well.

“Amma’s new car has five doors,” Latha thought to herself, “and she paid five lakh rupees for it.”

A new science lab, the school principal said, would cost two crore rupees. That’s almost as many rupees as there are people in Mumbai.

Styled for Level 4:

A new science lab, the school principal said, would cost Rs2 crore. (That’s two followed by seven zeroes: 2,00,00,000.)



Range

These instructions pertain to numerical range when not presented in natural language.

Breakfast time at the school canteen is 7–8am, lunch is 12noon–1pm, tea is 4:30–5pm and dinner is 7:30–8:30pm.

(For times, see instructions for each reading level, below.)

Abbu whistled shrilly, and 20–25 cows came lumbering up.

The librarian said, “Of all these books, 60–70 per cent are about cats.”

The price of rubber slippers is Rs150–Rs350 per pair.



Subheads



Upper/lower capitalization throughout:
How Do Invertebrates Manage without Bones?

Single quotes only:
Where Is the Eager Eater's Secret Stash of 'Pumpkin Mash'?

A-level head:
A Note on Feeding Neighbourhood Animals

B-level head:
Foods that dogs should not eat

You can differentiate B-level heads by using a smaller font size and initial capitals only.

(For more rules on capitalization, see [Titles and Capitalization](#), below.)

Quotation marks

Use quotation marks [‘ ’ “ ”]
never primes [' or "].

Double quotes denote speech: “Hello!”
Single quotes denote words or phrases to be marked apart for ironic or other reasons.

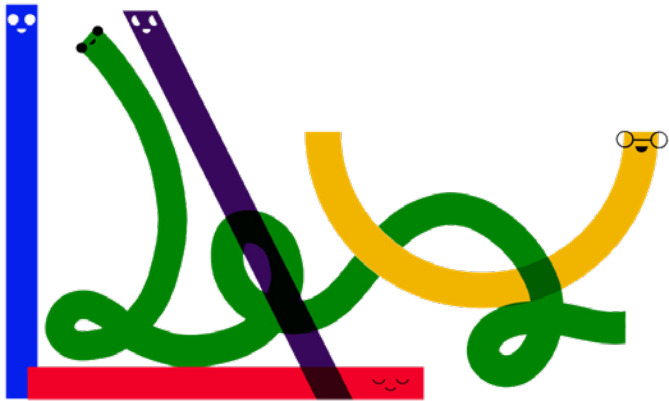
Punctuation and speech quotes:

He said, “She ate all my sandwiches.”
“She ate all my sandwiches!” he yelled.
“She ate all my sandwiches,” he said, sounding stern. “But then I ate her idlis.”

Nested quotes: double outside, single inside

“I didn't want to tickle the goat!” she said. “He told me, ‘That goat is ticklish,’ so I went to see if that was true.”
“Amma, when you said 'don't touch', you didn't point at the pethas.”

Italicization



Avoid italics where possible.

Italics may be used for emphasis, but with restraint, in Level 3 and Level 4 titles. Usage in Level 2 titles is at the editor's discretion.

Avoid italicization of non-English words. Not all such words need translation.

Sukku yelled. Sukku's dadi was not pleased. She grumbled, "This boy na, hamesha loud."

The title *Kali Wants to Dance* (2018) does a good, restrained job of using Tamil words and musical terms in English text.

Lists

Vertical lists

Use simple bullets rather than hyphens, en dashes or em dashes. The sentence before the list should end in a full stop or a colon.

If the items in a list are complete sentences, begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

If the items in the list are words or phrases, begin with a capital letter and end without punctuation. Avoid terminal commas or semicolons.

Neema's tummy is bursting with food. This is what she ate for lunch.

- Four slices of juicy tomato (12 medium-size bites)
- Two rounds of pungent onion (11 small bites)
- Two soft chapatis (14 big bites)
- A ladleful of brinjal sabzi (23 wee nibbles)
- A pile of hot rice and daal (17 scoops of the hand)
- Cool buttermilk (15 sips plus a warm burp)

List within a sentence

Separate the items with a comma. The final item in the list will be preceded by 'and' or 'or'. In most cases, such lists do not need a comma (the Oxford comma) before the final item. If each item on the list consists of more than one item, or if each item is a sentence fragment, use the Oxford comma. You may also use the Oxford comma if doing so makes the sentence clearer.

Thejasvi had a busy day. She woke Abba up in time for his bus, arranged her pencils by colour, drank three glasses of buttermilk (one with pepper), visited three friends, helped Amma change the kitchen light bulb, and watched one episode of cartoons on the TV.

In the bus, Parul sat next to Sam, Vamsi next to Meghana, Shantha with Pihu, and Sukku with Jacob.



Ordering lists

Most lists, and particularly lists of proper nouns or personal names, require a rationale behind the order in which they present their constituents.

Ascending or descending in order of importance, scale, relevance or age, or just the way the list sounds when being read aloud — whatever it is, the order of items should contribute meaning.

When there is no particular reason to place one item ahead of another, this Guide recommends listing them alphabetically. If the list is of personal names, alphabetize by surname if available, otherwise alphabetize by forename.

Titles



Italicize book and film titles, and use upper-lower capitalization. Use single quotes and upper-lower capitalization for episode titles.

She reached for her copy of *Gone with the Wind*.

He pressed a button and *Boot Polish* began to play.

Vaani's favourite episode of the show was 'An Empty Teapot'.

The first word and final word in a title are always capitalized, as are adjectives, adverbs, nouns, pronouns and verbs.

These conventions are likely to appear only in Level 4 books.

Capitalization

Always capitalize proper nouns, place names, days of the week, geographical or astronomical names, festivals.

Always check the official websites of relevant and/or reputable organizations to make sure you have the capitalization, spellings and word order right.

Species name: Use WWF/ IUCN guidelines for capitalisation.

Note: Do not abbreviate Mount to Mt or River to 'R'.

Capitalize the words Net, Internet and Web, but not 'website'.

Capitalize the first word following a period. No other punctuation mark requires the following word to be capitalized, unless a line break intervenes.



Earth/earth, Moon/moon, Sun/sun

Capitalize only when using as proper nouns referring to the astronomical bodies.

When using in an expression, lowercase:

"You're asking the moon!"

"What on earth do you mean?"

Every animal under the sun...

When we die, our bodies return to the earth.

The rocket booster fell back to earth.

Note that 'Earth', when capitalized, refers to the planet as a whole, including land, sea, atmosphere, biosphere, magnetic field and molten innards.

Abbreviations, honorifics



Honorifics
(Mr, Mrs, Dr, Drs, Ms, Messrs,
Professor)

are always capitalized.

Avoid the use of periods.

Note: Professor Thorat, but Prof. Nakul Thorat. In quoted speech, however, always prefer the full form.

**“I’ve heard this story before, in a speech by
Professor Nakul Thorat.”**

Initials in a name are separated by a word space.

**Pointing to the person at the door, Alo said,
“There she is, Dr P T Balamma. Isn’t she tall?”**

In general, when an abbreviation and the word abbreviated end with the same letter, there is no need for a period.

Acronyms, particularly well-known ones, do not require periods or word spaces: GDP, TNT, DTH, UP, AP, WB. They must, however, be spelt out at first use.

Acronyms that are usually spoken as a word usually do not require all-caps, unless liable to be misconstrued: Unesco, Nabard, Amul, but MAD (nuclear balance of power).

En dash, em dash



En dash

An en dash is used to indicate either end of a fixed range of numbers, *inclusive*. Do not use 'from' in conjunction with an en dash range.

Days and dates: The travelling library will be here Wednesday–Saturday, that is, 17–20 July.

Pages: The chapter on fruit bats is on pages 73–91 of this book.

An en dash can connect words that represent two separate but related quantities. Think of it as a 'versus' or 'from-to' coupling. Avoid this use; it's not ideal for young readers.

In world politics, there is a deep East–West divide. The school–home distance is too great for Neeta to enjoy walking there and back twice a day.

(See also instructions in Numbers/Range, above.)

Em dash

Format: [—] word space, em dash, word space.

An em dash is used to mark off a separate clause within a sentence, often for emphasis.

Ravish had an idea, a brilliant idea — one that would solve his problem and Meghna's problem at once.

The four of them in Team Turtle — Anitha, Masood, Tenzing and Suhaila — hurried off to collect buckets.

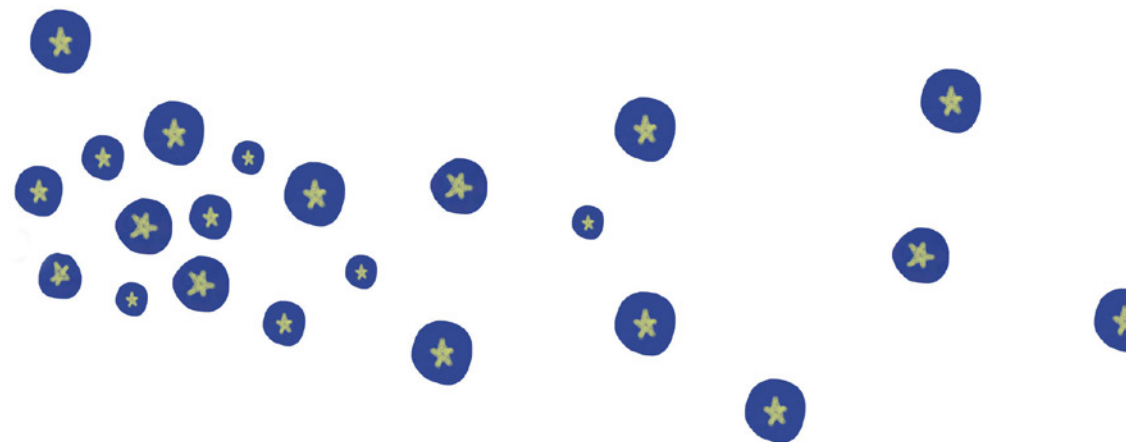
They pushed through the bushes toward the waterfall — they could hear it clearly, so they knew where it was — and found a patch of grass for their tent.

Never nest pairs of em dashes. Use the em dash sparingly.

URLs

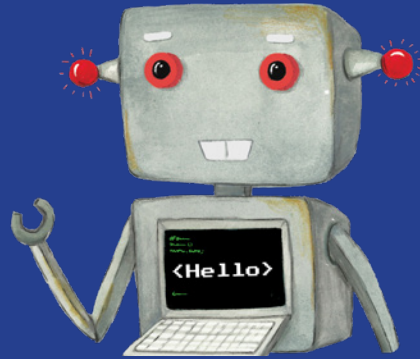


- Always check URLs (uniform resource locators) to make sure they work. If the web page is not likely to last for long, avoid using the URL. Use the name of the resource instead.
- *Italicize all URLs in print.*
- Hyperlink URLs in ebooks, and require them to open in a new tab.



- When using a URL in the main text, *avoid the `http://` or `https://`*. Go straight into `www.` if the URL has it, or else go directly to the rest of the page link.
- In footnotes, use the full link including `http://` or `https://www.`
- If a URL occurs at the end of a sentence, *place the full stop immediately after the URL, with no word space.*

Punctuation alert...!!



Exclamation mark

Don't over-use the exclamation mark. Think twice, thrice, 11 times before using it more than once per page.

Put the page aside and reflect for several minutes before using two exclamation marks together, even within an illustration. A 'Thunk!!' is rarely essential.

Remember that exclamation marks are a shortcut used by lazy writers to force life into their text. Fix the text instead of applying !s.

Ellipses

Style: three period points, no word space before, one word space after

Don't over-use ellipses.

Ellipses are used to approximate a 'tailing off' in speech or narrative, or as a way to impose a pause for effect or to carry a point over to the next page or paragraph.

If a paragraph or a page ends with an ellipsis, the subsequent paragraph or page will begin with a capital letter. No sentence should begin with an ellipsis.

But also:

[...] denotes a gap in a quoted or spoken sentence that is continued after the ellipsis.

[....] informs the reader that the quoted text is only part of a sentence and does not include the end of that sentence.

"I want to confess that... To tell the truth, I don't want to confess, but Dadaji ordered me to."



Sound alerts

Consider how a sound, written down, will sound when read aloud.

Twaaang or Twangggg?

Do cars really go Broom broom?

If the same sound will occur several times in a book, perhaps it can be written in exaggerated form at first use and then toned down thereafter.

Thwaaaaaackk or Thwackkk? (Later, **thwack!**)

Neologisms



Indian and global English host a plethora of neologisms that need not feature in children's books. Editors, apply discretion.

It took Sukitha less than a minute to Google the answer.

This Guide recommends avoiding the word, even though the meaning is widely understood. It is a corporate brand name, and has a generic alternative:

It took Sukitha less than a minute to find the answer online.

Uber, Tivo, Hoover, Xerox, Zipper and Instagram are other instances of verb-ized brand names. Avoid them.

Examples of non-brand neologisms to avoid: updation, prepone, upskill, de-escalate, chillax, meh, noob. These are words in common parlance, in a professional or informal social media context. Neither context is relevant to young readers.

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