

## Extract from BBC Style Guide

### "Weights and measures

**We should use both imperial and metric measures in most stories.** Context will usually decide which measure comes first, but if the first figure is part of a quote it should be retained, with a conversion in brackets immediately afterwards.

Where instantly recognisable abbreviations exist, these should be used throughout, even at first reference. For example, the words 'metre', 'kilometre' are not written out in full even at first reference; use the abbreviations **m** and **km**. All numbers preceding abbreviations should be rendered as digits; where units are written out in full, our usual numbers convention is followed. There should not be a gap between number and abbreviated unit, and units of measurement do not in general take an 's' in the plural.

UK and US stories should usually use imperial first - eg: **He said the first 50ft (15.24m) of the climb had been hard. The president's campaign helicopter has taken him more than 2,000 miles (3,200km).**

For feet and inches, use digits followed by abbreviations - eg: **The hedge was exactly 9ft 4in high (2.84m).**

In non-UK/US stories, metric should usually come first - with a bracketed conversion to imperial - eg: **Police in France say the floods reached a peak of 5.3m (17ft 8in). Many fugitives from English justice are living along a 10km (6.2 mile) stretch of the Spanish coast.**

Sometimes logic will dictate when metric should come first eg: **Train-speeds on the British side of the Channel Tunnel compare badly with French top speeds of 300km/h (186mph).** But don't be too literal in the conversion of an approximate figure, as in **The lifeboat picked up the man about 200m (656ft) from the shore.**

**A nanometre** is one thousand millionth of a metre. Spell it out in full at first reference; then trim to **nm**, with the accompanying number expressed as digit(s) eg: **6nm, 52nm.**

**For weights** originally expressed as a precise number of stone, write out the word 'stone' (never 'stones') - and follow our usual convention with any accompanying number - eg: **The child weighed less than two stone (12.7kg) at the time of his death; She said the company had sacked her because she weighed 15 stone (95.3kg).**

But if pounds are involved you should use the abbreviations **st** and **lb** (not 'lbs'), and use digits even for numbers below 10, with **no gap** between number and unit - eg: **Charles Atlas said he had once weighed 6st 9lb (42kg).**

From a gram (one thousandth of a kilogram), the abbreviation **g** is used at first reference and throughout. This rule applies whether singular or plural. It is lower case, and there is no gap between number and unit - eg: **Police say they found 30g (1oz) of cannabis in the woman's handbag.**

**Tonne:** Use the metric measurement rather than the imperial ‘ton’. In reality, there is very little difference between the two. Avoid the term ‘metric ton’, and of course the tautological ‘metric tonne’.

For **volumes**, the usual approach, again, is to use both metric and imperial - eg: **The tanker was carrying 30,000 gallons (136,000 litres) of petrol.** (Note that ‘litres’ is not abbreviated, because ‘l’ looks like a number one.) However, phrases where volume and liquid are historically almost inseparable do not have to be converted - eg: **He told the court his favourite pastime was to go out with his friends for a curry and a pint.** Thus, **a pint of beer** or **a pint of blood** are acceptable, unconverted, in any story - though context will sometimes make a metric conversion appropriate in, say, Technology or Health.

Adjectival phrases defining **areas** should include hyphens in both metric and imperial measures. Always mention both; the context will determine which comes first - eg: **The French fishermen denied reports that they had been operating inside the X-sq-km (Y-sq-mile) zone** (note: there is no ‘s’ on nouns used adjectivally). Elsewhere, there is no need for hyphens - eg: **The UK government is calling for a ban on fishing within a zone of X sq miles (Y sq km).**

Abbreviations should be used throughout. Never write ‘square kilometres’, but always **sq km**. There is no acceptable abbreviation for ‘miles’, so write **sq miles** (and, adjectivally, **sq-mile**).

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**Dates:** Put the day before the month (eg: **12 April 2001**). Avoid the 12/04/2012 formulation in alt tags or anywhere else, as this will be understood in the US as 4 December. Do **not** include suffixes after the day (eg ‘20th’). One exception to the general rule: in a US context, we should spell out **the Fourth of July**. When writing about any sporting season, or tax or financial years etc, our preferred style is **2010-11**. **AD**, as in the year of the Lord, goes before the year (eg **AD800**) with no gap. **BC** goes after the year - eg: **100BC**.