Acorn Technical Publications Style Guide

Contents

About this guide

This guide was originally written for the use of Acorn's own Technical Publications Department, but it was subsequently found to be of interest not only to other parts of the company, but also to a wider audience outside Acorn. The original requirement for it persists, though, so we hope readers outside Acorn will forgive some rather arcane internal references in amongst items which may be of more general interest.

The *Acorn Technical Publications Style Guide* is oriented towards manuals, rather than brochures and other publicity material, which require a different style of writing, but it should be of help to anyone in the company who has a piece of extended writing to do.

The guide offers

● suggestions for appropriate writing style

● conventions for spelling, typography and terminology

● an outline of the structure of a typical manual and models for standard document components such as copyright messages

● guidelines for those producing text to be imported into technical publications systems

● a brief reference guide to differences between British and North American English

● a summary of frequently-used proof-readers' marks.

The *Acorn Technical Publications Style Guide* lays no claims to completeness. It will need both changing and enlarging as our policies are modified over time, when new products are introduced, and in response to comments and criticism.

1 Writing style

It is not within the scope of this guide to offer general advice on how to **write** manuals and other documentation. However, a few specific points are grouped below under the headings of *Informality* and *Simplicity*, followed by details of conventions for vocabulary to be used, rules for presenting lists, and a section warning of some frequently-made errors. For more general advice, see

- *How to Write a Computer Manual* / Jonathan Price. – Menlo Park, California, USA: Benjamin/Cummins Publishing, Inc., 1984.
- *The Complete Plain Words* / Sir Ernest Gowers. – Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1987.

Informality

Keep the individual user in mind as you write. This should lead you to use almost automatically an informal, person-to-person style. However, take care that a friendly style does not degenerate into false 'matiness' or a patronising tone; this can happen when writing for the novice, as in the following example:

> You have now learned how to use both of the line drawing tools, wasn't that easy?

Incidentally, this sentence is also wrongly punctuated: see the section on *Incorrect commas* in the chapter entitled *Spelling and punctuation*.

Concrete, familiar analogies can be helpful, like this example from a UNIX manual:

> Security is impossible without passwords. In UNIX, a password is the key to otherwise locked doors.

Contracted forms

The conventions for written English include a few contracted forms that reflect the elisions we make all the time when speaking, even in quite formal contexts. The contractions most regularly used in writing are *n't* instead of *not*, and forms of the verbs *be*, *will*, and *have*, as in the following examples:

Full form	Contracted form
let us	let's
do not	don't
we are	we're
it is/it has	it's
it will	it'll
they have	they've
it would	it'd
it would have	it'd've

These are ranked in order of acceptability in informal writing, from the most to the least acceptable. At the top, the full form *let us* is not normally used at all, and the contracted version (popular in Mac manuals) should be used instead. Those 'below the line' are normally only used in the representation of speech in fiction, so do not concern us as technical authors. In between, the examples represent quite a wide range of forms – for example, along with *it's* go *he's* and *she's* – which can be used with restraint in manuals, especially those for the 'naive' user, to help achieve an informal tone. *Don't* is particularly suitable in imperatives where you are directly addressing the reader – 'Don't expose the computer to extremes of temperature' – but less so elsewhere.

Verbs vs nouns

Where you have a choice, using a 'verby' rather than a 'nouny' style gives a more everyday, less formal effect. For example:

Verby style	Nouny style
This enables you to select an option.	This enables the selection of an option.
Avoid using the computer in damp conditions.	Avoid the use of the computer in damp conditions.

In examples like these, using a verb construction also allows you to involve readers more, since in many cases the verb will denote something they will be doing, and may also entail using 'you'.

Active vs passive

Don't use a passive form when an active form fits the context. For example:

Use	instead of
Press a key.	A key should be pressed.
You will see this menu.	This menu will be seen.

Gender

Avoid referring to the user as *he*, provided you can do so without clumsy modes of expression. 'Clumsy modes of expression' include the use of *he or she*, *he/she*, etc. Using simply *she/her*, however justified from a consciousness-raising point of view, is too distracting. Rephrasing to avoid the problem is usually possible, and the plural form can often be used. For example,

Advise the user against servicing this product himself.

can be rephrased in the plural:

Advise users against servicing this product themselves.

If there is no alternative, stick to *he/him*, on the grounds that clarity is more important in Acorn manuals than social engineering.

Simplicity

Not everything can be simple: sometimes the technical author has to describe complex equipment or procedures. However, unnecessary verbosity should be avoided even in the most technical manual. For example, avoid 'hedging' expressions such as the following:

The distribution disc should contain the following files…

Well, either it does or it doesn't. If we don't know, should we be selling it? Similarly, the introduction to a recent manual begins:

This manual is designed to provide the information required to diagnose and repair faults on the FileStore E01 and E20 units.

This could open more briefly:

This manual provides the information…

A habit seems to have developed of opening sentences with 'Note that …'. Often this can be dispensed with altogether, but if you feel it contributes something, ask yourself whether the sentence fits well into its context. 'Note that …' seems to be a slightly formal version of *incidentally*, which is used to indicate that the information it prefaces relates only weakly, if at all, to what it follows.

People are often tempted to use fancy-sounding expressions where plain ones will do. Often the fancy expressions start out meaning something slightly different, so that a distinction is eventually lost. For example, 'on a daily basis' does not mean the same as 'daily':

1   The figures were calculated on a daily basis.

2   The figures were calculated daily.

1 could mean the same as 2, but it could also mean that at the end of each week, the figures for each day were calculated. 2 can only mean that calculations were done on Monday, then on Tuesday, and so on.

Other examples include the use of *majority* (meaning *more than half*) instead of *most* (meaning *almost all*), *in order to* where just *to* will do, and *the remainder* instead of *the rest*.

Some common errors

This section includes only a few remarks on some particularly frequent slips. A good source of further information is Gower's *Complete Plain Words*

Mis-attached subordinate phrases

These are best introduced with an example:

> As a visitor to last year's Desktop Publishing Show, I am sure you will be interested in attending this year's event.

Since the 'understood' subject of the first, subordinate, part of the sentence should be the same as the explicit subject of the main, second, part, this example strictly means that I (the writer) was a visitor to last year's show, whereas what is intended is no doubt that the reader was. It could be reworded as follows:

> As a visitor to last year's Desktop Publishing Show, you will, I am sure, be interested in attending this year's event.

Another example:

> Once set, you should keep the password secret.

The understood subject of *set* is *the password*, whereas the subject of the second part is *you*. A clearer way to write the sentence would be:

> Once you have set the password, keep it secret.

Finally:

> Weak from their long ordeal, the rescuers carried the survivors to the waiting ambulances.

This actually says that it was the rescuers who were weak, whereas, presumably, it was the survivors who were in this condition.

Lack of subject–verb agreement

This is particularly prone to happen where the subject of the sentence is complex; this may result in, for example, a plural word which forms part of the subject occurring immediately before the verb, making a plural verb look correct, whereas the subject noun phrase is in fact singular. For example:

Evaluation of both the method and its results are to start next week.

The fact that *results* (plural) comes before the main verb, *are*, probably accounts for the error. However, the subject of the sentence is *evaluation of both the method and its results*, which is singular. The verb should therefore be *is*. The following shows the same error, but the other way round:

The efficiency and thoroughness of the operation depends on skilful management.

Here, the verb should be *depend*, because the subject, *the efficiency and thoroughness of the operation*, is plural.

Corporate entities (for example, Acorn Computers Limited) are singular (inspite of the plural of *Computers*), so you should write:

Acorn Computers produces (not *produce*) the A3000.

Fewer vs less

Less can only be used with non-count nouns (and noun phrases) like *software*, *manufacturing capacity, furniture, information*. With count nouns/noun phrases, such as *program, factory, chair* or *fact, few* or *fewer* must be used. For example:

Use	Not
fewer programs	less programs

To tell whether a noun is count or not, try the following tests:

- Can it be used on its own, without an article or other determiner? If so, it is non-count. For example:
  She sells *furniture*.
  He publishes *software* for the Archimedes computer.
- If it can be used with the indefinite article a/an, it is a count noun (or noun phrase). For example:
  RISC OS is an *operating system*.

● If it can be used in the plural, it is a count noun. For example:
   A herd of *elephants*

Many nouns fall into both categories, according to how they are being used. B*rick*, for example:

   The house is built of brick. (Non-count, therefore *less brick*)

   Four million bricks were used to build the house. (Plural, therefore count, therefore *fewer bricks*)

However, this does not mean you have a choice about using *less/fewer*. A noun phrase is always either count or non-count in a particular context.

Plurals of words of foreign origin

English uses many thousand words of foreign origin, most of which have been fully assimilated into the language and use regular forms for singular and plural. Some, however, are still used with the forms they have in their source language. This causes confusion, especially when the most commonly used form is the plural, since not everyone realises it is a plural. Sometimes the original form is used for one sense of the word and the English for another.

Singular	Plural
appendix	appendices (in books)
	appendixes (in the body, and US usage)
index	indexes (in books)
	indices (mathematics)
phenomenon	phenomena
criterion	criteria
medium	mediums (spiritualists)
	media (eg recording media, but see note below)
formula	formulae
addendum	addenda (meaning 'things requiring to be added')
memorandum	memorandums or memoranda (similarly, 'things requiring to be remembered')
ephemeron (not used in English)	ephemera (meaning short-lived things such as handbills and bus tickets)

Two forms cause problems:

● *Media* is often used to refer collectively to the press and broadcasting: *the media*. In this context it is a singular noun. However, our use of it is more likely to be in the plural sense ('tape is one of several possible storage media'). In this context, its corresponding singular should be used when appropriate ('tape is a storage medium'; 'tape is a storage media' is incorrect).

- D*ata* causes a lot of uncertainty. Historically it is a plural (singular *datum*), but is now generally used as a non-count noun and therefore grammatically singular. P*iece of data* or *item of data* can be used when necessary. We will follow this practice; though some people feel strongly that *data* should be a plural, this would require the use of *datum*, a form that is unfamiliar to many.

Mid-Atlanticisms

A later chapter deals with US and Canadian English, from the point of view of 'translating' manuals to suit the North American market. What concerns us here, however, is the incorrect use of US forms in documents intended for a UK readership. Many US forms are eventually absorbed into UK English, and become acceptable. However, some US forms occasionally used have not yet been absorbed, and their use in UK English only causes confusion. For example, don't use the following words in the context of their US meaning:

	UK meaning	US meaning
alternate	one then the other	alternative
presently	shortly	at the moment

Vocabulary conventions

The rest of this chapter deals with usages that are not matters of general correctness, but merely conventions that we have adopted for in-house usage.

- Use *type* when introducing something the reader should type, not *enter*. For example:

  To run the compiler, type

  *cc options filename

- Use *press* to describe what you do to a key, rather than *hit*, *strike*, or *depress*. In addition, refer to named keys by their name alone: for example, E*scape*, not *the* E*scape key*.

- Terms for brackets, etc, depend on the type of manual, but do not mix these two sets of terms:

	in Technical Manuals	in Welcome Guides, etc
( )	parentheses	brackets, or round brackets
{ }	braces	curly brackets
[ ]	brackets	square brackets
< >	angle brackets	angle brackets

- Refer to other parts of manuals by chapter or section names, but by page number only when using publishing software capable of automatic page number cross-referencing. This makes subsequent editing less accident-prone.

●   Finally, use   *suppliers*   not   *dealers*

                                         expansion card   not   *podule*

                                         floppy disc   not   *floppy*

RISC iX

RISC iX (pronounced 'RISC-IX', like UNIX) is the name of Acorn's version of the Berkeley 4.3 BSD UNIX operating system. Note the use of a lower-case 'i'. The 'i' may be italicised in headings, but not in running text. The two parts of 'RISC iX' should be separated by a hard space so that they are not split over a line break or spread out too much in a justified line.

RISC OS desktop terminology

RISC OS (pronounced 'RISC-Oh-Ess') is short for 'RISC Operating System', and should always be written in capitals. The two parts of the term RISC OS should be separated by a hard space.

Mouse buttons

The mouse has three buttons:
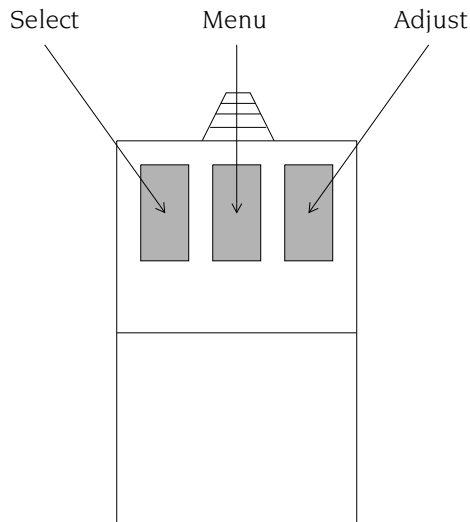
The buttons have these names because of the actions they perform:

● *Select* is used to make an initial selection

● *Adjust* is used to toggle elements in and out of this selection and to add extra selections without cancelling the current ones

● *Menu* is used to call up a menu.

The mouse moves a *pointer* on the screen.

Mouse operations

These are the terms you should use for mouse operations:

Press	press a button down
Release	release a button
Click	press and release. You can use *click* as a shorthand for *click Select*, but state this at the beginning of the guide.
Double-click	press, release, then press and release again within one second, without moving the mouse. (Don't stress the timing too much, in case you cause users to panic!)
Triple-click	double-click, then press and release again within one second, without moving the mouse.
Drag	press and move the mouse, or press for longer than 0.2 seconds
Choose	what you do to a menu option. You *move to* a sub-menu (see overleaf), and then choose an option from it.
Select	change an object's state by clicking on it.

It is a common fault to confuse *press* and *click*, and to talk about *selecting* menu options.

Parts of a window

The icons around a window have the following names:
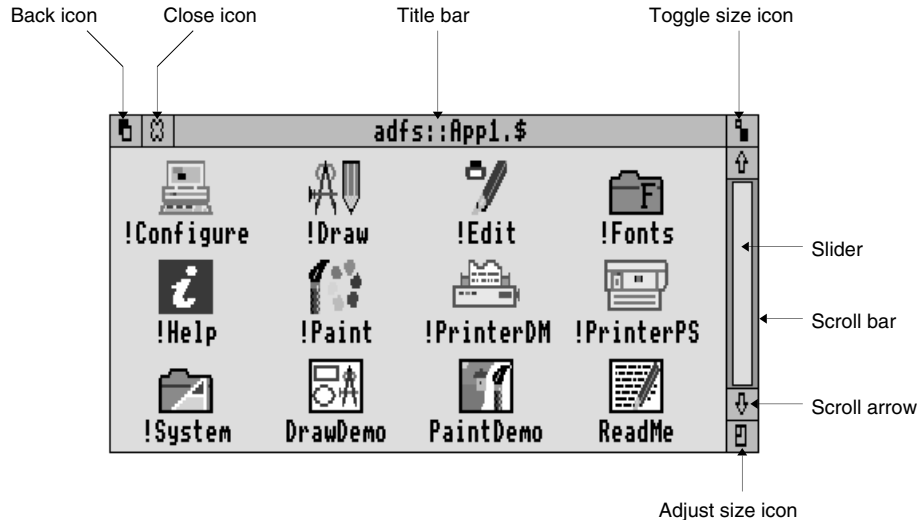
In running text use these names with initial capitals (with the exception of *slider* and *scroll bar*, which should be in lower case).

Other parts of the desktop

You must use the following terminology to refer to other parts of the *desktop*:

● A *menu* has *menu options* or *menu items*, some of which lead to *submenus* (no hyphen). You may shorten *menu options* to *options* and *menu items* to *items*, providing the context is clear.

In manuals, menu items and action icons (see below) such as Save should be in bold text.

A chosen menu option is shown *highlighted* (no need to say 'in inverse video').

● A window used for a dialogue with an application or the desktop is a *dialogue box*. These are discussed in detail below.

An *error box* is a special type of dialogue box that gives information to the user, and requires acknowledgement that it's been read.

● The bar at the foot of the screen is the *icon bar*.

● A menu that appears when you press Menu over an icon on the bar is an *icon bar menu*.

● A window showing the contents of a directory is a *directory display*.

Dialogue boxes

A box where the user has to provide information to the program is called a dialogue box. There are three main types of dialogue box in RISC OS:

● Ordinary

● Detached

● Static.

Ordinary dialogue boxes

An ordinary dialogue box appears as a submenu, and functions in the same way – for example a Save dialogue box. It has at least one action icon (such as **Save** or **Cancel** - see below) but no Close icon. It is typically small, to make it easy to browse through the various submenus an application offers.

Detached dialogue boxes

A detached dialogue box also appears as a submenu, but suspends its parent application until it is filled in – for example large dialogue boxes in *Acorn Desktop Publisher*.

Static dialogue boxes

A static dialogue box remains when the menu disappears, but still allows you to use any application, including its own parent. There are two variations:

● A *static pane* dialogue box is attached to a particular window – for example Draw's tools.

● A *static non-pane* dialogue box is not attached to a particular window – for example Paint's tools. It might however be associated with a particular window – for example Paint's colours.

Icons used in dialogue boxes

A number of different types of icons are commonly used within dialogue boxes. Note their correct names in RISC OS:

● Writable icons

● Option icons

● Radio icons

● Action icons

● Arrow icons.

Writable icons

A writable icon is a field, containing a caret, where the user can enter text. An example of this would be the writable icon in the **Save** menu.

Option icons

An option icon is a 'switch', and can either be on or off.

opton   optoff

Radio icons

A radio icon is one of a group of 'buttons', only one of which may be selected at once (like the wave selection buttons on a radio).

radioon   radiooff

Action icons

An action icon is the name for a 'button' on which users click in order to cause some event to occur – typically that for which they have just entered parameters in the dialogue box. An example is the **OK** button in a 'Save as' dialogue box.

Arrow icons

An arrow icon is used to increase or decrease a numeric value (such as when setting a **Zoom** value in Draw or Paint). It is sometimes used in conjunction with a slider (such as when setting a **Palette** entry).

up   down   left   right

Scrollable lists and pop-up menus

A scrollable list is the correct name for a window which shows several of the available choices in a window with one or (sometimes) two sets of scroll arrows, scroll bar and slider. These work in exactly the same way as a normal window.

A pop-up menu appears very similar to a writable icon, showing the currently selected choice. For example, this is how a pop-up menu for choosing a typeface might appear:

Typeface ⇨ Homerton

It is distinguished from a writable icon by the right arrow, which is identical to that used to indicate that a menu item leads to a submenu.

Numbered sequences and bulleted lists

Use numbers when you are presenting a sequence of things the user should do in the order given. For example:

1   Select the single-word paragraph 'newsletters'.

2   Click on the style name **BULLET** in the browser.

3   Repeat the tagging process with as many of the other feature paragraphs as you like.

In this example, each item is a sentence in itself and therefore begins with an upper-case letter and ends with a full stop.

Use bulleted lists for lists of objects or processes that are not in any particular order. For example:

The filing systems available on the BBC Master microcomputer are

- the Cassette Filing System (CFS)

- the ROM Filing System (RFS)

- the Disc Filing System (DFS)

- the Advanced Disc Filing System (ADFS).

For both numbered and bulleted lists, ensure that each item has the same format. Consider the following *incorrect* version of the bulleted list above:

The filing systems available on the BBC Master microcomputer are:

- the Cassette Filing System (CFS)

- ROM Filing System (RFS)

- the Disc Filing System (DFS)

- ADFS (the Advanced Disc Filing System).

An apparent exception to this can be found under *Complex List* 2 on the next page; the requirement is, more strictly, that it should be possible to attach each item to the introducing phrase, thereby forming a grammatical sentence. To show that the example above is wrong, try joining any two items to the introduction like this:

> The filing systems available on the BBC Master microcomputer are ROM Filing System and the Cassette Filing System (CFS).

If necessary, numbered lists may be nested under bulleted lists, and vice versa, but do not nest lists of the same type. Finally, do not use bulleted or numbered 'lists' when there is only one item in the list!

Punctuation and case in bulleted lists

The following conventions are based on those in J Price, *How to Write a Computer Manual*: refer to pages 255-6 for more examples. These should be taken as guidelines; you may need to adapt them for specific cases.

Unbroken syntax— no colon; full stop ends list

The filing systems list already mentioned is an example:

> The filing systems available on the BBC Master microcomputer are
>
> - the Cassette Filing System (CFS)
> - the ROM Filing System (RFS)
> - the Disc Filing System (DFS)
> - the Advanced Disc Filing System (ADFS).

It is really just a single sentence, broken up to make the elements of the list clearer. Incidentally, do not use *and* between the last two items.

Typical list— main clause followed by colon; no item punctuation

Example:

> Sprites have the following attributes:
>
> - a name
> - a definition mode
> - a height
> - a width

Complex list 1— main clause followed by colon; item punctuation

If any one of the items is a complete sentence, capitalise the first word of each item and end the item with a full stop.

The icon can take three forms:

- A pillar box indicates that the mail system is working.
- A pillar box with bulging sides indicates that there is mail waiting to be read.
- A pillar box containing a white question mark indicates that Mailman is unable to communicate with the network.

Complex list 2— no colon; item punctuation

A complex sentence broken down into a list. Each item should end with a semicolon, except the final item, which should end with a full stop.

This option gives information about the file you are working on, including

- whether it has been modified since you last saved it;
- what type of file it is;
- its name, including the full directory pathname.

2   Spelling and punctuation

Alternative spellings

There are more alternatives allowed in English spelling than most people realise (even discounting US variants). It is important that usage is consistent throughout our publications.

Use	instead of
-ise	-ize (organise, modernise)
acknowledgement	acknowledgment
buses	busses
cacheing	caching
centring	centering
connection	connexion
coordinate	co-ordinate
disc	disk (except in UNIX and PC Emulator manuals, where conformity to US practice may demand *disk*)
despatch	dispatch
focussed	focused
issuing	issueing
judgement	judgment
licence (noun)	license (unless passing on a US license verbatim)
program	programme (for a computer program)
programme	program (for any other sort)
writable	writeable

Some nouns end alternatively in -er or -or. Use the following:

adapter
connector
converter
generator
inverter
multiplexer
oscillator
processor

Full stops and commas

Don't use a full stop within or after most abbreviations and contractions. For example:

Use	instead of
Mr	Mr.
DC	D.C.

Exceptions, however, are *i.e.* and *e.g.*, as they are otherwise difficult to pick up in running text. Also, *etc.* should be followed by a full stop.

As a rule, however, avoid using abbreviations such as *e.g.*, *etc.* and *i.e.* at all: use *for example…* and other rewordings, as appropriate.

In names and addresses, keep the use of commas to a minimum. For example:

Acorn Computers Limited
Cambridge Technopark
645 Newmarket Road
Cambridge CB5 8PD

Common spelling errors

The following words are often misspelt; these are the correct spellings:

accommodation	occurred/occurrence
principal (the principal reason)	principle (principles of operation)
loose (loose collar)	lose (lose a game)
relevant	recommend
separate	supersede
supplement	targeted

There are sometimes differences in spelling between the noun and verb forms of the same words, even though they are pronounced the same. For example:

Noun	Verb
practice	practise
licence	license

Take note of the following minefield:

(in)dependent (adjective: an independent inquiry)
dependant (noun: she has two dependants)

Writing numbers

Spell out single digit numbers, except where:

● A unit of measurement follows. So: 'the computer has two disc drives', but 'it has 4MB of RAM'. There is no space between the digit and the unit of measurement in the last example.

● The number is the 'name' of a disc drive or similar object. So: 'Insert the disc into drive 4.'

Apostrophes

The apostrophe has two uses in English:

● in possessives

● to indicate certain 'missing' letters in informal writing style.

It is **not** used in plurals, even in abbreviations or dates written as numerals – RAMs, 1980s – with the occasional exception of abbreviations and unusual usages ending in a lower case letter. For example, you might prefer to write

dotting your i's and crossing your t's

since

dotting your is and crossing your ts

looks rather odd and is hard to process.

Apostrophes in possessives

The rules are as follows:

● singular nouns: add 's: 'The heart of the microcomputer's software is the operating system'.

- Singular nouns and proper names ending in s: as above, provided the last syllable of the name is not pronounced *iz*: 'the campus's designer', 'Charles's book', but 'John Bridges' proposal'.
- plural nouns ending in s: add an apostrophe *after* the s: 'Different manufacturers' plugs are not interchangeable'. This also applies to foreign word plurals like 'bureaux'.
- plural nouns not ending in an s: add 's: 'The children's toys'.

The possessive form of pronouns, unlike that of nouns, does not have an apostrophe before the *s*. In particular, remember that *its* does not have one when it is a possessive:

> The cell has a very high energy level for its size.

> Each mode has its own characteristics.

Similarly, the forms *his*, *hers*, and *yours* never have an apostrophe.

Apostrophes marking 'missing' letters

Examples of these appear in the section entitled *Contracted forms*. There are two main sources of confusion:

- the forms it's/its. The contracted form of *it is* or *it has* has an apostrophe, but the possessive does not. For example:
  It's easy to see what effect this will have.
  Its effect is unpredictable.
- the forms who's/whose. The contraction (of *who is* or *who has*) has an apostrophe. The possessive determiner or relative pronoun has no apostrophe, but does have a final *e*:
  Who's been eating my porridge?
  Everyone knows whose porridge it is.
  Whose porridge is it?

Apart from these cases, watch out for other homophones (pairs or groups of words that sound the same but have different meanings, and are accordingly spelt differently):

> you're/your
> there/they're/their

Finally, there is no apostrophe in the word *does*!

Word divisions and hyphens

Sometimes it is not obvious whether to write something as two words, a single word, or a hyphenated word.

Verb + adverb

Examples include *set up*, *log in*, *back up*. These are written as two words when used as verbs, but with a hyphen when used as nouns.

Verbs	**Nouns**
Your workstation has been *set up* correctly.	This depends on the *set-up* you are using.
Log in to the network.	At the *log-in* prompt, type …
Look up the filenames.	Use the normal *look-up* procedure.

(You *log in to* a network; you do not *log into* it.)

Preposition(s) + noun

Examples include *on line*, *out of date*. They are written as two words when part of the predicate of the sentence (ie after the verb), but are hyphenated when used as attributive adjectives (before a noun).

Predicative	**Attributive**
The process is *on line*.	an *on-line* process
Your version is *out of date*.	an *out-of-date* version

Other phrases used adjectivally

The same principle applies here: separate words when predicative, hyphenated when used adjectivally.

The desktop is *easy to use*.	an *easy-to-use* program

Modifier + noun/verb

A hyphen is sometimes used to join modifiers and nouns or verbs, especially when the resulting phrase is used adjectivally:

Type all commands in *lower case*.	Use *lower-case* letters.
Her behaviour displayed *common sense*.	A *common-sense* approach.
The monitor displays an image in *high resolution*.	A *high-resolution* monitor.
A *word processor*	A *word-processed* document

The treatment of *left hand* and *right hand* is similar, except that instead of being hyphenated when used attributively, they are written as a single word:

Take the plug in your *left hand*.   Press the *lefthand* button.

On occasions, a hyphen can be useful to distinguish meanings. Compare the following:

The screen displays *four colour*   The screen displays *four-colour*
modes.   modes.

Finally, a hyphen can be used to join a modifier to a verb when the modifier belongs to a grammatical category not typically used to modify verbs. F*lood*, in the following example, could be regarded either as a noun or a verb, neither of which typically modifies another verb:

F*lood-fill* the circle with a solid colour.

Here, the hyphen makes the sentence easier to understand, since without the sequence *flood* + *fill* does not obviously form a unit until you get to the end of the sentence. Without the hyphen, the reader tries to interpret *flood* as an imperative verb on its own, and then doesn't know what to do with *fill*.

The chapter B*ritish and* A*merican* E*nglish* lists some differences in the use of hyphens in the two varieties of the language.

Words with prefixes

Usually, there should be no hyphen between the prefix and the stem: *rearrange*, *predate*, *subdirectory*. The only exceptions are cases where

● the stem has to have an initial capital, such as *pre-*C*hristmas*, *un-*A*merican*.

● the prefix is rather long and relatively rarely used, e.g. pseudo-filing system, self-formatting disc, anti-clockwise, multi-purpose.

● the combination of prefix and stem is not in general use but has been coined for the occasion. An example is *mis-attached*, used in a heading in the previous chapter.

● a distinction has to be made between, for example, *recover* (get better) and *re-cover* (cover again).

● a clash of vowel letters would otherwise occur, e.g. *re-emphasis*, *pre-eminent*. However, use *coordinate* and *cooperate* without a hyphen.

Technical terms written as a single word

It has become conventional to write many two-word or hyphenated technical terms as single words. These include:

backplane

coprocessor

database

filename

keyword

linefeed

multitasking

pathname

The following expressions should be written as two words:

file server

word processor

bit map

Punctuation

This section does not attempt complete coverage of punctuation, which is too large a subject. General rules can be applied, such as those in Gowers' *Complete Plain Words*. However, there seems to be a lot of uncertainty in the use of some punctuation marks, especially commas. In addition, usage varies in a few areas, and the last parts of this chapter set out some conventions.

Some notes on punctuation differences in US English are given in the chapter *British and American English*.

Incorrect commas

The most frequent punctuation error is the use of a comma where there should be a full stop, colon or semi-colon. The following sentences display this:

The new modules described in this document handle the % character, it is therefore not necessary to include ArthurLib in the Run$Path once they have been installed.

A comma **cannot** be used to link two clauses in this way. There are several solutions:

● Use a full stop or semi-colon instead.

● Start the whole sentence with *Since*, and delete *therefore*.

> Your user id is the name with which you identify yourself to the computer, this name is usually assigned by the System Administrator.

Again, a comma cannot link two clauses. Solutions: use a full stop or semi-colon.

The only circumstance in which a comma **can** validly occur between two clauses is a sentence in which the constituent clauses form a list. The structure will then be *Sentence* A, *Sentence* B, *and Sentence* C. For example:

> Daddy Bear sat in the big chair, Mummy Bear sat in the middle chair, and Baby Bear sat in the smallest chair.

Another example of incorrect use of the comma:

> The data is stored in two bytes, the first byte contains the day of the month in bits 0 to 4.

Here, the second clause elaborates on the information given in the first. A semi-colon could be used instead of the comma, or *the first of which* could be substituted for *the first byte*. Either solution expresses the link between the two clauses.

You should be careful how you use *however* in this context, too:

> You can experiment with fonts, colours, line spacing and margins, however, the features you select do not form part of the text when you save it.

With commas on either side of *however* it is not clear whether *however* is attached to the clause it follows or the clause it precedes. In this instance, there should be a full stop before *however* and a comma after it.

The only time you can put commas either side of however is when it is removed from the beginning of its sentence and embedded into it:

> You can experiment with fonts, colours, line spacing and margins. The features you select do not, however, form part of the text when you save it.

Comma vs nothing

Occasionally, inserting or leaving out a comma can entirely change the meaning of a sentence. Consider the following two pairs:

> I shall wear no clothes to distinguish myself from other men.

> I shall wear no clothes, to distinguish myself from other men.

> Mrs Jones is trying to make my life hell so I give in my notice.

> Mrs Jones is trying to make my life hell, so I give in my notice.

The second case is based on an employee's letter to a supervisor. If the comma had been left out, it would have meant only that Mrs Jones' intention was that she should resign. With the comma, it means that she is resigning as a result of Mrs Jones' actions, whether or not that was Mrs Jones' intention. As it was, she put in the comma, and it resulted in the loss of her job, as it was taken to indicate resignation.

En-dashes

En-dashes are longer than hyphens and should normally be used in pairs – like this – and not singly. A pair of en-dashes has the same function as a pair of parentheses. If you feel moved to use a single dash, consider whether a more meaningful punctuation mark such as a colon might not be better.

Quotation marks

Don't use the 'straight' quotation marks " in running text: use distinct single opening and closing quotation marks, ' '. However, for program listings, the fixed-pitch " should be used, since it appears on the screen.

Full stops and parentheses

If a complete sentence is used inside parentheses, its full stop should be inside the closing parenthesis. (This sentence is an example of the preceding rule.) On the other hand, if the contents of the parentheses, though at the end of a sentence, are just a phrase within it, the full stop comes after the closing parenthesis (like this example). There should be no spaces between the parentheses and the text they enclose.

Spaces after punctuation marks

Use a single space after commas, colons, semi-colons and full stops. Two spaces after a full stop (a common convention) often produces bad spacing effects in justified text.

3   Typographical conventions

Text appearing on the screen

This section deals only with how the range of fonts selected for an Acorn manual is actually deployed: when to use italics or a fixed-width font, for example. It does not specify fonts for any particular manual. This description therefore works on the assumption that

● the main text is in a proportionally-spaced font (such as Trinity);

● the fixed-width font is Courier.

Text

Normal text (body copy) uses the proportionally-spaced font.

Where to use bold text

Text should be emboldened in the following circumstances:

● For emphasis.
     Never leave a floppy disc on a radiator

● For menu options.
     Click on **Delete**

Where to use italic text

Use italic text for

● indicating that a particular term appears in the Glossary. Only use italics the first time it appears.
     Connect a *high-resolution monochrome* monitor to the computer...

● cross references to other parts of the manual, and to other publications.
     See *Configuration commands* in the *User Guide*.

● annotations of program listings
     `SYS"Wimp_Initialise"`   *Tell the Wimp about the task*

● Figure annotations:

     Figure 3.1   *Connecting a high-resolution monochrome monitor*

Fixed-width font

Where to use Courier Roman

- In program examples and listings.

  ```
  PRINT "PLEASE INPUT THE TIME"
  ```

- Where you are asking the user to type in something:

  To load from a file, type:
  ```
  void load_file(void)
  ```

  In UNIX manuals, however, it is the custom to use Courier Bold for text to be typed in, and text displayed by the computer is shown in Courier Roman.

  In interactive sessions, where the computer is asking questions and the user is supplying the answers, and you want to show this interaction on the page, the UNIX model should be followed in all manuals:

`rm -i syn*`	*text you type in*
`rm: remove synopsis-final?` **`y`**	*computer displays/you type*

- Where you are showing what the computer displays:

  ```
  Bytes free &0033FE00 =  3407360
  ```

  See the previous note about interactive sessions.

- In the body of the text – for pathnames, and for the names of commands in UNIX and languages such as C, where commands can be all lower-case. RISC OS commands are usually written with an initial capital, and so stand out from the body of the text without a font change.

Where to use Courier Bold

Only use Courier Bold in interactive sessions, to show the text the user types in response to a prompt by the computer, which is shown in Courier Roman.

Courier Italic

Use Courier Italic to indicate a variable, which the user has to provide to suit the occasion:

```
*copy source_directory.filename destination_directory
```

Use Bold Italic for variables in cases where Bold Roman is being used for non-variables.

Referring to Courier text

When you refer in the body of the text of a manual to text just displayed in a Courier font, use the same font for consistency:

The format of the Link command is:

```
Link -output file [options] files
```
The `files` argument is a list of input files; this is described below`.`
`-output` is the only compulsory keyword.

Return key

For Welcome Guides, it may be appropriate to indicate explicitly that the user has to press Return at the end of lines; beginners do not always work this out for themselves. Include the ↵ character at the end of the line to be typed:

`*BASIC↵`

Chapter and section titles

Chapter and section titles should have an initial upper-case letter for the first word only (except, of course, where the name of something normally capitalised forms part of the title, as in *Starting Acorn Desktop Publisher*).

References to books and chapters

Use italics for references to titles of other Acorn manuals, other chapters in the current manual and other sections in the same chapter:

Turn to the *Archimedes User Guide* for full details.
The chapter entitled *Using the debugger* describes these features.
The section entitled *The Imports menu* describes this in detail.

However, references to the current manual itself should not be in italics, since you will not be using its complete title:

Full details are given later in this guide.

The next two sections describe the typographic conventions to be used for full bibliographical listings. These are suitable in, for example, software manuals of the more technical kind, where reference may need to be made to textbooks, industry standards, or useful further reading.

Books

<Title> / <author[;another author*]>. – <edition if not first>. – <place of
publication>: <publisher>,<year of publication>.

* If more than three, use the first-named, followed by '... [et al]'.

Example:

C:a reference manual/ S P Harbison; G L Steele, Jr. – 2nd ed. – Englewood
Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall, 1987.

Papers published in books

<Title of paper> / <author[;another author]>
in
<Title of Book>. – <edition if not first>. – <place of publication>: <publisher>,
<year of publication>.

Example:

Natural language interfaces / A W Smith; E Harding
in
Readings in natural language processing. – Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press, 1982.

Papers published in journals

<Title of paper> / <author[;another author]>
in
<Title of Journal> <volume>(<number>), <year>. – <pages>.

Example:

Selling through documentation / D Jones; J C Brinsmead
in
Technical author 13(1), 1989. 145-167.

4   Trademarks and terminology

This chapter covers conventions for the use of trademarks and technical terminology, and lists trademarks currently claimed by or belonging to Acorn and other companies.

Trademarks

Trademarks are valuable commercial property, helping a company to protect its successful products against inferior copies and ensuring, for example, that money spent on advertising its own products does not merely promote all products of a similar type. For the company to be able to claim, if challenged, that an expression – a word or phrase such as A*rchimedes* or E*conet* – is one of its trademarks, it must show that the expression is not normally used as a generic expression, that is, to refer to any one of a whole class of objects of the same type. For example, it would not be plausible to claim that the word *microcomputer* belonged to a particular company and was one of its trademarks, since it is very evidently in everyday use to refer to lots of different products from hundreds of manufacturers. On the other hand, A*corn* is one of our trademarks, for although the word *acorn* has an established meaning, referring to the fruit of the oak tree, its use – with an initial capital – to denote a microcomputer was something new and unique to this company.

Using trademarks in text

It is open to any of our competitors, or to any Tom, Dick or Harry who wants to set up an exhibition called *the* A*rchimedes* S*how*, to argue that expressions we want to preserve as trademarks are, in fact, generics. The most telling point they could make in such an argument would not be merely that someone, somewhere, uses Archimedes as a generic term, but that we at Acorn have done so. It is therefore especially important that we use trademarks carefully.

There are two ways of ensuring that we do not use our own trademarks as generic terms. One is to use initial capitals for all the words that comprise them (with the exception of prepositions that occur in the middle of the expression). An example:

Correct	Incorrect
Acorn Desktop Publisher	Acorn desktop publisher

However, when referred to on the copyright page at the front of manuals, Acorn trademarks should be all in capital letters, viz ACORN, ARCHIMEDES.

The second way of making it clear that our trademarks are not generic terms is to use them as modifiers of generics. What this means is that instead of saying, for example, 'an Archimedes', we should say 'an Archimedes computer', and instead of 'an Econet', 'an Econet network'. In these expressions, 'computer' and 'network' are the generic terms, describing a large class of products a subset of which is then identified by the use of the trademark as a modifier. The expression as a whole then denotes a particular computer or network.

Acorn trademarks

Acorn's legal department has provided the following list of the principal names that Acorn currently claims as trademarks in the United Kingdom (note the use of mid-word capitals in some of these).

Acorn	Termulator
Acornsoft	View
Acorn Desktop Publisher	ViewIndex
Archimedes	ViewSheet
Arthur	ViewSpell
Econet	ViewStore
OverView	Zarch

The Acorn Computer device or logo and the Master device or logo are also trademarks of Acorn Computers Limited.

Other manufacturers' trademarks

When a trademark is used in a manual, it should appear in the list of acknowledgements in the preliminary pages. A list of common trademarks appears below, which are to the best of our knowledge correct at the time of publication. This list cannot be comprehensive: you remain responsible for checking all references to other companies' products in what you are writing.

Trademark	Owner
AutoSketch	Autodesk Ltd
Centronics	Centronics Data Computer Corporation
Domesday	British Broadcasting Corporation
Epson	Epson Corporation
Ethernet	Xerox Corporation

Trademark	Owner
FrameMaker	Frame Technology Inc
GEM	Digital Research Inc
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
Integrex	Integrex Corporation
InterSheet	Computer Concepts
LaserJet	Hewlett-Packard Company
LaserWriter	Apple Computer Inc
MicroText	National Physical Laboratory
MS-DOS	Microsoft Corporation
Multisync	NEC Limited
NEC	NEC Limited
NeWS	Sun Microsystems Inc
PostScript	Adobe Systems Inc
Prestel	British Telecommunications plc
Nimbus	Research Machines Limited
Sun	Sun Microsystems Inc
SupaStore	Council for Educational Technology
UNIX	AT&T
VAX	Digital Equipment Corporation
Xenix	Microsoft Corporation
X Window System	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Yellow Pages	British Telecommunications plc
1st Word Plus	GST Holdings Limited

Generic names

The following names are generic terms, not trademarks, though they are sometimes claimed as such. They should therefore not be acknowledged.

CP/M   NFS   Reduce   Viewdata   Winchester   Z80

Most names for high level languages are also generics.

Technical terms and abbreviations

Units of measurement

The following list includes units laid down by the Système Internationale d'Unités (SI). Note especially the *case* used.

A	ampere	electric current
b	bit	binary digit
B	byte	storage (used only in combination with prefixes k

		M and G – kB MB GB)
F	farad	electrical capacitance
g	gram	mass
H	henry	magnetic inductance
Hz	hertz	frequency
MIPS	million instructions per second	
m	metre	length
s	second	time
V	volt	potential difference/electromotive force
W	watt	electric current
°	degree	temperature
Ω	ohm	electrical resistance/reactance/impedance

Unit prefixes

T	tera-	million million (2^{40} used with computing storage)
G	giga-	thousand million (2^{30} in computing)
M	mega-	million (2^{20} in computing)
k	kilo-	thousand (2^{10} in computing)
c	centi-	hundred (c or centi- is not approved by SI, and should be avoided in a technical manual. However, it is in everyday use in the form *centimetre*: this is therefore acceptable in many contexts.)
m	milli-	thousandth
μ	micro-	millionth
n	nano-	thousand millionth
p	pico-	million millionth

Combining units and prefixes

μs	microsecond
Mb	megabit
MB	megabyte
km, kB	kilometre, kilobyte
THz	terahertz

Notational system for circuit diagrams

Circuit diagrams and their accompanying text use a notational system for component values that is designed to avoid the use of unusual characters and the decimal point.

Ohms

For values less than 1000 ohms, use R (= Resistor) in place of the decimal point. For values above 1000 ohms, use K or M (the multiplier) in place of the decimal point. For example:

0R1	=	0.1 ohms
150R	=	150 ohms
1K5	=	1,500 ohms
15K	=	15,000 ohms
1M5	=	1,500,000 ohms

Farads, henrys, amps and volts

As for ohms, use the multiplier in place of the decimal point. Typical multipliers for these units run from m to p as in the list above. The suffix letter indicates the unit. For example:

100pF	=	100 picofarad
0μ33H	=	33 microhenrys
17mV	=	17 millivolts

The suffix letter may be omitted if it is clear from the value and the context what the unit is.

Other terms and abbreviations

Note the use of *upper* and *lower* case in these terms.

Standard abbrev.	meaning
AC	alternating current
ADFS (not 'the ADFS')	Advanced Disc Filing System
BASIC	the language
DC	direct current
f0	function key 0 on a Master microcomputer
F0	function key 0 on an Archimedes or A3000 computer
I/O	input and/or output
Shift-F1	holding down one key while pressing another
RISC iX	the operating system (note that the lower-case i does not need to be italic in running text)
RISC OS	the operating system (use hard space between C and O)
UNIX	the operating system

5   The structure of a manual

Outline

Most Acorn manuals now consist of the following sequence of components:

1   preliminary pages (copyright notice, disclaimers, safety warnings)

2   contents pages

3   'About this guide'

4   main text of the manual itself

5   appendices

6   End-user licence agreement

7   index

8   Reader's Comment Form.

A two-volume manual should have the complete contents and index, i.e. for both halves, in each half.

Page numbering

- Items 1 – 3 in the list above are numbered in a single sequence of lower-case Roman numerals, starting at ii.

- 4 – 7 are numbered in Arabic numerals, starting at 1.

- All righthand pages have odd numbers, all lefthand pages, even numbers.

- Each of the above sections, as well as each chapter and each appendix, starts on a new righthand page.

Preliminary pages

The appropriate selection should be made from the following components, and used in the order given. Items in italics are variables, and the relevant value should be inserted. Items in square brackets should be included or omitted as appropriate.

Copyright message

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Neither the whole nor any part of the information contained in, nor the product[s] described in, this manual may be adapted or reproduced in any material form except with the prior written approval of Acorn Computers Limited.

Disclaimers of liability

There are three different disclaimers, each appropriate to different types of product.

Software products only

Use this version for languages, utilities, word processors, databases and games.

The product[s] described in this manual and products for use with it are subject to continuous development and improvement. All information of a technical nature and particulars of the product[s] and its/their use (including the information and particulars in this manual) are given by Acorn Computers Limited in good faith. However, Acorn Computers Limited cannot accept any liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of any information or particulars in this manual.

Products including a hardware element

Use this version for any product incorporating a hardware element: it thus covers not only computers, but also expansion cards, hard discs, disc upgrades, etc.

The product[s] described in this manual and products for use with it are subject to continuous development and improvement. All information of a technical nature and particulars of the product[s] and its[their] use (including the information and particulars in this manual) are given by Acorn Computers Limited in good faith. However, Acorn Computers Limited cannot accept any liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of any information or particulars in this manual, or any incorrect use of the product[s]. All maintenance and service on the product[s] must be carried out by Acorn Computers' authorised dealers or Approved Service Centres. Acorn Computers Limited can accept no liability whatsoever for any loss or damage caused by service, maintenance or repair by unauthorised personnel.

Supplier message

Add this sentence to products/manuals designed to be used only by suppliers:

> This manual is for the sole use of Acorn Computers' authorised suppliers and must only be used by them in connection with the product[s] described within.

Support and the Reader's Comment Form

All manuals should include the following:

> If you have any comments on this manual, please complete the form at the back of the manual and send it to the address given there.

> Acorn supplies its products through an international dealer network. These outlets are trained in the use and support of Acorn products and are available to help resolve any queries you may have.

Abbreviations

If the term BBC appears in a manual, include the following sentence:

> Within this publication, the term BBC is used as an abbreviation for B*ritish* B*roadcasting* C*orporation*.

Trademark list

List in upper case all trademarks appearing in the manual. A list of our own and others' trademarks appears in the *Trademarks and terminology* chapter. No distinction is made between registered and non-registered trademarks. The format is as follows:

> TRADEMARK, TRADEMARK and TRADEMARK are trademarks of Acorn Computers Limited.
> *trademark* is a trademark of *company.*
> *trademark* is a trademark of *another company.*

Publication details

> Published by Acorn Computers Limited

ISBN

Current Acorn practice is to assign an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) only if the manual is to be made available separately from the product it describes. The format of numbers is

> ISBN 1 85250 *nnn n*

where 1 denotes the country of publication, 85250 is Acorn's publisher number, the next three digits are specific to the book, and the final *n* is a check digit (in the range 1–9, or X).

Edition

Sometimes used to differentiate more clearly between issues (see below) which may have the same title. The format is

Edition *n*

Part number, issue number and date

Each individual part of an Acorn product, including disc, disc label, function key strip, registration sheet, and manual, is assigned a unique part number. Each time a part changes in 'form, fit or function' – a new release of a software product, or a revised manual, for example – a new number is assigned. It consists of a seven digit number (with a comma after the fourth digit).

The first time a product is released, its issue number is 1. It may then happen that some part of a product – the manual, for example – is revised, without the product as a whole being re-released. The new manual should then be described as 'Issue 2', etc.

Part number *nnnn,nnn*
Issue *n*, *month year*

The date is the date of issue – that is, when the manuals is released for printing.

(When designing disc label artworks, remember that the part number printed on the disc label is not the disc label part number, but the part number of the software on the disc.)

Sample preliminary page

(Suitable for a software manual such as that for a language compiler:)

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Within this publication, the term 'BBC' is used as an abbreviation for 'British Broadcasting Corporation'.

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Multisync is a trademark of NEC Limited.

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Issue 1, July 1991

Short forms of preliminary pages

There is a need for a shorter form of the copyright notice for short documents such as leaflets and release notes, which may themselves be only one page long. In such cases the copyright notice, which should appear at the *end* of the document, should take the following form:

Copyright © Acorn Computers Limited *year*
Published by Acorn Computers Limited
Part number *nnnn,nnn*
Issue *n, month year*

Other documents, which simply require identification (such as printed customer letters), but no claim of copyright, should be marked as follows:

nnnn,nnn-nn month year

where the first seven digits are the part number, and the last two the issue number.

Safety information and warnings

A section on safety should be included in all hardware manuals. Its content is determined partly by legal requirements and should therefore not be changed without approval from the Project Manager, the company Safety Officer and the Legal Department. For a current approved example, see the A3000 *Welcome Guide*.

Contents page

This should be at whatever level of detail will give the reader an overview of the contents of the manual: including all headings may produce a very long contents list which is hard to use. It should not run to more than four pages. It should provide a reference to the *End-user licence agreement*, if appropriate (see overleaf).

'About this guide'

A section which summarises very briefly what each chapter in the manual covers. This information will vary from manual to manual, but will be drawn from the Chapter *Typographical conventions*.

Conventions used in this manual

Specifies the use of different fonts for indicating different types of text in the manual.

Bibliography

Some manuals, such as language manuals, require a reference section to other works the reader may find useful, or to published standards. Since this has a different function from the bibliography in an ordinary book, and is also likely to be shorter, it is better placed here rather than at the end. The section entitled *Books, chapters and cross-referencing* in the *Typographical conventions* chapter deals with the formats for a straightforward listing of titles.

Appendices

If there is only one appendix, it has a heading in the same format as the chapter headings, with the form 'Appendix: Title'. If there is more than one, identify them as 'Appendix A: Title', 'Appendix B: Title', etc.

End-user licence agreement

This should appear in the back of Acorn software manuals, with references to it both in the Table of Contents and the Index. A sample agreement is shown below (from the *1st Word Plus Guide*):

End-user licence conditions for 1st Word Plus (Release 2)

1. Definitions

The following expressions have the meanings given here:

'Acorn' means Acorn Computers Limited, being either owner of all intellectual property rights in the Software, or having the right to grant licences of the Software.

'Developer' means any third party software developer who retains copyright in the Software.

'Documentation' means the printed user documentation supplied with the Software inside the pack.

'Software' means the programs contained in object-code form on the disc(s) supplied with these conditions:

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Acorn grants you a personal non-transferable non-exclusive licence (or sub-licence), as follows:

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- (ii)   make the Software or the Documentation available to any third party by way of gift or loan or hire; or
- (iii)   incorporate any part of the Software into other programs developed or used by you; or
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2   by failing to comply with the Conditions.

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5. General

These conditions supersede any prior agreement, oral or written, between you and Acorn relating to the Software.

Index

Always keep in mind how the reader will want to use the index, by asking yourself whether the entry you are considering is really something he might want to look up. Don't worry if even a whole page of the manual has no index entries referring to it: an introduction, for example, may be a useful section in a manual but still not contain any information that a user will want to look up. Some pages will be much denser with index entries than others.

Each index 'concept' should have a single index entry with cross-references to it, rather than several entries in slightly different forms. Thus, for example, you should have an entry under *files, creating* and a cross-reference in the form *creating files see files, creating*.

Entries beginning with non-alphabetic characters should appear in ASCII order at the beginning of the alphabetic sequence, headed *Symbols*. The only exception to this is * commands, which should be indexed in the position they would have without the * (include the * in the entry itself, though).

Each entry begins with a lower-case letter unless it is for something that always has an initial upper case letter. Entries containing more than one word should be indexed as if there were no spaces between the words. Thus the following sequence is correct:

> file
>
> filenames
>
> file not found

Sub-entries should be indented, without a dash. For example:

> directory 5, 9-19, 35
>> change 14, 16-17
>> display 11,16
>> paths 6, 9-12

Do not use sub-sub-entries.

Cross-reference by using the words *see* and *see also* in italics. For example:

> ADFS *see* operating systems
>
> image data transfer graphics 45-50
>> *see also* graphics

The index should include a reference to the E*nd-user licence agreement* mentioned above (if appropriate).

6   Preparing input text for documentation

If you are asked to write text for use by another department or organisation, you would normally think of doing the job on your usual word processor, and leave the problems of reformatting the text to your customer. But the problem with most word processors and desktop publishing programs is that they fill the text with control codes and line feeds which are not wanted by the destination system, and can be difficult to extract.

Check first with your customer, but you should usually provide the text in **unformatted** ASCII, as produced by an editor such as Edit, and some word processors in text mode. This chapter gives some guidelines on how you can make the job of reformatting the text on the destination system much quicker and easier.

Newlines and formatting

As you write, you may want to format the text so that it is easier to read. However, this introduces line feeds which then have to be edited out. The best way to handle this is as follows:

- Where you want a 'hard' new line (such as at the end of a paragraph), insert two newline characters.

- When you have finished editing the text, replace the single newlines by spaces.

Do **not** attempt to replicate the layout that the document will eventually have. In particular:

- Do not insert hard spaces in tables; instead, separate the columns with single Tab characters and the reformatter will sort out the final appearance.

- Do not enter bullet characters or numbers for numbered lists; the Bullets and List styles (see overleaf) will insert them.

- Do not indent text directly; identify indented paragraphs with the Indent, Indent Cont'd, or Double Indent styles (see overleaf).

Paragraph tags

You can make life even easier for the reformatter by tagging your paragraphs with style names. Enclose these within angle brackets at the start of each paragraph (or series of paragraphs with the same style). To use a literal angle bracket in your text, precede it with a backslash. Case is not significant in style names. The available styles are:

Headings
Chapter
Section
Subsection
Subsubsection
Text
Bullets
Nested Bullets
Indent
Indent cont'd (has less space before than Indent)
Double Indent
Example (gives full-size Courier)
Program (gives small Courier allowing 80 characters to a line)
List (numbered: do not insert the numbers in your text)
Start Section
Start Subsection

In addition, you can mark text styles for individual words/phrases with the following Character tags, again between angle brackets. See the chapter entitled *Typographical conventions* for an explanation of when to use these character formats:

DefaultFont (turns off other character formats)
Bold
CmndLine (for program listings)
CmndLineVariable
CrossRef (for references to other publications)
Desktop (menu options etc)
Diagram (for annotating illustrations)
Emphasis
IactiveInput (text you type in)
IactiveVariable
Jargon (Glossary entries)
ProgramNotes (for annotations on program listings)

An example

The following marked-up text would generate the formatting of the first part of page 1 of this guide:

```
<text>It is not within the scope of this guide to offer general advice on how
to <emphasis>write<defaultfont> manuals and other documentation. However, a
few specific points are grouped below under the headings of
<crossref>Informality<defaultfont> and <crossref>Simplicity<defaultfont>,
followed by details of conventions for vocabulary to be used, rules for
presenting lists, and a section warning of some frequently-made errors. For
more general advice, see
```

```
<bullets><crossref>How to Write a Computer Manual<defaultfont> /
Jonathan Price.– Menlo Park, California, USA: Benjamin/Cummins Publishing,
Inc., 1984.
```

```
<crossref>The Complete Plain Words<defaultfont> / Sir Ernest Gowers. –
Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1987.
```

7   British and American English

Manuals written in 'British' English read oddly to North American users, so when products are sold into these markets, particularly to the United States, it is desirable that they be 'translated' into the local language. This is not just a question of spelling 'colour' 'color', as this chapter attempts to show.

Introduction

British and US English (UKEng and USEng) differ, like any two varieties of any language, in the following features:

style and usage

For example, a more formal style may be considered appropriate for a given kind of document.

vocabulary

A word may occur in one variety but not the other. It may have different meanings, a sense in one variety that it does not have in the other, or different connotations.

grammar

This includes differences in the use of verb constructions, prepositions, adjectives and adverbs.

spelling

Some of these differences are systematic, arising from Webster's spelling reforms. Others merely arise from the adoption of different spellings as conventional at the time when spellings became fixed.

pronunciation

In speech, this is the most striking difference, but it need not concern us as we are only concerned with the written language.

The differences between the two varieties are sufficient that it would be a mistake to release documentation written for the UK market onto the US market without revision. Although we do not expect UK versions of manuals for US software, we should not assume any such tolerance in the opposite direction.

This chapter is written in terms of how USEng differs from UKEng, so when it states, for instance, that a process occurs 'more often', this means that it occurs more often in USEng than in UKEng. If a feature is simply mentioned, it is a feature of USEng which is different from UKEng. This bias reflects the UK perspective of the writer and the availability of published descriptions. From the point of view of the acceptability of our documentation in North America, the opposite perspective would be better; we really need list of UKEng features that do not occur in USEng.

Attitudes

The US market is much less tolerant of UK linguistic practices than we are of theirs. This is due to the greater economic power of the US and their greater numbers; we are exposed far more to USEng, both spoken and written, than Americans are to UKEng.

Many sociolinguistic studies support the intuitive view that while actual prestige is attributed to users of the prestige varieties of a language, other desirable qualities such as dependability and warmth are attributed to users of less prestige varieties.

The highest-prestige varieties of USEng are the most British-like varieties of New England. UKEng itself therefore has very high prestige in the US, but a low 'warmth-factor'. British secretaries and nannies convey high status, but at the same time, British actors are cast as villains more often than chance would predict. We should therefore bear in mind that while British editions of computer manuals may, in the North American context, convey some of the properties we wish users to assign to our products, an overall impression of formality and coldness may also be conveyed.

Style and usage

Product documentation represents a fairly restricted type of written language use. There are differences between guides – for example, a Welcome Guide and a Service Manual – but these are small compared to the differences between a romantic novel and a legal contract. As a general rule, USEng is less formal for our kind of document, with the result that unmodified UK guides might come across as unfriendly. The only way to judge whether our style is appropriate is for a native speaker of USEng to review our documentation.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary differences between UKEng and USEng run into the thousands. In everyday language they are quite noticeable, but this will be much less true of text with technical content, especially since many of the terms used were coined in the US and have been adopted here.

Some vocabulary differences are stylistic: for example, *autumn* and *fortnight* have a poetic and archaic quality in USEng. P*erhaps* is formal: *maybe* would be used instead.

Other differences lie in the connotations of words: *clever* has a negative flavour in USEng, which would use *smart* instead. On the other hard, *smart* does not mean 'well-dressed' in USEng.

Grammar

Grammar breaks down into morphology (the shape of words) and syntax (the way words are put together). For present purposes, a large number of differences in the use of prepositions (*to*, *in*, *out*, etc) will be included under the heading of syntax.

Morphology

Regularisation of verb forms

UKEng	USEng	
learnt	learned	
spelt	spelled	etc

Word formation processes

Many of these are more productive, resulting in an extended vocabulary. For example, *-ify* produces *uglify*; *-ize* produces *hospitalize*.

Word 'formation' through a shift of grammatical category is more common, though many of the resulting extensions are now used in UKEng too. For example: to *author*, to *host*, to *pressure*.

Syntax

Use of auxiliary verbs in USEng

- *shall* is rarely used, *shan't* almost never.
- use of *would* in the sense *used to*: When I was young, I would go there every day.

- *will* less frequent as 'predictive': That will be the postman → That must be/is/should be the mailman.

- use of *must* as negative epistemic in USEng (the example will illustrate!): He can't be in; his car has gone → He must not be in; his car has gone.

- *dare* and *need* are rarely used.

Use and meaning of have/have got

Do you have …?   = do you usually have (UKEng)
                          = do you have now (USEng)

Past forms differ: I hadn't got … → I didn't have

Verb phrases

Many unsystematic variations:

UKEng	USEng
like you to do	like for you to do
sounds (a nice one)	sounds like
(same for seems, looks)	
come and have/go and have	come/go have
check up on	check out
fill in (a form)	fill out
meet (someone)	meet with
prevent something happening	prevent something from happening
protest at something	protest something
stop someone doing …	stop someone from doing …
talk to someone	talk with someone
visit someone	visit with someone

Use of articles

Variation in some time expressions:

the next day → next day
in future (meaning 'from now on') → in the future
all afternoon → all the afternoon
half an hour → a half hour

Pronouns

O*ne* is seldom used:

One another → each other.

Adjectives and adverbs

- variations in placement:
  They will never agree to it → They never will agree to it. (UKEng variant possible too)

- *as well* can occur sentence-initially in Canadian English:
  This has always applied to men. As well, it now applies to women.

- momentarily = in a moment
  presently = at present

- use of prepositions with adjectives/adverbs:
  out of → out

Other prepositions

behind → in back of
round → around

Time expressions

at the weekend → over the weekend/on the weekend
Monday to Friday (inclusive) → Monday through Friday
twenty to three → twenty of three, twenty till three
five past eight → five after eight
I'll do it on Sunday → I'll do it Sunday
a week this Tuesday → a week from this Tuesday
Tuesday week: not used in USEng

Spelling

Some differences are systematic, but a great many are not. However, this is not a problem, since in any case the best way to handle spelling is with a spelling checker, switching to the USEng dictionary.

Canadian spelling is not identical to USEng. For example, USEng has *-ize*, UKEng has a choice between *-ise* and *-ize*, but Canadian English uses *-ize* where the stem is 'transparent' (if you detach the *-ize*, you are left with a well-formed noun that is close in meaning to the verb), and *-ise* where it is not. Thus Canadian English uses *capitalize*, but *apologise*. In general, Canadian spelling follows UKEng for learned or formal publications, and USEng for informal publications, such as newspapers.

Punctuation

Hyphenation

Word-joining hyphenation

This is used less in USEng: the above heading would therefore probably be written 'word joining hyphenation'. Hyphens are used much less to join adverbs to the adjectives they modify: a carefully-written report → a carefully written report.

Prefix hyphenation

Similarly, writing prefix+stem as a single word is preferred to the hyphenated form. For example: non-standard → nonstandard.

Formatting hyphenation

UKEng tends towards splitting on the basis of the word's morphology or etymology. (An extreme adherent of this would favour helico-pter.) USEng splits on a phonological basis, i.e. at syllable boundaries as perceived by an ordinary user of the language. Thus UKEng struct-ure becomes USEng struc-ture.

Other punctuation differences

List punctuation

USEng uses a comma before the and joining the two last items:

We ordered beef, roast potatoes, peas, and carrots.

This is acceptable but less common in UKEng.

Capitalisation and colons

UKEng uses a lower-case letter after a colon in running text, USEng upper-case.

Quotation marks

Single quotation marks have become standard in UKEng, but double quotes are the norm in USEng.

8   Proofreading symbols

Although we do not expect in future to have to mark up paper proofs for typesetters, a good deal of proofreading will be done within the department, by other members of Acorn's staff and by outside contractors and software writers. The following subset of the British Standard list of proofreader's marks should prove useful for this purpose.

Instruction	In the text	In the margin
Delete character	*through character to be deleted*	
Delete word(s)	*through word(s) to be deleted*	
Insert character(s)		
Change to upper case	*under character(s) to be changed*	*under character(s) to be changed*
Change to lower case	encircle character(s)	
Change to bold	*under characters to be changed*	
Change to italic	underline character(s)	

Instruction	In the text	In the margin
Change italic to upright	encircle character(s)	
Increase space in line		
Reduce space in line		
Start new paragraph		
Transpose		
Run on (no new para)		
Indent	enclosing text	
Cancel indent		
Move to right	enclosing matter to be moved right	
Move to left	enclosing matter to be moved left	

Glossary

active

A normal sentence type where the subject comes first, followed by the verb, and then the object. For example:

Dogs chase cats

See also *passive*.

adjective

A word that modifies a noun. Can be used in **attributive** position, before the noun:

● a *red* book

or in **predicative** position, after the noun and a verb like *is* or *seems*:

● The book is *red*.

adverb

A word used to modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb:

● You can *freely* export images used by Paint.

● This works in two *slightly* different ways.

● This works in two *very* slightly different ways.

agreement

The grammatical phenomenon in which verbs change their form according to whether the subject of the sentence is singular or plural:

● My dog *has* fleas.

● All dogs *have* fleas.

clause

A phrase containing a 'tensed' verb (in other words, not an infinitive or a participle). A sentence must contain at least one clause, but it may contain more (like this one, which has two). A **subordinate clause** is a clause which, if removed from the sentence, still leaves a grammatical sentence behind.

contraction

A reduced form of a pair of words, reflecting their normal pronunciation. For example, *he is* contract to *he's*, *you will* to *you'll*, and I *am* to I'*m*.

denote

Stand for, indicate.

elision

The omission of vowels or syllables made in normal speech.

en-dash

A horizontal dash the width of the letter n. In Novarese, the en-dash is horizontal, unlike the hyphen.

epistemic

A variety of philosophy or logic concerned with knowledge. Cp deontic: concerned with morality/obligation.

folio

The page number as printed on the page.

generic

Applicable to a whole class of objects: *tigers*, *computers*, *plates*. In the legal context, a generic is a product whose name is not a trademark.

imperative

The form of a verb used for telling someone to do something. For example, I*nsert* the disc into the drive. C*lick* on the close icon.

justification

The spreading out of words in a block of text so that straight righthand or lefthand margins are produced. J*ustified* (or *fully-justified*) *text* usually means that both margins are straight, but text in which only one margin is straight is called *left-* or *right-justified*. It is also known as *ranged-left* (or *right*), or *left-aligned*.

modifier

A word used to restrict the meaning of another word or phrase:

- a *red* book (*red*, an adjective, tells you what type of book)
- a *filing* system (*filing*, a noun, tells you what kind of system)
- a *totally* new filing system (*totally*, an adverb, tells you how new the filing system is).

noun

A word denoting an object or concept: *computer*, *system*, *file*, *sock*, *toenail*, *Communism*.

A **noun phrase** must include a noun (or pronoun), but may also contain an article and various modifiers. For example:

- a filing system (article + noun modifier + head noun)
- a new filing system (article + adjective + noun modifier + head noun)
- the totally new filing system that I have just invented (article + adverb + adjective + noun modifier + head noun + relative clause).
- it (pronoun).

passive

A sentence type which reverses the subject and object of an ordinary **active** sentence (and accordingly requires a change in the form of the verb):

- Cats are chased by dogs.

phrase

A part of a sentence which forms a coherent entity.

prefix

A part of a word that cannot stand alone but must be attached to the beginning of other words: *re-*, *pre-*, *multi-*, *pseudo-*.

preposition

A word used to relate a noun or noun phrase grammatically and semantically to the rest of the sentence:

- a task running *in* a window

- characters generated *by* the program

- Move *to* the next occurrence *of* the string.

proper name

A noun or noun phrase identifying a specific individual or entity:

- Acorn Computers

- King's College

- the People's Republic of China.

proportionally-spaced

A font in which the characters are of varying widths: the m will be wider than the i, for example. In a fixed-width font, all characters are the same width.

sociolinguistics

A branch of linguistics which studies how language varies with social groups such as socio-economic classes.

subject

The noun, pronoun or noun phrase in a sentence which denotes who or what did the action (or whatever) denoted by the verb. Sometimes the subject doesn't look much like a noun phrase, but it has an equivalent function:

- *The sprite file window* has its own menu.

- *Double-clicking on a file icon* loads the file into the appropriate editor.

- *The most frequent error encountered when attempting to log on to a network* is 'No clock'.

verb

A word denoting an action or state: *read, believe, counteract, impersonate*. A tensed verb locates in time the action (or whatever) described in the sentence. (However, a present tense sentence often makes a general statement that something is the case, rather than describing a particular event.)

- This option *saves* the entire diagram in DrawFile format.

- These applications *share* certain resources.

Many sentences contain a **verb group**, not just a single-word verb. For example:

- You *can open* more than one window at once.

- You *must change* the disc after copying each directory.

- Several modules *will have been loaded*.

- Several modules *have been loaded*.

In each of these examples, it is the first word in the verb group that is the tensed verb.

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