



Gengo Style Guide

Rules and preferences for translating with Gengo

(American English)

GENGO STYLE GUIDE

This style guide offers rules and preferences for translating with Gengo.

The “rules” section contains rules that must be followed in all written English texts. When reviewing translations, if we spot a segment that does not adhere to a particular point outlined in this section, we will mark this segment as an error. This will affect the score for that job and thus affect the translator’s overall score.

The “preferences” section contains our preferred choices for certain elements of writing where two or more equally grammatically-correct options exist. If a translation is found not to follow the guidelines in this section, we will make note of it in your review, but we will not mark this as an error, meaning that it will not affect your score.

To have the best translator experience, we suggest you review all of the rules and preferences included here and do your best to integrate them into your writing.

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1. RULES

Please remember that these are grammatical rules of the English language. When reviewing a translation, if we find that the text breaks one of the rules in this section, we will mark that segment as an error. This will affect the translator's overall score. Please take some time to brush up on these basics and make sure you have a firm grasp of these rules.

1.1. PUNCTUATION

* Please note: Punctuation usage can differ between languages. Use the most appropriate punctuation when translating into English as the original source material may contain language-specific punctuation or symbols. Even where punctuation symbols are used in both source language and English, do not automatically copy the punctuation that is found in the source text, as it may not be the most appropriate choice in English.

Period

- Use a period (.) at the end of each sentence. Each period should be followed by a single space.
 - Example: This is an example. Please follow this format.
- When parentheses are used to enclose an independent sentence, the period belongs inside the parentheses.
 - Example: Bob was excited to buy his girlfriend flowers for her birthday. (He has never done this before.)

Question Mark

- Do not use question marks in indirect speech.
 - Example: The manager asked when the delegation would arrive.

Exclamation Mark

- Exclamation marks are usually to be avoided in formal contexts.

Comma

- Use a comma at the end of a list of items to differentiate between words and word groups.
 - Example: "She told an improbable story about her father, a shoe thief and a mango farmer." (Father is both footwear filcher and tropical fruit grower)
 - Example: "She told an improbable story about her father, a shoe thief, and a mango farmer." (Story is about three different people)
- Use a comma to separate two adjectives, or if the word "and" can be inserted.
 - Example: I bought my niece a big, furry polar bear stuffed animal.
 - Example: He bought an expensive luxury car. ("expensive and luxury car" does not make sense, so a comma cannot be used.)
- Use a comma at the end of the words etc., i.e., and e.g.
 - Example: Today, my great-grandfather became a centenarian, i.e., he had his 100th birthday.
 - Example: I enjoy all types of Japanese food (e.g., sushi, tempura, soba noodles).
- Use a comma after the day of the month and as a thousands separator for numbers above 999.
 - Example: June 7th, 2010 (*not* June, 7th, 2010 or June, 7th 2010)
 - Example: 3,000 (*not* 3000)

Semicolon

- Use a semicolon to connect two independent clauses.
 - Example: There are 30 pages to the proposal; don't get discouraged.
- Use a semicolon for a list of items that contain internal punctuation.
 - Example: We traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana; San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington.
- Use a semicolon if adverbs (then, however, thus, hence, indeed, accordingly, besides, therefore) are used to transition from one independent clause to another
 - Example: The health care bill finally passed; yet the debate continues.

Colon

- Use a colon when listing items
 - Example: Please confirm the following: the date, name, and number of guests who will be attending.

Dash

- Use an em dash (—) when there is a sudden change in thought or an abrupt end to a sentence.
 - Making an em dash on a Mac: hold down on shift + option and press hyphen (-)
 - Making an em dash on a PC: hold down on the alt key and type 0151
 - Example: He made it his mission—his one and only mission—to tell them about what happened.
- Use an en dash (–) when denoting a range of values (such as dates, times, or numbers) or when establishing a relationship between two words.
 - Making an en dash on a Mac: hold down on option + hyphen
 - Making an en dash on a PC: hold down on alt and type 0150
 - Example: Ages 18–21, patient–physician relationship

Quotation Mark

- Use the double quotation marks (" ") when quoting spoken words. Double quotation marks can also be used when certain words are emphasized for added effect (i.e., in cases of sarcasm or irony, also occasionally when using a word or letter as an example or when indicating certain proper nouns, etc.).
 - Example: She asked him, "Can you stop by the store on your way home?"
 - Example: Many believe the law was passed for "political" reasons and not for "social" reasons.
- Use single quotation marks (' ') only when there are quotes within quotes.
 - Example: Bob explained, "I wanted to play music but then Sally said, 'No way!'"
- Periods, commas (,), question marks (?), exclamation marks (!), etc., should remain inside the double quotation mark. If the quoted phrase is independent from the punctuation, the question mark or the exclamation point goes outside the quotation mark, however, the comma and period always stay inside the final quotations.
 - Example: Gandhi once said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."
 - Example: Can you explain the quote, "An eye for an eye"?

- Semicolons (;), colons (:), etc. should remain outside the double quotation mark.
 - Example: The lawyer objected citing the following: "It was an interesting point and a great story, but lacked substance."
 - Example: The homeless man exclaimed "Death to America"; there was no reaction from the crowd.

Apostrophes

- There are two situations in which apostrophes are used:
 - To mark possession.
 - Example: David's car [singular]
 - Example: Bess's drill [singular ending in s]
 - Example: children's playground [plural noun]
 - Example: footballers' wives [plural ending in s]
 - To mark where a letter or letters have been missed out.
 - Example: don't=> do not
 - Example: can't=> cannot
 - Note that "it's" belongs to the second type. Do not use "it's" for a possessive.
 - Example: it's => it is.

Brackets

- If a whole sentence is enclosed in brackets, the final period should come within the brackets, too.
 - Example: [We went shopping.]

Ellipsis

- Ellipsis in English is always marked by three dots. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence do not add a fourth period. There should be no space before other sentence-end punctuation marks.
 - Example: He reached for his knife...
 - Example: Is that ... a pineapple?!

1.2. SPELLING

American vs. British Spelling

Gengo uses American spelling unless the customer requests otherwise.

1.3. GRAMMAR

Compound words

- Avoid hyphenating nouns where possible and make compound words either with or without a space.
 - Example: Eye shadow (*not* eye-shadow)
 - Example: Breakdown (*not* break-down)
- Use a hyphen to clarify meaning.
 - Example: Man-eating shark vs. man eating shark

A vs. An

- The pronunciation of the word dictates whether you use a or an, not whether first letter of the word is a vowel or consonant.
- Use “a” for the following: pronounced h, long u (or eu), and the word one
 - Example: a utopia, a horse

Capitalization

- Capitalize a person's title if it precedes their name, and lowercase the title if it follows the name.
 - Example: President Barack Obama vs. Barack Obama, the president
- Capitalize language names.
 - Example: the English language, German-speaking customers, Japanese students
- Capitalize names and shortened/abbreviated names of government, non-government and business positions and offices.

- Example: United States Supreme Court vs. Supreme Court, Chief Executive Officer vs. CEO
- Capitalize the first word of a quotation.
 - Example: She asked him, "Can you stop by the store on your way home?"

Numbers

- Numbers 0 - 9 should be written out. Numbers larger than 9 should be left in their numeric form. Please note that a comma is used for whole numbers over a thousand. Numbers over one million should be shortened and written with a period.
 - Example: Sally has two brothers and one sister.
 - Example: Google employs over 10,000 people.
 - Example: The company's revenue hit \$3.5 billion this year. (*not* \$3,500,000,000)
- To maintain consistency, if numbers both smaller and larger than 9 are used in the same sentence, all numbers should be written in their numeric form.
 - Example: They have 4 dogs, 8 cats, 24 fishes, and 3 frogs. (*not* They have four dogs, eight cats, 24 fishes, and three frogs.)

Currency

- Leave numbers in their numerical form and use a currency symbol instead of writing out the currency name. Also, include the country of origin if the currency is used in multiple countries.
 - Example: US\$1,000 (*not* 1,000 US Dollars)
 - Example: ¥1,000 (*not* 1,000 yen)

Proper Nouns

- How a proper noun is translated depends on the information being transmitted. The deciding factor is how translating the proper noun affects the reader's ability to identify the specific place/thing being referenced.
 - Example: Herr Tiger Smith -> Mr. Tiger Smith
 - Example: Krankenhaus Waldfriede -> Waldfriede Hospital
 - Example: Göltzschtalbrücke -> Göltzschtal Bridge
 - Example: Römerstraße 7, Köln -> Römerstraße 7, Cologne
 - Example: 淡水河 -> Danshui River

- Example: 台大醫院 -> National Taiwan University Hospital

2. PREFERENCES

This section contains our preferences for certain rules where more than one grammatically-correct option exists. If a segment in a translation does not follow the guidelines in this section, we will make note of it in the review, but we will not mark this as an error, meaning that it will not affect the translator score.

Please remember that you should still be familiar with these guidelines and work on incorporating them into your writing.

2.1. GRAMMAR

Comma

- Gengo uses the Oxford (or serial) comma.
 - Example: We bought bananas, apples, and oranges.
 - Example: I painted the house red, yellow, pink, purple, and blue.

Italics vs. Quotations

- If possible, use italics for titles of published books, periodicals, movies, television programs, plays and names of ships, submarines, aircrafts, spacecrafts and satellites.
 - Example: We saw a performance of *As You Like It* on our cruise aboard the *Grand Princess*.
- If possible, use quotations for titles of works that are published within larger works, and italicize the larger works.
 - Example: He referenced the article "California Voters Back Election Overhaul," which appeared in this week's *New York Times*.
- If possible, use italics for foreign words and phrases, unless they are commonly used. (Some commonly used foreign words include: *ibid.*, *et al.*, etc.)
 - Example: He felt he'd captured the *Zeitgeist* in his work.

Capitalization

- Only capitalize the first letter of headlines.
 - Example: Section A: A brief introduction to our company

Time/Date

- The default should be to use the 12-hour system unless the customer requests otherwise.
 - Example: 3:00 p.m. (15:00)
- Dates should be written as Month Day, Year. The ordinal suffix should be included in the date.
 - Example: June 7th, 2010 (*not* 7th June 2010 or June 7, 2010)

2.2. STYLISTIC

Abbreviations and Contractions

- Avoid abbreviating words or using contractions unless necessary to maintain the original style of the text. Depending on how informal the original source text is, abbreviations and contractions are allowed. If in doubt, ask the customer which they prefer.
 - Example: Street (*not* St.)
 - Example: Cannot (*not* can't)
 - Example: It is (*not* it's)

Informal vs. Formal/Business Writing Style

- Translations should accurately reflect the original source text in meaning but also in writing style. Depending on the context, an informal writing style (which exaggerates certain words or letters and/or uses slang) is acceptable. Translators must use their best judgment when choosing a writing style. If in doubt, ask the customer which they prefer.
 - Informal writing style
 - Example: I REALLY enjoyed the Lady Gaga concert. You shoulda come with us!!!
 - Formal writing style

- Example: I would like to express my disappointment in not being able to attend the event with you.

2.3. FORMATTING

Format - General

- The general structure and use of paragraph breaks or line breaks (regardless of whether it is a text or file-based translation) should perfectly follow and match the original source material.
 - Example: If the original source text has 3 paragraphs, the translation should as well.
 - Example: Do not turn a list into a paragraph, or vice versa.
- Use the most appropriate punctuation when translating into English, as the original source material may contain language-specific punctuation or symbols.
 - Example: 5分待ちました。。。 would be translated into English as: It has been 5 *minutes*... (no Japanese '。。。' marks)

Text-based Translations

- Translation text boxes on the Gengo website do not support HTML, therefore font type, size, color and style consistency are inapplicable.

File-based Translations

- Use the same font type, size and color as the original source text.
- Maintain the appropriate font styles (bold, italic, underline) as the original source text.
- A translation may be longer than the source text, and create formatting issues.

Translators are expected to make a reasonable effort to maintain a presentable document, but they are not responsible for complex formatting work within a document.