

Names - of people

Building Your Article · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

NAMES . . . the first time you mention a person's name, use their first (given) name AND then their surname (or family name). That is Mary Smith or John Jones, etc. Be careful about Asian names because often family names (surnames) are used first. Avoid using Mr, Mrs, Miss, Master or Ms - it's old-fashioned journalism. If a person's honorific is Dr, Senator, Professor, etc, use that in the first mention, that is, Dr John Jones, Senator Fred Black, Professor Mary Smith, etc. Once you have mentioned the person by two names (and given them their honorific), then refer to them by only their surname - so long as that's the style of your target publication. Never in journalism use "the Honourable" or "the Right Honourable" for politicians or judges.

After the first mention, don't use given names. Modern journalism practice is to use only surnames.

Some publications use Mr or Mrs when the person is important, such as Mr Rudd or Mrs Turnbull. Kevin Rudd's wife is not ever Mrs Rudd - she uses her own name Therese Rein. So, just Rein, or Ms Rein. (Do not assume that every woman takes her husband's surname.)

With "Mary" or "John" it's easy to tell the person's sex, but with "Kerry" or "Alex" it's not clear if it's a male or female, and especially with many foreign names. So you should somehow insert (logically) the word she or her, or he or his, to indicate gender. One exception: if you're writing about a family and they all have the same surname, you'll have refer to each person by his or her first name.

A person's first and last name, their age, suburb, workplace and occupation gives the reader a quick pen picture of the person.

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