

Re: ASCII convention

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Christopher Culver wrote:

I have always understood that graphemes are supposed to be marked up with angle brackets ("`<w>` represents a semivowel in English").

Do you mean angle brackets or the characters "<" (less than sign) and ">" (greater than sign), which you actually used? They are quite different, in appearance and by their properties as characters in standards. Angle brackets are typically larger and have an obtuse angle, and they are classified as punctuation characters, whereas "<" and ">" are classified as mathematical operators. The angle brackets are mainly used in mathematics, creating a need for clearly distinguishing them from the operator symbols.

Angle brackets do not belong to ASCII, of course, and they are somewhat difficult to produce in most programs, and printing or display could be a problem, too. It is also debatable which characters you should use for angle brackets, since Unicode has several pairs of characters that might be interpreted as angle brackets in some sense. It is understandable that "<" and ">" are widely used instead of them, but they really *aren't* angle brackets.

When writing for general audience, it is probably better to use quotation marks (according to the rules of the language you are writing in) rather than any special notation: The letter "w" often represents a semivowel in English. (Replace the ASCII quotation marks by correct quotation marks whenever possible.)

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