

AMA Manual of Style

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Biological Nomenclature

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Scientific names are labels used in place of lengthy descriptions. A scientific name corresponds to a set of formally defined attributes. The meanings of scientific names are internationally understood. Vernacular names or common names are also labels. Vernacular names seen in medical publications include fungi, prokaryotes, meningococcus, and St John's wort. Vernacular names cannot be assumed to correspond to formally defined sets of attributes and vary by region and language. In scientific writing, scientific names should be used when the labeled entity verifiably corresponds to the set of attributes associated with the scientific name, at least at first mention. Subsequently