

## AMA Manual of Style

You are looking at 21-30 of 698 items for:

### Correct and Preferred Usage

Roxanne K. Young

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The second quote, from a 1904 editorial in JAMA, certainly holds true today, but of course, editors do consider manuscripts that are poorly written but are of good science, although they may feel less confident about a paper's content if the presentation is sloppy. Also, authors whose first language is not that of the journal should still be given consideration. In particular, editors should not lose the author's voice, especially in informal usage. Still, scientific writing should be as precise as possible to avoid misinterpretation. This section provides a selection of correct and preferred terms...

### Non-English Words, Phrases, and Accent Marks

Brenda Gregoline

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Some words and phrases derived from other languages have become part of standard English usage. Those that have not should be italicized (see 22.0, Typography), and usually a definition should be given. Consult standard medical dictionaries and the most recent edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary for guidance. A public health investigation revealed that the source of lead exposure was *hai ge fen* (clamshell powder), 1 of the 36 ingredients of the Chinese herbal medicine. *In Vitro Susceptibility Testing of Antifungal Agents* Medical information and advice abound on the Internet, but remember: *Caveat lector*. Lorenz Böhler, the son of a carpenter, eventually became the *praeceptor traumatologiae totus mundi* (teacher of traumatology in the whole world)...

### Medical Indexes

Bruce McGregor and Harriet S. Meyer

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Indexes are essential and highly valued components of medical textbooks and journals. Publishers should hire professional indexers conversant with medical terminology and allot sufficient time in the production schedule for a comprehensive index to be prepared. “Space limitations on indexes should not apply to medical books.” Medical indexes should aim for “accuracy, thorough analysis (subheads and cross-references), completeness/comprehensiveness [and] usability.” A textbook index should “tie together” discussions throughout of the same or related subject, eg, an infectious disease and its pathogen. General references on indexing include *Indexing Books*, the indexing chapter in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and *Indexing From A to Z*, which includes a section on biomedical indexing. The American Society of Indexers website provides indexing resources.<sup>6</sup> Patton and Wyman’s online guide includes information specific to biomedical indexing. Biomedical indexing is covered in *Indexing Specialties: Medicine and Indexing the Medical Sciences*...

## Abbreviations

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Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines an abbreviation as “a shortened form of a written word or phrase used in place of the whole”<sup>3</sup> (eg, Dr for doctor, US for United States, dB for decibel). An acronym is “formed from the initial letter or letters of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term”<sup>3</sup>(eg, ANCOVA for analysis of covariance). Acronyms are pronounced as words.

## Nomenclature

Margaret A. Winker, Richard M. Glass, and Harriet S. Meyer

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This chapter is devoted to nomenclature: systematically formulated names for specific entities. Biological nomenclature dates back at least to the 18th century. Since the mid-20th century, many biomedical disciplines have established committees to develop and promulgate official systems of nomenclature. Accelerating knowledge, particularly from molecular biology, necessitated the official biomedical nomenclature systems, sometimes with dramatic results. For instance, a single coagulation factor had been referred to by 14 different names...

## Eponyms

Richard M. Glass

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Eponyms are names or phrases derived from or including the name of a person or place. These terms are used in a descriptive or adjectival sense<sup>1</sup> in medical and scientific writing to describe entities such as diseases, syndromes, signs, tests, methods, and procedures. These eponymous terms should be distinguished from true possessives (eg, Homer's Iliad). Medical eponyms are numerous (a website devoted to medical eponyms lists more than 7000), are frequently used in medical publications, and are treated in dictionaries of eponyms covering general medicine<sup>3</sup> and some specialties, eg, neurology. Eponyms historically have indicated the name of the describer or presumptive discoverer of the disease (eg, Alzheimer disease) or sign (eg, Murphy sign), the name of a person or kindred found to have the disease described (eg, Christmas disease), or, when based on the name of a place (technically, toponyms), the geographic location in which the disease was found to occur (eg, Lyme disease)...

## Greek Letters

Brenda Gregoline

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Greek letters are frequently used in statistical formulas and notations, in mathematical composition, in certain chemical names for drugs, and in clinical and technical terms (see 14.11, Abbreviations, Clinical, Technical, and Other Common Terms; 14.12, Abbreviations, Units of Measure; 15.0, Nomenclature; 20.0, Study Design and Statistics; and 21.0, Mathematical Composition). The editors of JAMA and the Archives Journals prefer the use of Greek letters rather than spelled-out words, unless usage dictates otherwise. Consult Dorland's and Stedman's medical dictionaries for general terms. These sources may differ in the representation of terms, ie, #-fetoprotein (symbol) (Stedman's) and alpha fetoprotein (Dorland's). If the Greek letter, rather than the word, is found in either of these sources for the item in question, use the letter in preference to the word.

## Units of Measure

Phil B. Fontanarosa and Stacy Christiansen

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The presentation of quantitative scientific information is an integral component of biomedical publication. Accurate communication of scientific knowledge and presentation of numerical data require a scientifically informative system for reporting units of measure. The International System of Units (Le Système International d'Unités or SI) represents a modified version of the metric system that has been established by international agreement and currently is the official measurement system of most nations of the world.<sup>1</sup> The SI

promotes uniformity of quantities and units, minimizes the number of units and multiples used in other measurement systems, and can express virtually any measurement in science, medicine, industry, and commerce. In 1977, the World Health Organization recommended the adoption of the SI by the international scientific community. Since then, many biomedical publications throughout the world have adopted SI units as their preferred and primary method for reporting scientific measurements...

## Numbers and Percentages

Stephen J. Lurie and Margaret A. Winker

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Any policy on the use of numbers in text must take into account the reader's impression that numbers written as numerals (symbols) appear to emphasize quantity more strongly than numbers spelled out as words. Because numerals convey quantity more efficiently than spelled-out numbers, they are generally preferable in technical writing. In literary writing, by contrast, spelled-out numbers may be more compatible with style. Despite these general principles, usage may appear inconsistent when a publication chooses to use numerals in some instances and words in others. The guidelines outlined in this section attempt to reduce these inconsistencies and avoid use of numerals that may be jarring to the reader. In situations that are not governed by these guidelines, common sense and editorial judgment should prevail.

## Manuscript Preparation

Cheryl Iverson

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Preparation of a scholarly manuscript requires thoughtful consideration of the topic and anticipation of the reader's needs and questions. Certain elements either are standard parts of all manuscripts or are used so often as to merit special instruction. These elements are discussed in this section in the order in which they appear in the manuscript. References are discussed separately in chapter 3 and tables and figures in chapter 4. The preparation of any manuscript for publication should take the requirements of the intended journal into account; this may enhance the chances of acceptance and expedite publication. For the author, manuscript preparation requires familiarity with the journal to which the article is submitted. Most journals publish instructions for authors, which serve as useful guides; some journals' instructions for authors contain a manuscript checklist (see that from JAMA 1 [reproduced in this chapter as the Table] as an example)...