

AMA Manual of Style

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Use of Numerals

Stephen J. Lurie and Margaret A. Winker

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009
ISBN: eISBN:
Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.265

In scientific writing, numerals are used to express numbers in most circumstances. Exceptions are the following: # Numbers that begin a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading # Common fractions # Accepted usage such as idiomatic expressions and numbers used as pronouns # Other uses of “one” in running text # Ordinals first through ninth # Numbers spelled out in quotes or published titles. (See , Spelling Out Numbers.) Note the following examples of numerals in text: The relative risk of exposed individuals was nearly 3 times that of the controls. In the second phase of the study, 3 of the

Spelling Out Numbers

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Use words to express numbers that occur at the beginning of a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading; for common fractions; for accepted usage and numbers used as pronouns; for ordinals first through ninth; and when part of a published quote or title in which the number is spelled out. When spelling out numerals, hyphenate twenty-one through ninety-nine when these numbers occur alone or as part of a larger number. When numbers greater than 100 are spelled out, do not use commas or and (eg, one hundred thirty-two). | Use words for any number that begins a sentence, title, subtitle, or

Use of Digit Spans and Hyphens

Stephen J. Lurie and Margaret A. Winker

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009
ISBN: eISBN:
Item type: section

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Digits should not be omitted when indicating a span of years or page numbers in the text. Hyphens may be used in text when a year span is used as the identifying characteristic of a study (eg, the 1982-1984 NHANES survey), but only when the actual dates of the study

have been defined previously in the text; if the dates are not defined in the text, the hyphen is ambiguous and may or may not mean that the dates indicated are inclusive. In certain circumstances, such as fiscal year or academic year, the actual span may be understood and no

Meta-analysis

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009
ISBN: eISBN:
Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.280

Meta-analysis is a systematic pooling of the results of 2 or more studies to address a question of interest or hypothesis. According to Moher and Olkin, [Meta-analyses] provide a systematic and explicit method for synthesizing evidence, a quantitative overall estimate (and confidence intervals) derived from the individual studies, and early evidence as to the effectiveness of treatments, thus reducing the need for continued study. They also can address questions in specific subgroups that individual studies may not have examined. A meta-analysis quantitatively summarizes the evidence regarding a treatment, procedure, or association. It is a more statistically powerful test of the

Observational Studies

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009
ISBN: eISBN:
Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.279

In an observational study, the researcher identifies a condition or outcome of interest and then measures factors that may be related to that outcome. Although observational studies cannot lead to strong causal inferences, they may nonetheless suggest certain causal hypotheses. To infer causation in observational studies, investigators attempt to establish a sequence of events if event A generally precedes event B in time, then it is possible that A may be responsible for causing B. Such studies may be either (the investigator tries to reconstruct what happened in the past) or prospective (the investigator identifies a group of individuals and

Abstract

Cheryl Iverson

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009
ISBN: eISBN:
Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.28

In this age of electronic data dissemination and retrieval, in which abstracts are typically indexed and freely available, a well-written abstract has become increasingly important in directing readers to articles of potential clinical and research interest. The abstract

of a research report summarizes the main points of an article: (1) the study objective or background, (2) the study design and methods, (3) primary results, and (4) principal conclusions. For scientific studies and systematic reviews, narrative expressions, such as “X is described,” “Y is discussed,” “Z is also reviewed,” do not add meaning and should be avoided. Results should be presented

Cost-effectiveness Analysis, Cost-Benefit Analysis

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009

ISBN: eISBN:

Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press

DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.281

Although a treatment or screening technique may be shown to be effective in an RCT, recommending it in general practice would not necessarily be rational. Such interventions may be prohibitively expensive, or they may benefit only a small number of people at the expense of a large number of people, or they may lead to significant “downstream” costs that would eventually negate any immediate savings or benefit. Thus, it is possible that interventions that appear less effective may actually lead to the greatest societal benefits over the long term. Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses comprise a set of mathematical techniques to

Significant Digits and Rounding Numbers

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009

ISBN: eISBN:

Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press

DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.284

When numbers are expressed in scientific and biomedical articles, they should reflect the degree of accuracy of the original measurement. Numbers obtained from mathematical calculations should be rounded to reflect the original degree of precision. | The use of a numeral in a numbers column (eg, the ones column) implies that the method of measurement is accurate to that level of precision. For example, when a reporter attempts to estimate the size of a crowd, the estimate might be to the nearest tens of number of people, but would not be expressed as an exact number, such as 86, unless

Studies of Diagnostic Tests

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009

ISBN: eISBN:

Item type: section

Publisher: Oxford University Press

DOI: 10.1093/jama/9780195176339.021.282

Correct treatment depends on accurate diagnosis. Diagnostic tests may include simple procedures such as physical signs or physical examination, as well as blood tests and radiologic imaging. Few diagnostic tests, however, can be relied on to yield accurate

diagnoses 100% of the time. Thus, it is important to study the performance of diagnostic tests. Bossuyt et al stated: Exaggerated and biased results from poorly designed and reported diagnostic studies can trigger their premature dissemination and lead physicians into making incorrect treatment decisions. A rigorous evaluation process of diagnostic tests before introduction into clinical practice could not only reduce the number

Survey Studies

Margaret A. Winker and Stephen J. Lurie

Print Publication Year: 2007 Published Online: 2009

ISBN: eISBN:

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In a survey study, a representative sample of individuals are asked to describe their opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. For surveys of behavior (eg, diet, exercise, smoking), authors should provide evidence that the survey instrument correlates with the actual, observed behaviors of a similar sample of individuals. That is, the survey instrument should have been shown to have . If the survey instrument is different in any way from that given to the previous validation sample (eg, wording, order, or omission of questions), then it may no longer be a valid measure of those behaviors. For surveys, as for other studies,