

AMA Manual of Style

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Types of Articles

Richard M. Glass

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Effective written communication requires the author to consider the intended message and audience and use a form appropriate to both. Medical journal articles usually fit into one of the following 7 main types. Published reports of original research are the backbone of medical and scientific communications. Critical evaluation and replication of the findings of such reports are key aspects of quality control and progress in science and medicine; the clinical applications of original research are a major source of benefits for patients. Journals often categorize reports of original data as Original Articles, Original Communications, or Original Reports, section headings that emphasize the new findings such articles intend to communicate. Short articles reporting original data may be called Brief Reports. Studies that address basic issues of physiology or pathology may be called Research Reports or Clinical Investigations. In JAMA, articles that report preliminary findings are called Preliminary Communications...

Abbreviations

Roxanne K. Young

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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"³ (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"³(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...

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.

Typography

Annette Flanagan

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Typography is broadly defined as the composed arrangement and appearance of text and other elements on a surface that involves elements of design. The editor and graphic designer often cooperate in the process of creating the typography and design for a book, monograph, or journal (in print or online), with the goal of achieving a balance of form and readability. According to typographer Edmund Arnold, good design and typography for English-language publications follow the linear flow of the Latin alphabet and support the act of reading. The English language is read from left to right and from top to bottom. According to Arnold, when a reader of such language begins to read a printed page, the eyes first fall naturally to the top left corner and then move across and down the page, first from left to right and then in a right-to-left sweep to the next line, until reaching the bottom right corner. Any design or typographic element that forces the reader to work against this natural flow (reading gravity) interrupts the reading rhythm and should be avoided...

Ethical and Legal Considerations

Annette Flanagin

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This chapter is intended to provide guidance to authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers in the fields of biomedicine, health, and the life sciences. The discussion focuses on ethical and legal issues involved in publication. According to Lundberg, human behavior is regulated by 3 forces: morality, ethics, and law. If personal morality does not regulate acceptable and appropriate behavior, we can rely on ethics. Ethical behavior is determined by norms, principles, guidelines, and policies. This chapter cites examples of the determinants of ethical behavior as they relate to scientific publication. If ethics do not regulate behavior, we are forced to rely on public laws. Examples of cases involving scientific publication when laws have been invoked or enforced are also provided in this chapter. Those ethical and legal considerations and dilemmas most commonly encountered in scholarly scientific publication are the focus of this chapter. References to sources for additional guidance and information not discussed in this chapter are also provided within the text and at the end of each subsection...

Editorial Assessment and Processing

Richard M. Glass

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The principal goals of editing biomedical publications are to select, improve, and disseminate information that will advance the art and science of the discipline covered by the publication. For example, biomedical publications are a major source of information for the improvement of medical care. In addition to initial transmission to readers at the time of publication, information from journal articles is often carried by the public media. Published articles influence educators and opinion leaders, who transmit the information to many persons who do not read the original publications. Medical journal articles can also be subsequently accessed by clinicians and researchers seeking information about particular topics. Such searches are facilitated by online search engines (see 25.0, Resources) and provide the information essential to practicing evidence-based medicine,¹ in which patient-care decisions are informed by acquiring and assessing the relevant medical literature. These myriad uses of biomedical literature indicate the importance of the procedures to improve quality involved in editorial assessment and processing...

Grammar

Stacy Christiansen

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Item type: chapter

A clear understanding of grammar is basic to good writing. Many excellent grammar books provide a detailed discussion of specific principles (see 25.3, Resources, General Style and Usage). In this section, the focus is on how to avoid common grammatical and writing errors. The content of this chapter is organized from the smallest parts of speech (eg, nouns and pronouns) to larger structures (eg, sentences and paragraphs)...

Punctuation

Cheryl Iverson

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Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are the 3 end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Periods are the most common end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Use a period at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence and at the end of each table footnote and each figure legend...

Articles of Opinion

Richard M. Glass

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Editorials are short essays that usually reflect the views of the editor or the policies of the journal. Editorials may be written by the editor, a member of the editorial staff or editorial board, or an invited author. Editorials may comment on an article in the same issue of the journal, providing additional context and opinion regarding its implications, or may deal with a separate topic of interest to the journal's readers or editors. In the past, it was common for authors of medical journal editorials not to be identified, as is still the usual practice for newspaper editorials. This