

AMA Manual of Style

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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...

Redundant, Expendable, and Incomparable Words and Phrases

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It's déjà vu all over again. Yogi Berra (1925-) A redundancy is a term or phrase that unnecessarily repeats words or meanings. Below are some common redundancies that can usually be avoided (redundant words are italicized): Some words and phrases can usually be omitted without affecting meaning, and omitting them often improves the readability of a sentence: Quite, very, and rather are often overused and misused and can be deleted in many instances (see also , Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases). Avoid roundabout and wordy expressions: An adjective denoting an absolute or extreme state or quality does not logically admit of quantification

Back-formations

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Back-formation is the creation of a new word in the mistaken belief that it was the source of an existing word. Many back-formations are verbs, some of them derived from abstract

nouns (ambulate from ambulation, diagnose from diagnosis, dialyze from dialysis) and others from agent nouns, real or supposed (beg from beggar, peddle from peddler, scavenge from scavenger). These examples of back-formations have achieved acceptance; however, many of those pertaining to medical jargon have not, including adhere, cyanose, defervesce, diurese, lyse, necrose, pex (from orchidopexy), plege (from cardioplegia), and torse. Medical jargon also includes many deviant singular forms of nouns

Jargon

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Many words have found their way into medical vocabularies with unusual meanings that are not recognized even by medical dictionaries. Such writings may be characterized as medical jargon or medical slang. When these words appear in medical manuscripts or in medical conversation, they are unintelligible to other scientists, particularly those of foreign countries; they are not translatable and are the mark of the careless and uncultured person.

Morris Fishbein, MD I have laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) Words and phrases that can be understood in conversation but are vague, confusing, or depersonalizing are generally inappropriate

Age and Sex Referents

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Use specific terminology to refer to persons' age. See also , Inclusive Language, Age. Neonates or newborns are persons from birth to 1 month of age. Infants are children aged 1 month to 1 year (12 months). Children are persons aged 1 to 12 years. Sometimes, children may be used more broadly to encompass persons from birth to 12 years of age. These persons may also be referred to as boys or girls. Adolescents are persons aged 13 through 17 years. They may also be referred to as teenagers or as adolescent boys or adolescent girls, depending on context. Adults are persons aged 18 years

Anatomy

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Authors often err in referring to anatomic regions or structures as the “right heart,” “left chest,” “left neck,” and “right brain.” Generally these terms can be corrected by inserting a phrase such as “part of the” or “side of the.” right side of the heart; right atrium; right ventricle left side of the chest; left hemithorax left aspect of the neck right hemisphere [query author] ascending [not right] and descending [not left] colonWhere appropriate, use specific anatomic descriptors:The upper extremity comprises the arm (extending from the shoulder to the elbow), the forearm (from the elbow to the wrist), and the

Articles

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The article a is used before the aspirate h (eg, a historic occasion) and nonvocalic y (eg, a ubiquitous organism). Abbreviations and acronyms are preceded by a or an according to the sound following (eg, a UN resolution, an HMO plan). (See also , Abbreviations, Agencies and Organizations.)

Inclusive Language

Roxanne K. Young

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Sexist language, racist language, theistic language all are typical of the policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not, permit new knowledge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas. Toni Morrison JAMA and the Archives Journals avoid the use of language that imparts bias against persons or groups on the basis of sex, race or ethnicity, age, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation. The careful writer avoids generalizations and stereotypes and is specific when choosing words to describe people. Sex refers to the biological characteristics of males and females. Gender includes more than sex and serves as a cultural indicator of a person’s personal

Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases

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UPDATE: We will discontinue using quotation marks to identify parts of an article, but retain the capitalization; eg, This is discussed in the Methods section (not the “Methods” section). This change was made February 14, 2013. What would become of us if the delectur did not exist, sighed the proofreader. José Saramago We not infrequently are

compelled to refuse publication to an article which contains valuable facts, but which is weighed down with so many imperfections as to discourage one as does the porcupine from closer investigation. JAMA The second quote, from a 1904 editorial in JAMA, certainly holds true today, but of course, editors do consider manuscripts that

Clock Referents

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Occasionally, reference to a locus of insertion, position, or attitude is given in terms of a clock-face orientation, as seen by the viewer (see also , Numbers and Percentages, Use of Numerals, Measures of Time). Note: The terms clockwise and counterclockwise can also be confusing. The point of reference (eg, that of observer vs subject) should be specified if the usage is ambiguous.