

AMA Manual of Style

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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.

Greek Letter vs Word

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Capitalization After a Greek Letter

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In titles, subtitles (except in references), headings, table column heads, line art, and at the beginning of sentences, the first non-Greek letter after a lowercase Greek letter should be capitalized. #-Blocker use during pregnancy increases the risk that an infant will be small for gestational age. Do not capitalize the Greek letter itself, unless the word itself normally includes a Greek capital letter. In this case, the first non-Greek letter after the capital letter should be lowercased. #-Hemolytic streptococci were identified. #1-3,4-trans-tetrahydrocannabinol is 1 of 2 psychoactive isometric principles in cannabis. For hyphenation in words that contain Greek letters, consult Special Combinations

Greek Alphabet

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Capital and lowercase Greek letters are listed below. |

Page Composition and Electronic Formats

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If Greek letters need to be marked or modified on page proofs, this can be done by writing the letters “Gk” in the margin, followed by a description of the character (eg, “Gk lowercase mu”). Greek letters can pose problems for some Internet browsers. The best solution for editors is to make sure their text outputs Greek letters in a universal, platform-independent, nonproprietary standard for character encoding, such as Unicode. Most word processing and typesetting programs can generate Greek letters that already are Unicode encoded. Greek letters in running text should never be saved as graphics; these files are much