



Plurals Quiz

by Laura King, MA, ELS

Directions: Edit the following sentences based on your understanding of [chapter 9](#) of the [AMA Manual of Style](#).

1. Patients and caregivers should plan on median life spans as long as 7 to 10 years for patients whose conditions are diagnosed in their 60's and early 70's.

ANSWER:

Patients and caregivers should plan on median life spans as long as 7 to 10 years for patients whose conditions are diagnosed in their 60s and early 70s.

Editor's Note: Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of numerals ([§9.6](#), Plurals of Symbols, Letters, Numbers, and Years, p 369 in print).

2. Molecular genetics have contributed greatly to our understanding of inherited ocular disease.

ANSWER:

Molecular genetics has contributed greatly to our understanding of inherited ocular disease.

Editor's Note: Some nouns, because they end in a “plural” form, are mistakenly taken to be plurals even though they should be treated as singulars and take a singular verb (eg, measles, mumps, mathematics, genetics) ([§9.8](#), False Singulars, pp 369-370 in print).

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3. Sera from 100 infants in the study were collected at birth.

ANSWER:

Serum samples from 100 infants in the study were collected at birth.

Editor's Note: Beware of “pluralizing” nouns that cannot stand on their own as plurals (eg, use *serum samples* not *sera* and *urine tests* not *urines*) ([§9.7](#), When Not to Use Plurals, p 369 in print).

4. The physicians were asked to mind their p’s and q’s while the new medical record system was being implemented.

ANSWER:

The physicians were asked to mind their *p*’s and *q*’s while the new medical record system was being implemented.

Editor's Note: Use ’s to indicate the plural of letters, signs, or symbols spoken as such or for words referred to as words when *s* alone would be confusing. Italics with the inflectional ending in roman type should be used for words, letters, and numbers but not for symbols and signs ([§9.6](#), Plurals of Symbols, Letters, Numbers, and Years, p 369 in print).

5. The emergency department staff were asked to implement and manage the screening procedures.

ANSWER:

The emergency department staff was asked to implement and manage the screening procedures.

Editor's Note: Collective nouns may take either singular or plural verbs, depending on whether the word refers to the group as a unit or to its members as individuals. In American English, most nouns naming a group regarded as a unit (in this example, *staff*) are treated as singular ([§9.2](#), Collective Nouns, pp 367-368 in print).



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6. Of the patients, 83% was ambulatory at the time of discharge.

ANSWER:

Of the patients, 83% were ambulatory at the time of discharge.

Editor's Note: Collective nouns may take either singular or plural verbs, depending on whether the word refers to the group as a unit or to its members as individuals (§9.2, Collective Nouns, pp 367-368 in print). In this example, 83% refers to *patients*, which should use the plural verb *were*. If the sentence started, "Of the population," then the verb would be singular ("Of the population, 83% was ambulatory at the time of discharge.").

7. Specific formulae have been described for growth, angiogenesis, cell-to-cell adhesion, and even pH regulation and drug administration.

ANSWER:

Specific formulas have been described for growth, angiogenesis, cell-to-cell adhesion, and even pH regulation and drug administration.

Editor's Note: There is a trend toward using English plurals rather than the traditional Latin or Greek. Section 9.3 lists preferred plural forms for some terms commonly used in medical writing (§9.3, Latin and Greek vs English, p 368 in print).

8. Endocarditis was confirmed if active *Staphylococci* were demonstrated by histologic examination or culture.

ANSWER:

Endocarditis was confirmed if active staphylococci were demonstrated by histologic examination or culture.

Editor's Note: When referring to the common vernacular plural of a genus, use roman lowercase letters (§9.4, Microorganisms, pp 368-369 in print).



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9. Of the 3 types of *Proteuses*, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Proteus vulgarism*, and *Proteus penneri*, *P mirabilis* causes most of *Proteus*-related infections.

ANSWER:

Of the 3 types of *Proteus* species, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Proteus vulgarism*, and *Proteus penneri*, *P mirabilis* causes most of *Proteus*-related infections.

Editor's Note: For organisms that do not have a common plural, add the word *species* or *organisms* to the genus name to indicate a plural use ([§9.4](#), *Microorganisms*, pp 368-369 in print).

10. During the initial period of spread, the incidence of vancomycin-resistant enterococci was reported to be much higher among patients located in intensive care units (ICU's) compared with those not in ICU's.

ANSWER:

During the initial period of spread, the incidence of vancomycin-resistant enterococci was reported to be much higher among patients located in intensive care units (ICUs) compared with those not in ICUs.

Editor's Note: For most all-capital-letter abbreviations, the plural is formed by adding *s*. Do not use an apostrophe before the *s* ([§9.5](#), *Abbreviations*, p 369 in print).

11. After the biohazardous material spill in the emergency departments (EDs) of the medical pavilion, warning signs reading "DO NOT ENTER EDS" were placed throughout the buildings.

ANSWER:

After the biohazardous material spill in the emergency departments (EDs) of the medical pavilion, warning signs reading "DO NOT ENTER EDs" were placed throughout the buildings.

Editor's Note: When plural all-capital-letter abbreviations are found in an all-capital setting, the plural *s* is still lowercase ([§9.5](#), *Abbreviations*, p 369 in print).



LEARNING RESOURCES

12. In the study of veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, 60 mg of phenelzine sulfate were administered to each study participant.

ANSWER:

In the study of veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, 60 mg of phenelzine sulfate was administered to each study participant.

Editor's Note: For a unit of measure (eg, milligrams), a singular verb should be used ([§9.2](#), Collective Nouns, pp 367-368 in print).

