



## Age and Sex Referents Quiz by Laura King, MA, ELS

**Directions:** Edit the following sentences to eliminate incorrect age and sex referents. Refer to [section 11.5](#) (p 410 in print) of the [AMA Manual of Style](#).

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1. A subpopulation at higher risk for sexually transmitted disease may be African American adolescent females seeking sexual health services.

**ANSWER:**

A subpopulation at higher risk for sexually transmitted disease may be African American female adolescents seeking sexual health services.

**Editor's Note:** Whenever possible, a patient should be referred to as a man, woman, boy, girl, or infant, not as a male or female. However, *male* and *female* are appropriate adjectives, and *adolescent* is an appropriate noun. In this example, making *female* the adjective and *adolescent* the noun resolves the usage problem.

2. The study participants ranged in age from 10 to 25 years and included both boys and girls.

**ANSWER:**

The study participants ranged in age from 10 to 25 years and included both males and females.

**Editor's Note:** Occasionally, a study group may comprise children and adults of both sexes. Then, the use of *male* and *female* as nouns is appropriate.

## LEARNING RESOURCES

3. Incidence was estimated as the proportion of newborn babies meeting the specified cutoff for mild hypothermia or for moderate or severe hypothermia.

**ANSWER:**

Incidence was estimated as the proportion of newborns meeting the specified cutoff for mild hypothermia or for moderate or severe hypothermia.

**Editor's Note:** The preferred term for persons from birth to 1 month of age is *neonate* or *newborn* (do not use the term *baby*).

4. The infants were examined immediately after birth for the presence of hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy.

**ANSWER:**

The newborns were examined immediately after birth for the presence of hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy.

**Editor's Note:** Do not use the term *infant* to refer to a person from birth to 1 month of age. The preferred term is *neonate* or *newborn*.

5. The investigators studied the incidence of acute respiratory illness in children 1 to 12 months old.

**ANSWER:**

The investigators studied the incidence of acute respiratory illness in infants 1 to 12 months old.

**Editor's Note:** Although the term *children* is not incorrect in this example (because sometimes *children* may be used more broadly to encompass persons from birth to 12 years of age), the more specific term is *infants* (those aged 1 month to 1 year).

## LEARNING RESOURCES

6. Patients included in the study had a mean age of 6½ years (range, 2-15 years).

**ANSWER:**

Patients included in the study had a mean age of 6.5 years (range, 2-15 years).

**Editor's Note:** When age is presented as a mean, use the decimal form (eg, 6.5 years) (see also [§20.0](#), Study Design and Statistics, p 835-905 in the print).

7. The study examined potential major bleeding events in the elderly (those older than 75 years).

**ANSWER:**

The study examined potential major bleeding events in elderly patients (those older than 75 years).

**Editor's Note:** Because the term *elderly* connotes a stereotype, avoid using it as a noun. When referring to the entire population of elderly persons, use of *the elderly* may be appropriate (as in the impact of prescription drug costs on the elderly, for example). Otherwise, terms such as *older persons*, *older people*, *elderly patients*, *geriatric patients*, *older adults*, *older patients*, *aging adults*, *persons 65 years and older*, or *the older population* are preferred (see also [§11.10.3](#), Age, p 416 in the print).

8. The study examined the risk of human immunodeficiency virus among males and females treated at the local community health clinic.

**ANSWER:**

The study examined the risk of human immunodeficiency virus among male and female patients treated at the local community health clinic.

**Editor's Note:** Whenever possible, a patient should be referred to as a man, woman, boy, girl, or infant, not as a male or female. However, occasionally, patient ages are not known. In this case, the use of *male* and *female* as nouns is appropriate. However, if the terms *male* and *female* can be easily changed to adjectives by following them with a noun (eg, patient, individual, study participant), this approach is recommended.



## LEARNING RESOURCES

9. From the population sample, 25 men (mean age, 35 years; range, 26-49 years) and 25 girls (mean age, 32 years; range, 24-47 years) were selected for participation in the study.

**ANSWER:**

From the population sample, 25 men (mean age, 35 years; range, 26-49 years) and 25 women (mean age, 32 years; range, 25-47 years) were selected for participation in the study.

**Editor's Note:** Female adults are persons 18 years and older and should be referred to as *women* not *girls*.

10. The primary outcome of the study was hearing assessment of adolescents 18 to 24 years of age with various types of craniosynostosis.

**ANSWER:**

The primary outcome of the study was hearing assessment of young adults 18 to 24 years of age with various types of craniosynostosis.

**Editor's Note:** *Adults* are persons aged 18 years and older and should be referred to as *men* or *women*. Persons 18 to 24 years of age may also be referred to as *young adults*.