

APA Abbreviation Usage and Format



Abbreviations/Overview

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Abbreviations in APA

The use of abbreviations and acronyms is allowed in academic writing. For the purpose of this document, the term “abbreviation” will encompass abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms.

Abbreviations/Overview

When using abbreviations:

- Introduce the abbreviation to readers, even if it is an abbreviation that is commonly used in your discipline.
- Avoid overuse: most writing is easier to understand when more words are spelled out than when it is overflowing with abbreviations. Only abbreviate when it helps the reader.
- Avoid underuse: include and introduce an abbreviation if it will be used at least three times in a paper.
- Use consistently.

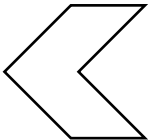
Abbreviations/Overview

- You do not need to introduce abbreviations that are used in the dictionary (i.e., AIDS, IQ). You do need to introduce terms even if they are familiar, such as ROM for “range of motion” or PT for “physical therapy.” This is because academic writing is meant to serve a broad audience. In addition, some readers may see an abbreviation and think it stands for something else, i.e., PT could be “physical therapy” or “part-time” or “patient.”
- Once you introduce an abbreviation, use it consistently throughout the paper; do not alternate between writing out the words and the abbreviation.
- Abbreviations may be used to begin a sentence.
- Abbreviations may not be used as the group author name in a reference list entry.
- Do not abbreviate the name of a publisher in a reference list unless it is shown as abbreviated on the work you are citing.

Abbreviations/Overview

Special consideration for USAHS students: OT can be used in a paper for either “occupational therapy” or “occupational therapist,” not both. The same for PT. To avoid confusion for readers, you may consider writing out both occupational therapy/physical therapy and occupational therapist/physical therapist.

If there are two different group authors that would share the same abbreviation mentioned within a single document (for example, American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association could both be APA), it is recommended that both be written out in all mentions to avoid confusion.

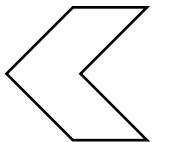


How to Introduce an Abbreviation

Introduce the abbreviation in the first mention of the term/words.

- If the full term appears in a sentence, introduce the abbreviation by placing it in parentheses after the term: American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).
- If the full term first appears in a parenthetical citation, introduce the abbreviation by placing it in brackets: (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2021).

If the first mention occurs in a heading, write the term out fully in the heading, then introduce it the first time it appears in the text. Abbreviations may be used in headings only if they have already been introduced or are commonly used in the dictionary. That said, it is recommended that abbreviations be avoided in headings or that headings be reworded so they are not included. This is due to the fact that some readers will skim an article and may not understand the heading on its own.



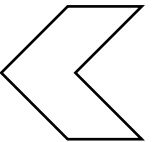
Abbreviation Format: Plurals and Articles

Plurals

- Most abbreviations incorporate a lowercase “s” to create a plural form: DOIs, URLs, Eds.
- Do not add an “s” to make “page” plural. Instead use pp.
- Units of measurement are the same singular or plural: 1 cm, 3 cm; 1 hr, 5 hr

Articles

- Use the article that matches the way the abbreviation is pronounced. Use “an” before a vowel sound and “a” before a consonant sound.
- Keep in mind that some abbreviations are pronounced as words (ROM) and others are pronounced letter-by-letter (HMO, IQ).
- Examples: an IQ score, an SCI, a DSM-5 disorder



Abbreviations in Abstracts

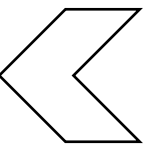
It is typically not necessary to use abbreviations in an abstract. However, if the abbreviation would help the reader recognize a term or find your article via a keyword search, then abbreviations are allowed, even if they are not used three times.

When you use an abbreviation in both the abstract and the text, introduce it in both places upon first mention.



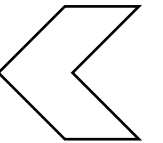
Abbreviations in Tables and Figures

- Introduce abbreviations used in tables and figures within each table and figure, even if they have already been introduced in the body of the paper. The abbreviation can either be introduced in the table using parentheses, in the same manner as it would in the body of the paper, or it can be specified in a table/figure general note or figure legend. (Log into MyUSA and then use this link: [APA Table Construction](#) for more information on table/figure notes).
- If an abbreviation is used in more than one table or figure, introduce it in each table or figure.
- Do not introduce or write out abbreviations for units of measurement or statistics in a table or figure. The abbreviation “no.” for number and the symbol “%” may be used without introduction or mention in a general note.



Abbreviations in Reference Lists

Some parts of books, reports, and other publications are abbreviated in a reference list. See [Table 1](#) for a list of common reference page abbreviations.



Abbreviations and Units of Measurement

- APA uses the metric system in its journals. Authors are required to provide the metric conversion if using non-metric measurements: The rod was 3 ft (0.91 m) long.
- Write out the word for units of measurement that are not accompanied by numeric values: several kilograms, duration of hours.
- Use abbreviations and symbols for units of measurement that are accompanied by numeric values—do not make abbreviations plural: 4 cm, 30 kg, 22 °C.
- Abbreviations for units of measurement can be used in table column and row headings even if they are not accompanied by a numerical value.
- Do not introduce or write out units of measurement, even in the first mention. See [Table 2](#) for a list of abbreviations for common units of measurement.



Abbreviations and Time, Latin Terms, and Statistics

Time

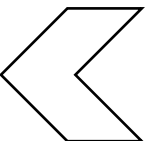
- Do not abbreviate the words “day,” “week,” “month,” or “year,” even when they are accompanied by numerical values.
- See [Table 3](#) for common time abbreviations.

Latin Terms

- Use Latin abbreviations only in parenthetical material. In the narrative, write out the term in English.
- Exceptions: Use “v.” for “versus” in the name of a court case, in the reference list, and in all in-text citations. Use “et al.” in both narrative and parenthetical citations.
- See [Table 4](#) for common Latin abbreviations.

Statistical Abbreviations

- Do not introduce abbreviations or symbols that represent statistics or Greek letters. Introduce other statistical abbreviations when they are used in your paper.
- For a comprehensive list of Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols, log into MyUSA and then click on this link: [Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols](#) then go to 6.44 “Statistical Symbols and Abbreviations” Table 6.5.





All information for this presentation was adapted
from:

American Psychological Association. (2020).
*Publication manual of the American
Psychological Association* (7th ed.).
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-00>

For further information, please contact the
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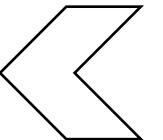


Table 1*Abbreviations in References*

Abbreviation	Book or Publication Part
ed.	edition
Rev. ed.	revised edition
2 nd ed.	second edition (use ordinal numerals for editions)
Ed./Eds.	editor/editors
Trans.	translator(s)
Narr./ Narrs.	narrator/narrators
n.d.	no date
p./pp.	page/pages
para./paras.	paragraph/paragraphs
Vol./Vols.	volume/volumes
No.	number
Pt.	part
Tech. Rep.	Technical report
Suppl.	supplement

Note: From "Abbreviations in References," (p. 306), by the American Psychological Association, 2020.

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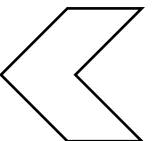


Table 2*Abbreviations for Common Units of Measurement*

Abbreviation	Unit of Measurement	Abbreviation	Unit of Measurement
°C	degrees Celsius	kW	kilowatt
cc	cubic centimeter	L	liter
cm	centimeter	lb	pound ^a
cps	cycles per second	m	meter
dB	decibel	mg	milligram
deg/s	degrees per second	mi	mile ^a
°F	Degrees Fahrenheit ^a	ml	milliliter
ft	foot ^a	mm	millimeter
g	gram	mph	miles per hour ^a
Hz	hertz	rpm	revolutions per minute
in.	inch ^a	V	volt
J	joule	W	watt
K	Kelvin	yd	yard ^a
km	km		

Note: From “Abbreviations in References,” (p. 175), by the American Psychological Association, 2020. Copyright 2020 by the American Psychological Association

^a Include the metric unit equivalent in parentheses when using nonmetric units.

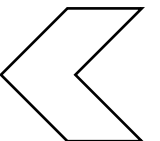


Table 3*Common Time Abbreviations*

Term	Abbreviation	Example
hour	hr	6 hr
minute	min	30 min
second	s	5 s
millisecond	ms	2.65 ms
nanosecond	ns	90 ns

Note: From "Abbreviations in References," (p. 176), by the American Psychological Association, 2020.
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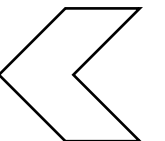


Table 4
Latin Abbreviations

Latin Abbreviation ^a	Translation
cf.	compare
e.g., , etc.	for example, , and so forth
i.e.,	that is,
viz.,	namely,
vs.	versus or against

Note: From “Abbreviations in References,” (p. 176), by the American Psychological Association, 2020.

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^a Use Latin abbreviations only in parenthetical material; use the translation in the narrative with the exception of “et al.” and “v.” (for court cases).

