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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A

a, an Use *a* before consonant sounds.

Examples:

- a historic event (sounds like it begins with the letter *h*)
- a one-year term (sounds like it begins with the letter *w*)
- a united stand (sounds like it begins with the consonant letter *y*)

Use *an* before vowel sounds.

Examples:

- an enormous amount
- an honorable endeavor (the *h* is silent)
- an NSH webpage (sounds like it begins with the letter *e*)
- an 18-person committee (sounds like it begins with the letter *a*)

AABB Formerly American Association of Blood Banks, this organization is now referred to only as AABB.

abbreviations An abbreviation is a shortened or contracted form of a word or a phrase used to represent the whole.

Examples:

- Dr. for doctor
- St. for street
- mL for milliliter

See also **acronyms** or **measurements**.

abnormal, normal; negative, positive Examinations and laboratory tests and studies are not abnormal, normal, negative, or positive. These adjectives apply to observations, results, or findings.

Examples:

- Findings from the examination were normal.
(Not: The examination was normal.)
- The throat culture was negative for β -hemolytic streptococci.
(Not: The throat culture was negative.)
- Serologic test results for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.
(Not: Serologic tests for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.)

Exceptions:

- HIV-positive men
- seronegative women
- negative node

academic degrees Do not use periods between letters in abbreviations. Use *MD* and *PhD* in first reference. Use *Dr.* in all subsequent references to the person. List *MD* after last name, with a comma preceding; follow with other degrees and credentials.

Example:

James N. Sheldon, MD, PhD, FCAP

Capitalize academic degrees when abbreviated but not when written out.

Examples:

Irene T. Jones, MD

CAP STYLE MANUAL

• A-Z USAGE GUIDELINES

• STYLE STANDARDS FOR WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

• STYLE STANDARDS FOR VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

• TEMPLATES

• RESOURCES

HOW-TO GUIDES

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADVERSE EVENT MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

FAQs | STYLE QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Irene T. Jones received her doctorate in medicine from the University of Texas.

Definitions:

MD doctor of medicine
DO doctor of osteopathy
PhD doctor of philosophy
JD juris doctor

accept, except *Accept* means to receive. *Except* means to exclude.

accident, injury Do not use the term *accident* to refer to injuries of any cause. The preferred terms refer either to external cause (eg, injury from falls) or to intentionality (eg, unintentional injury).

acronyms An *acronym* is formed from:

- The initial letters or groups of letters of words in a set phrase or series of words.

Examples:

ELISA for enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
radar for radio detecting and ranging

- A set of initials representing a name, organization, or the like.

Examples:

HHS for Health and Human Services
OSHA for Occupational Safety and Health Administration

- In first reference, use the full names of associations, agencies, and programs.

Place the acronym in parentheses following the full name.

Example:

College of American Pathologists (CAP)

- In second and subsequent references, use the acronym if it is commonly employed and understood, or if the reader can make the connection easily. If not, continue to use the full name in subsequent references.

Use *the* before acronyms pronounced letter by letter.

Examples:

the CAP
the CDC

- Do not use *the* before acronyms pronounced as words.

Examples:

OSHA
SNOMED

- Do not spell out these acronyms on first reference: AIDS, CBC, CLIA, DNA, EDTA, ELISA, HIV, HMO, MRI, Pap, pH, RNA.

See **Acronyms Reference**

acute, chronic Use these terms to describe symptoms, conditions, or diseases. *Chronic* refers to duration. *Acute* refers to severity. Do not use *acute* or *chronic* to describe patients, parts of the body, treatment, or medication.

Examples:

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
acute renal failure

Exception:

acute abdomen (a specific medical condition)

addresses Use address abbreviations with numbers and complete local addresses. In documents, use a period with the abbreviation.

Examples:

Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
Place	Pl.
Road	Rd.
Street	St.

Mailing labels and envelopes follow different punctuation guidelines. See **Address Formatting and Mailing Guidelines**

advisor Spell with an *o*. Do not use *adviser*.

affect, effect *Affect* as a verb means *to have an influence on*. *Effect* as a verb

means *to bring about* or *to cause*.

Examples:

Ingesting massive doses of ascorbic acid may affect his recovery [influence his recovery in some way].

Ingesting massive doses of ascorbic acid may effect his recovery [produce the recovery].

Affect as a noun refers to immediate expressions of emotion (as opposed to mood, which refers to sustained emotional states).

Effect as a noun means *result*.

Example:

The patient's general lack of affect was an effect of recent trauma.

age Use numerals to state age.

Example:

The patient is 8 years old.

agenda An *agenda* is a list; it is singular and requires singular verbs and pronouns.

Example:

The agenda has served its purpose.

The plural is *agendas*.

See **CAP Style Manual on agenda templates**.

AIDS Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Do not spell out on first reference.

Remember that AIDS is a condition. A person cannot be infected with AIDS but can be infected with the AIDS virus. Furthermore, a person cannot die of AIDS but can die of AIDS-related complications or illnesses.

all ready, already *All ready* means *prepared*.

Example:

He is all ready for the presentation.

Already means *previously*.

Example:

They have already started the presentation.

all right Always two words. Never *alright*.

all together, altogether *All together* means *collectively*—all at once or all in one place.

Example:

We were all together in the conference room.

Altogether means *in sum* or *entirely*.

Example:

Altogether there were 20 people in the meeting room.

allude, refer *Allude* means *to mention indirectly* or *to hint at*—to speak of something in a covert or roundabout way.

Example:

Ralph suspected that the speaker's comment about bad taste alluded to his new tie.

Refer means *to mention directly*.

Example:

The speaker referred to Ralph's new tie as an example of bad taste.

a lot Always write as two words. Never *alot*.

alternate, alternative *Alternate* means *one after the other*.

Example:

Walking requires alternate use of the left foot and the right.

Alternative means *one instead of the other*.

Example:

The alternative is to take a taxi.

among, between Use *between* when only two are involved.

Example:

The president sensed a barrier between himself and the vice president.
With three or more, you have a choice. Use *between* if you're thinking of the individuals and their relations to one another.

Example:

There was an embarrassing exchange between the three candidates.
Use *among* if you're thinking of the group.

Example:

Alfred's late arrival created a stir among the guests.

ampersand (&) Use the ampersand when it is part of a proper name.

Examples:

Johnson & Johnson

Connection Café & Exhibits

Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine

AM, PM Capitalize and do not use periods.

anatomic pathology/pathologists Never use the term *anatomical pathology/pathologists*.

and/or Avoid this construction. Rewrite *black and/or white* as *black or white, or both*.

anybody, any body; anyone, any one Use as one word for an indefinite reference.

Example:

Anyone can do that.

Use two words to single out one element of a group.

Example:

Any one of them may attend the meeting.

any more, anymore *Any more* means *any additional*.

Example:

Are there any more chairs left?

Anymore means *now* or *any longer*.

Example:

We won't be using that conference room anymore.

any time, anytime Use two words to mean any amount of time.

Example:

Do you have any time on your calendar tomorrow?

Use *anytime* to mean whenever.

Example:

I can meet with you anytime that you would like.

any way, anyway Write as one word to mean *in any case*. Otherwise, use two words. Never use *anyways*.

Examples:

You wouldn't want to see them, anyway.

I can't think of any way to repair the computer.

AP Anatomic pathology, not anatomical pathology.

apostrophe Follow these guidelines.

Contractions: Use an apostrophe to form a contraction from two words.

Examples:

you're = you are

it's = it is

they're = they are

don't = do not

Descriptive phrases: Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense.

Examples:

a teachers college

a users guide

As a rule of thumb, if the longer form would not have an apostrophe, don't use it with the shorter form.

Examples:

a college for teachers

a guide for users

An 's is required however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s.

Examples:

a children's hospital

a people's republic

Descriptive names: Some organizations with a descriptive word in their names use an apostrophe, some do not. Follow the user's practice.

Examples:

Diners Club

the National Governors Association

Residents Forum

Actors' Equity

the *Ladies' Home Journal*

Omitted letters and numbers: Use an apostrophe to indicate omission.

Examples:

rock 'n' roll

'tis the season

CAP '15

the '20s

Plurals of letters and numbers: Use an apostrophe for plurals of a single letter.

Examples:

Mind your *p's* and *q's*.

The Oakland A's won the pennant.

Do not use an apostrophe for plurals of multiple letters or numbers (including years).

Examples:

ABCs

727s

the 1960s

Plural nouns not ending in s: Add 's.

Examples:

the alumni's contributions

women's rights

Plural nouns ending in s: Add only an apostrophe.

Examples:

the churches' needs

the VIPs' entrance

Nouns plural in form, singular in meaning: Add only an apostrophe.

Examples:

mathematics' rules

measles' effects

Apply the same principle when a plural word occurs in the formal name of a singular entity.

Examples:

General Motors' board

the United States' judicial system

Nouns the same in singular and plural: Treat them the same as plurals, even if the meaning is singular.

Examples:

one corps' locations

two deer's tracks

Singular nouns not ending in s: Add 's.

Examples:

the company's needs

the president's office

Singular common nouns ending in s: Add 's unless the next word begins with s.

Examples:

the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat

the witness's answer, the witness' story

Singular proper names ending in s: Use only an apostrophe.

Examples:

Agnes' book

Kansas' hospitals

Dr. Williams' article

Special expressions: The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in s apply to words that end in an s sound and are followed by a word that begins with s.

Examples:

for appearance' sake
for conscience' sake
for goodness' sake

Use 's otherwise.

Example:

my conscience's voice

Pronouns: Personal interrogative and relative pronouns have separate forms for the possessive. None involves an apostrophe: mine, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose.

Note: *your* is a pronoun; *you're* means you are.

Contractions: you're, it's, there's, who's. Be careful to use these correctly. For example, use *who's* when you mean *who is*, but not when you mean *whose* (as in "Whose hat is this?").

Other pronouns: Add an apostrophe or 's.

Examples:

others' plans
someone's guess
another's idea

Compound words: Add an apostrophe or 's to the last word of a compound term.

Examples:

the attorney general's request
someone else's problem

Joint possession, individual possession: Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint.

Example:

Fred and Ethel's apartment

Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned.

Example:

Fred's and Ethel's books

Quasi possessives: Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases as: a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, three days' work, your money's worth. Frequently, however, a hyphenated form is clearer: a two-week vacation, a three-day job.

See also **possessives**

articles Capitalize the initial letter of each major word in all article titles, subtitles, headlines of publication, etc. Enclose publication article names in quotes (although publication names should appear in italics).

Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine The CAP's monthly peer-reviewed scientific journal. Use an ampersand (&), not *and*. Can be referred to as *Archives* on second reference (but never on first reference). The abbreviation to use for references is *Arch Pathol Lab Med*. The domain address is **www.archivesofpathology.org**.

as, because, since *As*, *because*, and *since* can all be used to mean *for the reason that*. Do not use *as* when it could be construed to mean *while*. Do not use *since* when it could be construed to mean *from the time of* or *from the time that*.

Examples:

She could not answer her page as she was examining a critically ill patient. (Ambiguous; *as* could mean *while* or *because*.)

She had not been able to answer her page since she was in the clinic. (Ambiguous; *since* could mean *from the time that* or *because*.)

as, like Use *like* as a preposition to compare nouns and pronouns. It requires an object.

Example:

He speaks like a professional.

Use the conjunction *as* to introduce clauses.

Example:

She rereads her memos, as she should, before sending them.

association, relationship *Association* is a connection between two variables in which one does not necessarily cause the other. *Relationship* implies cause and effect.

assure, ensure, insure *Assure*, *ensure*, and *insure* all mean *to make secure or certain*. However, *insure* typically refers to insurance. Only *assure* is used with

reference to a person in the sense of to *set one's mind at rest*.

Examples:

We can ensure that things will turn out well.

The health care policy insures his health.

I assure you we will meet the deadline.

at this time Rewrite sentences that use this construction. Instead of saying, "At this time we have not made a decision," simply say, "We have not made a decision."

audioconference Write as one word.

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B

backup, back up Write as one word, without a hyphen, for a noun or adjective.

Example:

He made a backup of the files.

Write as two words for a verb.

Example:

Please back up the truck.

bar code Hyphenate when the phrase is used as a modifier. Also hyphenate bar-coded. No hyphen when used as a noun: bar code.

because, as, since *As*, *because*, and *since* can all be used to mean *for the reason that*. Do not use *as* when it could be construed to mean *while*. Do not use *since* when it could be construed to mean *from the time of* or *from the time that*.

Examples:

She could not answer her page as she was examining a critically ill patient.

(Ambiguous; *as* could mean *while* or *because*.)

She had not been able to answer her page since she was in the clinic.

(Ambiguous; *since* could mean *from the time that* or *because*.)

benchtop Write as one word.

beside, besides *Beside* means *at the side of*. *Besides* means *in addition to*.

between, among Use *between* when only two are involved.

Example:

The president sensed a barrier between himself and the vice president.

With three or more, you have a choice. Use *between* if you're thinking of the individuals and their relations to one another.

Example:

There was an embarrassing exchange between the three candidates.

Use *among* if you're thinking of the group.

Example:

Alfred's late arrival created a stir among the guests.

bias-free language Avoid language that suggests unfairness, stereotypes, or prejudice in relation to age, ethnicity, race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, mental or physical characteristics, religion, or socioeconomic factors. Such language is potentially offensive. Make communication bias-free by:

- Using generally accepted language, such as *African American*, rather than *black*.
- Using gender-neutral terms, such as *chair*, rather than *chairman*.
- Putting the person before the label to avoid limiting the person to a single characteristic, such as *patient with diabetes*, rather than *diabetic*.
- Avoiding labels, such as *afflicted*, *suffers from*, and *victim of*.

biannual, biennial *Biannual* means *twice a year*; it means the same thing as

semiannual. *Biennial* means *every two years*.

bibliography A list of written sources of information on a subject. Bibliographies generally appear as an alphabetized list at the end of a book, chapter, or article. They may show what works the author used, or they may list works that a reader might find useful.

See also **references**

biopsy *Biopsy* refers to the removal and examination (usually microscopically) of tissue or cells from the living body. Using *biopsy* as a verb was considered incorrect in the past, but such use has become common and acceptable. Note: observations are made of the biopsy specimen, not the biopsy itself.

Examples:

The physician performed a biopsy of the lung.

The physician biopsied the lung mass.

The results of the biopsy were normal.

(Not: The biopsy was normal.)

biweekly *Biweekly* means *every other week*. *Semiweekly* means *twice a week*.

blog To write entries in, add material to, or maintain a weblog.

Board of Governors Capitalize references to the Board of Governors of the College of American Pathologists. Use the complete name on first reference, then shorten to *Board* (not BoG) in formal and informal references (but always capitalized). Always lowercase when referring to other associations' boards of directors. Also, capitalize Board of Directors when referring to the CAP Foundation Board of Directors. Do not use *Board* by itself when referring to the CAP Foundation.

boilerplate Ready-to-print copy describing the CAP or one of its products or services.

brackets Use brackets to indicate editorial interpolation within a quotation and to enclose comments in quoted material.

Example:

"Enough questions had arisen [these are not described] to warrant medical consultation."

Use brackets to indicate parenthetical expressions within parenthetical expressions.

Example:

A nitrogen mustard (mechlorethamine [Mustargen]) was one of the drugs used.

See also **parentheses**

brightfield Write as one word. Do not capitalize unless it's the first word of a sentence.

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C

Canada Do not include the word *Canada* with the province when mentioned in text. Include *Canada* in mailing addresses.

cancer protocols Lowercase the general terms *cancer protocol*, *protocols*, and *checklists*. The titles of specific protocols follow capitalization rules for publication titles.

Example:

Protocol for the Examination of Specimens From Patients With Hodgkin Lymphoma

cannot Write as one word. Not *can not*.

CAP College of American Pathologists. Generally, spell out on first reference as the *College of American Pathologists (CAP)*. In subsequent references, use *the CAP*. Shortening the reference to *the College* is not recommended, because it is generic and does not reinforce the identity of who we are. If your audience is well acquainted with the CAP, you may simply use *the CAP* in the first reference. In oral presentations, pronounce the CAP acronym as *the C-A-P*.

CAP eCC CAP electronic Cancer Checklists. Use a lowercase e.

CAP.NET The brand identity for the CAP's intranet community. For ease of writing, write as two words, both in uppercase separated by a period.

CAP 15189SM CAP 15189 is a service mark of the College of American Pathologists.

CAP Press The imprimatur for the CAP's nonperiodical publications (eg, texts, atlases).

CAP TODAY[®] The CAP's monthly news magazine. Write in all capital letters and italicize. The Web address is **www.captodayonline.com**.

CAPXX Beginning in 2016, no apostrophe or space will appear between *CAP* and *XX* (the abbreviated year) when used in text to name the CAP's annual meeting.

CAPXX – The Pathologists' MeetingTM Note the spaces around the en dash. CAPXX is the CAP's annual meeting (lowercase), not the CAP's Annual Meeting.

capital, capitol *Capital* has multiple meanings. It can be a city that serves as a seat of government, wealth in the form of money or property, an asset or advantage, or a capital letter.

Capitol refers to the building in which a legislative assembly meets.

capitalization Capitalize the first word of every complete sentence. Follow these guidelines.

CAP membership status: Capitalize Fellow, International Fellow, Emeritus Member, Junior Member.

Following a colon: Capitalize the first word of a formal statement that follows a colon.

Example:

We state our conclusions thus: Generate more research.

Direct quotations: Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation.

Examples:

The report noted: "A candidate may be admitted after completing two years of school."

Kurt Vonnegut put it best when he said, "Writers can treat their mental illnesses every day."

Exception:

Start a quotation that runs into the sentence with a lowercase letter.

Example: The patient described her pain as feeling like "needles behind the eyes."

Titles, subtitles, headings: Capitalize each major word in titles, subtitles, and headings. Do not capitalize a conjunction (eg, *and*), article (eg, *a*), or preposition (eg, *to*) of three or fewer letters unless it is the first or last word of a title or heading. Capitalize two-letter verbs (eg, *Go*, *Do*, *Am*, *Is*, *Be*).

Publications: Capitalize each major word in the titles of books, the names of journals or magazines, and chapter and article titles (when referred to in text).

Example:

The CAP publication, *An Algorithmic Approach to Hemostasis Testing*, was well received at the annual meeting.

Exception:

Capitalize only the first word of chapter and article titles in references (see **references**).

Hyphenated compounds: In titles, subtitles, and headings, do not capitalize the second part of a hyphenated compound in the following instances.

- If either part is a hyphenated prefix or suffix.

Example:

Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs

- If both parts together constitute a single word.

Example:

Long-term Treatment of Diabetes

However, in the case of a temporary compound, in which each part of the hyphenated term carries equal weight, capitalize both words.

Example:

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Proper nouns: Capitalize words used as names for unique individuals, events, objects, or places.

Geographic names: Capitalize the names of cities, towns, counties, states, countries, continents, islands, airports, peninsulas, bodies of water, mountains and mountain ranges, streets, parks, forests, canyons, dams, and regions.

Sociocultural designations: Capitalize the names of languages, nationalities, ethnicities, political parties, religions, and religious denominations. Do not capitalize political doctrines (eg, conservative, progressive). Do not capitalize *white* or *black* as designations of race.

Proprietary names: Capitalize trademarks and proprietary names of drugs and brand names of products and equipment. Do not capitalize generic names or descriptive terms.

Organisms: Capitalize the formal name of a genus when used with or without the species, but not plurals or derivatives.

Examples:

Streptococcus

Streptococcus pneumoniae

S. pneumoniae

streptococci

streptococcal

Official names: Capitalize the official titles of organizations, businesses, conferences, institutions, and governmental agencies. For names of institutions, do not capitalize *the* unless it is part of the official name.

Examples:

The Art Institute of Chicago

the Food and Drug Administration

Titles of people: Capitalize a person's title when it directly precedes the person's name but not when it follows the name. Capitalize academic degrees when abbreviated but not when spelled out.

Examples:

President Gene N. Herbek, MD, FCAP

Gene N. Herbek, MD, FCAP, president of the College ...

Academic degrees: Capitalize academic degrees when abbreviated but not when spelled out.

Examples:

Irene Jones, MD

Irene Jones received her doctorate in medicine from the University of Texas.

Abbreviations and acronyms: Do not capitalize the words from which an acronym or abbreviation is formed unless it's derived from a proper name.

Examples:

prostate-specific antigen (PSA)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

case, patient In clinical research, a *case* is a particular instance of a disease. A *patient* is a particular person under medical care.

catalog Do not write *catalogue*.

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Requires a singular verb.

CD, CD-ROM Compact disc-read only memory. Use *CD* in all references. *CD disc* is redundant.

central office Do not use. Use *headquarters*.

chair Use *chair*, not *chairman* or *chairwoman*.

checklist Write as one word. Lowercase when referring to checklists in general. Use initial caps when naming a specific checklist.

Examples:

Laboratory General Checklist
Phase II type checklist questions
CAP cancer protocols and checklists

chronic, acute Use these terms to describe symptoms, conditions, or diseases.

Chronic refers to duration. *Acute* refers to severity. Do not use *acute* or *chronic* to describe patients, parts of the body, treatment, or medication.

Examples:

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
acute renal failure

Exception:

acute abdomen (a specific medical condition)

CIN Cervical intraepithelial neoplasia. Use Arabic numbers to designate the stage when spelled out, but use Roman numerals when abbreviated.

Example:

cervical intraepithelial neoplasia stage 3 (CIN III).

cite, site *Cite* means to mention or quote as an authority or example. *Site* refers to a particular place.

Examples:

This style manual explains how to cite sources in a journal article.
We are looking for a site for the next committee meeting.

cities Name major cities without reference to the state.

In the US, this includes Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington.

Outside the US, this includes Amsterdam, Baghdad, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Berlin, Bogota, Brussels, Cairo, Copenhagen, Djibouti, Dublin, Frankfurt, Geneva, Gibraltar, Guatemala City, Hamburg, Havana, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kuwait City, London, Luxembourg, Macau, Madrid, Mexico City, Milan, Monaco, Montreal, Moscow, Munich, New Delhi, Oslo, Ottawa, Panama City, Paris, Prague, Quebec City, Rio De Janeiro, Rome, San Marino, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Vatican City, Vienna, Zurich. When you name city and state in a sentence, follow the city and the state with a comma. Spell out the name of the state.

Example:

The meeting was held in Northfield, Illinois, last Thursday.

See also **states**

classic, classical The adjective *classic* generally means *authentic*, *authoritative*, or *typical* (eg, the classic symptoms of ...). *Classical* refers to the humanities or fine arts.

CLIA '88 Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988. This is a well-known acronym that you do not need to spell out on first reference, but doing so is not inappropriate. Write with a space and an apostrophe.

What is CLIA? In 1988, several media reports focused public and Congressional attention on deficiencies in the quality of services provided by some of the Nation's clinical laboratories. The Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988, or CLIA '88, resulted from Congressional examination of the situation, including investigation of testing performed in physician office laboratories. CLIA sets standards designed to improve quality in all laboratory testing and includes specifications for quality control, quality assurance, patient test management, personnel and proficiency testing.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regulates all laboratory testing (except research) performed on humans in the US through CLIA. In total, CLIA covers approximately 200,000 laboratory entities.

The majority of the CLIA '88 standards went into effect in September 1992, but the implementation continues to be an ongoing dynamic process.

clinician, practitioner Use these terms to describe health professionals in the clinical practice of such fields as medicine, nursing, psychology, dentistry, optometry, and podiatry, distinguishing them from specialists in laboratory science, research, policy, or theory. When referring to a particular type of clinician, use the more descriptive term (eg, physician).

CMS Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Requires a singular verb.

co- as a prefix Use a hyphen if needed to avoid ambiguity or awkward spelling that could interfere with readability.

Examples:

co-create
co-payment
co-worker

collective nouns Use singular verbs and pronouns with a noun that denotes a single unit (eg, *class, committee, crowd, family, group, staff, team*).

Examples:

The committee is meeting to set its agenda.
(Not: The committee is meeting to set their agenda.)
The team set its goals.
The class was a success.

Use plural verbs with team names and band names.

Example:

The Chicago Bears are out of town next weekend.

Plural in form: Some words that are plural in form become collective nouns and take singular verbs when you treat the group or quantity as a unit.

Examples:

A hundred miles is a long way to drive. (a unit)
We drove a hundred miles in one day. (individual items)
The data is sound. (a unit)
We carefully collected the data. (individual items)

College of American Pathologists (CAP) On first reference, spell out *College of American Pathologists (CAP)*, unless your audience is familiar with the organization or your communication or document is more informal. Then shorten the name to *the CAP*.

colon Use a colon to introduce a list, tabulation, or text. Capitalize the first word after a colon only if a complete sentence follows the colon.

Example:

This dictum is often believed to be in the Hippocratic Oath: First, do no harm.

Do not use a colon if the sentence is continuous without it.

Example:

You will need enthusiasm, organization, and commitment.
(Not: You will need: enthusiasm, organization, and commitment.)

Do not use a colon after *because* or forms of the verb *include*.

See also **lists**

See also **semicolon**

comma Use a comma to indicate a break or pause in thought, set off material, or introduce a new but connected thought.

General usage:

- Separating groups of words
- Setting off *ie, eg*, and the expanded equivalents (*that is, for example*)
- Separating clauses joined by conjunctions (*and, but, or*)
- Setting off parenthetical expressions
- Setting off degrees and titles

Use commas in a series of three or more terms.

Examples:

Each patient completed a 21-item, 10-point, self-administered questionnaire.
The physician, the nurse, and the family could not convince the patient to take the medication.

commission, committee, council Capitalize these words only as part of an official

name. Do not capitalize them when they stand alone or are used generically.

Examples:

The General Resource Committee reviewed the minutes from its last meeting.

We sent a fax to the committee members regarding the upcoming meeting.

(Note that *committee* is lowercase even though it refers to a specific committee.)

Remember that a committee (or commission or council) is a singular *it*, not a plural *they*.

commissioner Use *regional commissioner* when referring to a Laboratory Accreditation Program official. Do not use *region commissioner*.

company names Generally, refer to a company the way the company refers to itself.

compare to, compare with Use *compare with* to examine similarities or differences. Use *compare to* to highlight a single striking similarity or dissimilarity or to liken a thing of one class to a thing of another class, without analysis (ie, one entity is comparable to another).

Examples:

Compared with patients receiving only routine medical care, patients in the treatment group had greater improvements.

Few medical discoveries can compare to the discovery of penicillin.

Competency Assessment Program Use initial caps.

complementary, complimentary *Complementary* means *forming a whole or bringing to perfection; completing*.

Example:

The husband and wife have complementary personalities.

Complimentary means *flattering* (eg, a complimentary remark) or *given or supplied without charge*.

Example:

They received complimentary tickets to the show.

compose, comprise, constitute *Compose* means *to create or put together*.

Examples:

The company is composed of five divisions.

He composed a letter to the editor of the journal.

Comprise means *to contain, include all, or embrace*. It is incorrect to write *comprised of*.

Examples:

The US comprises 50 states.

The committee comprises 40 members.

Constitute means *to form or make up*.

Examples:

Fifty states constitute the United States.

Twelve people constitute the jury.

conference Capitalize the full proper name of a conference. Do not set in quotes.

continual, continuous *Continual* means *to recur at regular and frequent intervals*. *Continuous* means *to go on without pause or interruption*.

Examples:

The patient with emphysema coughed continually.

His labored breathing was eased by a continuous flow of oxygen through a nasal cannula.

convince, persuade You *convince* a person *of* something. You *persuade* a person *to* do something. Usually follow *convince* with *of* or *that*, and *persuade* with *to*.

Examples:

Jean convinced the group that her plan would be the best course of action.

Mary persuaded her neighbor to remove the fence.

copyright © Use the copyright symbol on all published works, artwork, and video and audio recordings.

Example:

© 2015 (or first year published) College of American Pathologists. All rights reserved.

cost-effective Always hyphenate.

council, counsel Use the noun *council* to refer to an assembly of officials. Use the noun *counsel* to mean *advice, guidance, or consultation*. Use the verb *counsel* to mean *advise*.

Examples:

The council met every Friday.

We valued the counsel of our committee.

The attorney counseled us on copyright law.

CP Clinical pathology.

credentialed, credentialing Spell with one *l* and not two.

criterion, criteria *Criterion* is singular. *Criteria* is plural.

cross- In general, hyphenate words starting with *cross*.

Examples:

cross-contamination

cross-linking

cross-reactivity

cross-sectional

Exception: crossmatch, crossmatching

currency Use the dollar sign (\$) for United States and Canadian currency. Spell out *cents*. Use zeros or periods only when indicating a fraction of a dollar. Always use Arabic numerals, regardless of whether the number is less than or greater than nine.

Examples:

We have a \$1 million budget surplus.

Our bill for office supplies came to \$23.47.

I have 60 cents for a can of soda.

currently Do not use to mean *now* with a verb in the present tense.

Example:

We are studying the problem.

(Not: We are currently studying the problem.)

Customer Contact Center Not Customer Service or Contact Center.

The phone numbers for the Customer Contact Center are:

800-323-4040

847-832-7000 (Country Code: 001)

The email address is **contactcenter@cap.org**.

Hours are 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM CT., Monday–Friday

See also **phone numbers**

customs Use lowercase unless you are referring specifically to the US departments by name (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement or US Customs and Border Protection).

Examples:

a customs official

Check with your local customs office.

customs regulations

cutoff Write as one word for a noun or adjective.

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Or use Edit > Find to search for a specific entry.

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D

dash Use sparingly, only when a comma doesn't provide adequate emphasis. Use a dash to mark an abrupt break or interruption and announce a long list or summary within a sentence. Dashes convey a less formal, more conversational tone than parentheses.

Em dash (—): Em dashes are long dashes used to indicate a sudden interruption in a sentence. Do not put spaces before or after em dashes.

Examples:

Osler, Billings, and Apgar—these were the physicians teaching the seminar.

All of these factors—age, severity of symptoms, psychic preparation, and choice of anesthetic agent—determine the patient's reaction.

En dash (–): The en dash is longer than a hyphen but half the length of the em dash. Use the en dash primarily with numerals in time and other numerical ranges, with no spaces before or after the dashes.

Examples:

9:00–11:00 AM.

The tumors measured 12–18 cm.

See also **hyphen (-)**

data Use with a plural verb, unless using the term collectively to refer to a group of data as a unit.

Examples:

The data have been carefully collected. (individual items)

The data is sound. (a unit)

See also **collective nouns**

database Write as one word.

dates Do not use *th* at the end of a date. Spell out the name of the month.

Example:

Her birthday is November 28.

(Not: Her birthday is November 28th.)

Put a comma after the year in a full date.

Example:

The meeting is set for January 1, 2010, in Washington, DC.

Do not use a comma to separate a month or season from the year. Lowercase the season name unless it is part of a proper name.

Examples:

We will meet in May 2016 or early summer 2015.

We will meet again at the 2016 Spring Fling.

The House of Delegates meeting is scheduled for spring 2016.

See also **months**

decimal Put numbers used with units of measure in decimal format. Put a 0 before the decimal marker for numerical values less than 1.

Example:

0.123 (not .123)

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Exception:

Certain statistical values should be reported without the use of 0.

Example:

$P < .01$

For consistency, use decimals in tables or other groups of numbers, even if one number is whole.

Example:

Patients in group one stayed in the hospital an average of 2.3 days, group two stayed an average of 3.4 days, and group three stayed an average of 4.0 days.

Use decimals rather than fractions with units of measure.

Example:

2.5 kg (not 2-1/2 kg)

See also **fractions**

decision maker, decision making Write as two words. Hyphenate *decision-making* only when it is used as a compound modifier preceding a noun.

definitely Avoid this vague and overused intensifier.

Unnecessary use: I definitely agree with everything they said.

Better: I agree with everything they said.

degrees (for temperatures and angles) Use the degree symbol (°) when referring to temperatures in Celsius (C) and Fahrenheit (F). Do not put a space after the degree symbol.

Examples:

32°C

4° to 12°C

Spell out *degree* when referring to angles to avoid confusion.

Example:

a 30-degree angle.

See also **academic degrees**

department Capitalize when referring to a specific department.

Examples:

Department of Pathology

Department of Obstetrics

Lowercase when making a general reference.

Example:

the pathology department

diabetes Use Arabic (not Roman) numerals to designate type (ie, diabetes type 1, diabetes type 2).

die from, die of Use *die of*, not *die from*. People die of specific diseases or disorders.

differ from, differ with Use *differ from* to refer to things. Use *differ with* to refer to people. People who disagree *differ with* one another.

Examples:

Jane insisted that her solution differed from Andrew's solution.

The chairman differed with the committee.

directions and regions Lowercase north, south, northeast, northern, etc, to indicate compass direction. Capitalize these words to designate regions.

Examples:

We drove west to Seattle. (compass direction)

More businesses are moving south. (compass direction)

A storm in the Midwest shut down two hospitals. (region)

She had a Southern accent. (region)

They were located in Southeast Asia. (region)

Naming nations: Lowercase unless they are part of a proper name or are used to designate a politically divided nation. For example: eastern Canada, the western United States; but South Korea, Northern Ireland.

Referring to widely known sections of states or cities: Southern California, South Side of Chicago. If in doubt, lowercase.

Forming proper names: Far East, Middle East, the West Coast (the entire region, not the coastline), the Western Hemisphere.

disc, disk Use *disc* in ophthalmologic terms (eg, optic disc). Use *disk* for other anatomical terms (eg, lumbar disk).
Use *disc* in computer terminology (eg, compact disc).

discreet, discrete *Discreet* means *careful* or *prudent*.

Example:

Arthur was discreet about his involvement in the project.

Discrete means *separate, distinct, or unconnected*.

Example:

We maintained two discrete accounts for the project.

disease names Do not use apostrophes with disease names.

Example:

Alzheimer disease

(Not: Alzheimer's disease)

disinterested, uninterested *Disinterested* means *impartial* or *neutral*.

Example:

A good judge should be disinterested.

Uninterested means *bored* or *lacking interest*.

Example:

The jury seemed uninterested in the case.

division Capitalize when referring to a specific division.

Examples:

Division of Laboratory Medicine

Division of Advocacy

Lowercase when making a general reference.

Example:

the advocacy division

doctor In the first reference to a doctor, use MD preceded by a comma.

Example:

John E. Smith, MD, FCAP.

Then refer to the doctor as Dr. Smith.

When referring to more than one doctor, use Drs. followed by the names.

Example:

Drs. Smith and Jones could not attend the meeting.

doctor, physician Use *physician* only when referring specifically to a doctor of medicine or osteopathy (ie, MD, DO). Otherwise, prefer *doctor* as the more general term that includes persons who hold such degrees as PhD, DDS, EdD, DVM, and PharmD.

Down syndrome Do not use an apostrophe.

DVD Digital video disc (or digital versatile disc). The abbreviation is acceptable in all references. Note that *DVD disc* is redundant.

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E

e When preceding a word, write as lowercase unless beginning a sentence. Use of a hyphen varies; follow these guidelines:

ebook

e-learning

email
e-store
Unless it's a brand name (eg, iPad), do not capitalize the second letter.

each Requires a singular verb.

each other, one another Two people look at *each other*. More than two look at *one another*. Use either phrase when the number is indefinite.

Examples:

We help each other.

We help one another.

ebook Write as lowercase. Do not use a hyphen.

effect, affect *Affect* as a verb means *to have an influence on*. *Effect* as a verb means *to bring about or to cause*.

Examples:

Ingesting massive doses of ascorbic acid may affect his recovery
[influence his recovery in some way].

Ingesting massive doses of ascorbic acid may effect his recovery
[produce the recovery].

Affect as a noun refers to immediate expressions of emotion (as opposed to mood, which refers to sustained emotional states).

Effect as a noun means *result*.

Example:

The patient's general lack of affect was an effect of recent trauma.

eg Means *for example* (from Latin *exempli gratia*). Follow eg with a comma. Do not italicize or use periods. Generally, can be replaced with *for example*, followed by a comma.

When a list follows *eg*, it is implied that it is not an inclusive list. Do not use *etc* in conjunction with *eg*—it's redundant.

either Use it to mean *one or the other*, not *both*.

Examples:

She said to use either office.

There were chairs on each side of the table.

There were chairs on both sides of the table.

(Not: There were chairs on either side of the table.)

either...or, neither...nor The nouns that follow these words do not constitute a compound subject; they are alternate subjects and require a verb that agrees with the nearer subject.

Examples:

Neither they nor he is going.

(The singular verb *is* goes with the singular *he*.)

Neither he nor they are going.

(The plural verb *are* goes with the plural *they*.)

e-LAB Solutions Suite (ELSS)/e-LAB Solutions Note the updated variations of the portal name through which laboratories manage their participation in the CAP's laboratory improvement programs. Do not use the shortened name of e-LABs.

e-LAB Solutions Connect Note the program name by which users can submit their laboratory proficiency testing results.

ellipsis Use an ellipsis (. . .) to indicate an omission.

Example:

Chicago is home to a variety of spectacular attractions . . . the city's lakefront playground and the state's most popular attraction.

email Write as lowercase. Do not use a hyphen.

em dash (—): Em dashes are long dashes used to indicate a sudden interruption in

a sentence. Do not put spaces before or after em dashes.

Examples:

Osler, Billings, and Apgar—these were the physicians teaching the seminar.

All of these factors—age, severity of symptoms, psychic preparation, and choice of anesthetic agent—determine the patient's reaction.

See also **dash**

eminent, imminent *Eminent* means *famous* or *superior*.

Example:

The eminent scholar taught at Harvard for many years.

Imminent means *impending* or *about to happen*.

Example:

Her appointment to vice president is imminent.

en dash (–): The en dash is longer than a hyphen but half the length of the em dash. Use the en dash primarily with numerals in time and other numerical ranges, with no spaces before or after the dashes.

Examples:

9:00–11:00 AM

The tumors measured 12–18 cm.

See also **dash**

ensure, insure, assure *Ensure*, *insure*, and *assure* all mean *to make secure or certain*. However, *insure* is typically reserved for references to insurance. Only *assure* is used with reference to a person in the sense of *to set one's mind at rest*.

Examples:

We can ensure that things will turn out well.

The health care policy insures his health.

I assure you we will meet the deadline.

epidemic, pandemic An *epidemic* is the rapid spreading of disease in a certain population or region. *Pandemic* is an epidemic that has spread worldwide.

equally Do not write *equally as*.

Example:

Ken and Barb are equally unhappy.

et al Use in reference lists and references in text to indicated additional authors not listed. Note the period after *al* and not *et*.

Example:

Yang XJ, Zhou M, Hes O, et al. Tubulocystic carcinoma of the kidney, clinicopathologic and molecular characterization. *Am J Surg Pathol*. 2008;32(2):177–187.

When *et al* appears in text, do not put a comma before and after, and do not follow with a period.

Example:

Henderson et al reported on the lymphoma study.

See also **references**

etc Means *and others, and so on* (from *et cetera*). Do not italicize or use a period. Do not use *eg* in conjunction with *etc*—it's redundant.

every day, everyday Write as two words for an adverb.

Example:

We go there every day but Friday.

Write as one word for an adjective.

Example:

This is not an everyday event.

every one, everyone Write as two words to mean *each individual item*.

Example:

Every one of the copiers was broken.

Write as one word to mean *all persons*.

Example:

Everyone wants his goals to be attainable.

Use singular verbs and pronouns with *everyone*.

EXCEL® External Comparative Evaluation for Laboratories. All capital letters. EXCEL is a registered product of the CAP.

exclamation point Use an exclamation point to indicate an emotion, an outcry, or a forceful comment. Do not use more than one.

Avoid using exclamation points except when writing a direct quote. They are not appropriate in professional communications or scientific manuscripts.

except, accept *Except* means *to exclude*. *Accept* means *to receive*.

explicit, implicit *Explicit* means *expressed clearly or readily observable*.

Example:

Her explicit instructions were helpful.

Implicit means *implied or expressed indirectly*.

Example:

You might miss the implicit message in the speech if you don't pay close attention.

extension Abbreviate as *ext.*

Example:

Call 800-323-4040 ext. 7249.

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F

false-positive results or false-positives; false-negative results or false-negatives Hyphenate both noun and adjectival forms.

FAQ Frequently asked question. *FAQ* is acceptable in first use.

farther, further *Farther* refers to physical distance.

Example:

He travelled farther this week.

Further refers to an extension of time or degree.

Example:

We delved further into the problem.

fax Always use in place of *facsimile*. Lowercase unless it starts a sentence.

FDA Food and Drug Administration. Do not precede *FDA* with *US*. Capitalize the first letter of each word when naming FDA rules, regulations, or proposed regulations.

Fellow, fellow Capitalize Fellow, Emeritus Fellow, International Fellow, and Junior Member in text.

Use the FCAP designation with the names of Fellow members of the College of American Pathologists, preceded by their academic degree(s).

Example:

James N. Sheldon, MD, PhD, FCAP

Do not capitalize *fellow* when referring to a doctor participating in a fellowship.

fewer, less *Fewer* refers to a smaller number of individual things. *Less* refers to a smaller quantity of something.

Example:

The less money he makes, the fewer dollars he spends.

figure Abbreviate as *Fig.* in text that refers to a figure. Lowercase and spell out *figure* if used without the specific figure number.

Example:

See Fig. 1.

The figure shows the coagulation process.

finger-stick Hyphenate.

firewall Write as one word.

FISH Fluorescence in situ hybridization.

fluorescence, fluorescent Note that it is *uo* not *ou*.

FNA Fine-needle aspiration. (But: *core needle biopsy* [no hyphen])

FOB Freight on board (or free on board). Generally, spell out on first reference.

fold Do not use a hyphen when combined with a number less than 10.

Examples:

twofold

fourfold

Use a hyphen when combined with numbers 10 or greater.

Examples:

10-fold

100-fold

follow-up, follow up Hyphenate when used as a noun or adjective. Write as two words when used as a verb.

Examples:

The patient's follow-up treatment was successful.

He was asked to follow up on the action items of the meeting.

foreign phrases Italicize only if the phrase is not listed in the dictionary.

401(k) Tax-deferred retirement plan. Note the lowercase *k* in parentheses.

fractions Use numerals and hyphenate fractions written with a whole number.

Example:

6-1/2

(Not: six and a half)

Spell out and use a hyphen for common fractions less than one.

Examples:

one-fourth

two-thirds

See also **decimal**

FTP File transfer protocol.

fulfill Note spelling.

full time, full-time Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier.

Examples:

She works full time.

He has a full-time job.

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G

gender, sex Use *sex* to denote whether a person is genetically male or female. Use *gender* to denote a person's self-representation as a man or woman. The CAP adheres to a gender-neutral writing style, which often calls for plural construction (for example, *they* and *their* in lieu of *he or she* and *his or her*). If *he or she* is used, then *or* is preferred over the slash (*his/her*). Use the term chair when referring to a male or female chair of a CAP committee, commission, or council.

GIF Graphics interchange format. A compression format for images. When used as part of a file name, use lowercase.

Gram stain Capitalize *Gram* when used as a noun.

Examples:

She performed a Gram stain on the tissue.

The section was gram-stained.

gram-positive, gram-negative

goodbye Write as one word.

greater than, less than Spell out when used in text.

Example:

The result was less than 4 ng/mL.

Use symbols (< , >) in tables and figures.

Greek letters Spell out the names of Greek letters in text. Use symbols in tables and figures.

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H

H&E Hematoxylin-eosin (stain).

half-hour Hyphenate.

handheld Write as one word.

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health care Write as two words unless it's a proper noun (eg, UnitedHealthcare).

headings Do not hyphenate words in headings and subheadings.

headquarters Do not use *central office* when referring to the Northfield office. Use *headquarters*.

HER2/*neu* Italicize *neu*. Often referred to simply as HER2.

historic, historical If something has a place in history, it's *historic*.

Example:

The invention was an historic event.

If something has to do with the subject of history, it's *historical*.

Example:

The case presented an abundance of historical evidence.

HIV Human immunodeficiency virus. *HIV virus* is redundant.

homebrew Write as one word.

homepage Write as one word.

hopefully It means *in a hopeful manner*. Do not use it to mean *it is hoped*, *let us hope*, or *we hope*.

Correct: It is hoped that we will complete our work in June.

Better: We hope to complete our work in June.

Incorrect: Hopefully, we will complete our work in June.

hospitalwide Write as one word.

hotline Write as one word.

hour Abbreviate as *h* in tables and surveys. Otherwise, spell it out in text.
See also **measurements** for specific rules.

HPLC High-performance liquid chromatography

HPV Human papillomavirus. Use a hyphen when combined with a number (eg, HPV-6). *HPV virus* is redundant.

HSIL High-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion

HTML Hypertext markup language.

http:// In general, eliminate it. No longer needed.

Exception:

In references, use the complete URL.

hyperlink Write as one word.

hyphen (-) Use hyphens to connect words, prefixes, and compound modifiers. Use them to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

Example:

decision-making methods.

(But: methods of decision making)

Hyphenate a compound adjective when it precedes the noun it modifies but not when it follows the noun.

Examples:

end-to-end anastomosis

(But: The anastomosis was end to end.)

low-density resolution

(But: The resolution was low density.)

Some compound modifiers have become familiar in everyday usage; hyphenate them before and after the noun they modify.

Example:

long-term therapy

(But: The therapy was long-term.)

Note: Long-term is so common that it is spelled with a hyphen in the dictionary. The same holds true for false-positive and false-negative.

See also **dash**

See also **prefix**

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I

ie Means *that is* (from Latin *id est*). Follow *ie* with a comma. Do not italicize or use periods with this abbreviation. Generally, can be replaced with *that is*, followed by a comma.

if and when Use either *if* or *when*, but not both.

imminent, eminent *Eminent* means *famous* or *superior*.

Example:

The eminent scholar taught at Harvard for many years.

Imminent means *impending* or *about to happen*.

Example:

Her appointment to vice president is imminent.

impact Do not use *impact* to mean *affect*.

Example:

How will these results affect our program?

(Not: How will these results impact our program?)

implicit, explicit *Explicit* means *expressed clearly* or *readily observable*.

Example:

Her explicit instructions were helpful.

Implicit means *implied* or *expressed indirectly*.

Example:

You might miss the implicit message in the speech if you don't pay close attention.

imply, infer Writers or speakers *imply* something with the words they use. A listener or reader *infers* something from the words.

in, into There is a difference between these. *Into* is for entering something (like a room or a profession), for changing the form of something (an ugly duckling, for instance), or for making contact (with a friend or a roadblock, perhaps). Here's a trick to keep them straight. If you can drop the *in* without losing the meaning, you should use the two words *in to*.

Example:

The team ran into a logistical roadblock.

I ran into an old friend at the meeting.

You won't turn into a pumpkin!
Bring the guests in to me.
We went in to dinner.

in order to This can usually be changed to simply to.

Example:

She works hard to get the best results.

in spite of *Despite* means the same thing and is shorter.

in vivo, in vitro, in situ, in silico Do not italicize.

industrywide Write as one word.

infographic Write as one word.

in-house Hyphenate.

initials Use periods after all initials.

Example:

C. Elliott Foucar, MD, FCAP

Do not put spaces between initials.

Example:

Kojo S.J. Elenitoba-Johnson, MD

injury, accident Do not use the term *accident* to refer to injuries of any cause. The preferred terms refer either to external cause (eg, injury from falls) or to intentionality (eg, unintentional injury).

inpatient Write as one word.

insure, ensure, assure *Insure, ensure, and assure* all mean *to make secure or certain*. However, *insure* is typically reserved for references to insurance. Only *assure* is used with reference to a person in the sense of *to set one's mind at rest*.

Examples:

We can ensure that things will turn out well.

The health care policy insures his health.

I assure you we will meet the deadline.

interface Do not use *interface* as a verb. Use *interact* or *work together*.

Internet Capitalize because *Internet* is a proper noun.

intranet Not capitalized because it is not a proper noun.

irregardless *Irregardless* is a double negative. Use *regardless* instead.

italics Follow these guidelines.

Use italics when terms are described as terms, and letters as letters.

Examples:

The page number is called the *folio*.

In his handwriting the *n*'s look like *u*'s.

Use italics for definitions in text.

Use italics for titles of books, journals, symposia, conferences, plays, paintings, long poems, musical compositions, space vehicles, planes, and ships.

Examples:

Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine

Steadman's Medical Dictionary

USS Constitution

Use italics for non-English words and phrases that are not in the dictionary. Do not use italics if the words or phrases are considered to have become part of the English language (eg, *in vivo*, *en bloc*).

Use italics for genus and species names of microorganisms when used in the singular.

Examples:

Staphylococcus aureus

S. aureus

Staphylococcus

(But: staphylococci)

Use italics for gene symbols, but not gene names.

Example:

KRAS

(But: the K-ras oncogene)

Use italics sparingly, for emphasis.

Do not use italics for large blocks of type because legibility is reduced.

it's, its *It's* is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*. *Its* is the possessive form of the pronoun *it*.

Examples:

It's up to you.

It's been a long time.

The company lost its assets.

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J

JavaScript Write as one word with a capital S.

JCAHO Abbreviation retired; now The Joint Commission.

JPEG, JPG Joint photographic experts group (file format). Abbreviations are acceptable in all references. Lowercase when part of a file name.

junior/senior Abbreviate as *Jr.* or *Sr.* when used as part of a person's name. Do not use a comma to separate it from the name; however, follow with a comma when listing an academic degree.

Example:

Sam Smith Jr., MD, FCAP

K

keynote Write as one word (eg, keynote address).

KRAS Should be italicized except when referring to the CAP product (ie, KRAS Survey).

L

laboratory Use the word *laboratory*, not *lab*. Use the term *laboratory professional* rather than *laboratorian*.

laboratory-developed tests Use a hyphen when referring to this term. Also known as LDTs.

Laboratory Accreditation Program Use *CAP Laboratory Accreditation Program* in first instance and *laboratory accreditation program* on second instance. Do not use *LAP*.

laptop Write as one word.

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lawsuit Use italics for names of lawsuits in text and abbreviate versus as *v* (eg, *Melendez-Diaz v Massachusetts*).

less, fewer *Fewer* refers to a smaller number of individual things. *Less* refers to a smaller quantity of something.

Example:

The less money he makes, the fewer dollars he spends.

Levy-Jennings A quality-control data chart. Capitalize and hyphenate.

like, as Use *like* as a preposition to compare nouns and pronouns. It requires an object.

Example:

He speaks like a professional.

Use the conjunction *as* to introduce clauses.

Example:

She rereads her memos, as she should, before sending them.

lists Use bullets for most lists.

Example:

Citrus fruits include:

- Oranges
- Lemons
- Limes

Use numbers for two types of lists: steps in a process or other temporal sequence; or rank, including sequencing points most-to-least important.

Example:

To start the car:

1. Insert key
2. Start ignition
3. Shift into gear

literally, figuratively *Literally* means *actually* or *to the letter*.

Example:

He was so surprised, he literally fell off his chair.

Literally is often confused with *figuratively* (a word not often used), which means *metaphorically* or *imaginatively*. It would be incorrect to say, "The group literally took a step backward by agreeing to the new resolution." (The group members did not actually all take a step backward.)

login, logon, logoff; log in, log on, log off Write as one word for a noun. Write as two words for a verb.

Examples:

The login password is 1234.

Log in to your account.

LOINC Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes.

low-molecular-weight Hyphenate when used as an adjective (eg, low-molecular-weight heparin).

LSIL Low-grade squamous intraepithelial lesion

lymphoma T-cell, B-cell, NK-cell lymphoma: hyphenate when used as an adjective. (But as a noun: T cells, B cells, NK cells).



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Or use Edit > Find to search for a specific entry.

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M

MD Do not use periods between the letters. Precede with comma when used after a name. Use *MD* on first reference (for example, John M. Smith, MD, FCAP). On second reference, refer to him as Dr. Smith.
See also **doctor**

malignancy, malignant neoplasm, malignant tumor When referring to a specific tumor, use *malignant neoplasm* or *malignant tumor* rather than *malignancy*. *Malignancy* refers to the quality of being malignant.

measurements Follow these guidelines.

Use the following abbreviations with a numerical quantity:

Celsius	C (use closed up with degree symbol, eg, 40°C)
centimeter	cm
cubic centimeter	cc ³ (use milliliter for liquid and gas)
cubic micrometer	μm ³
cubic millimeter	mm ³ (use microliter for liquid and gas)
dalton	Da
day	d
Fahrenheit	F (use closed up with degree symbol, eg, 70°F)
foot	ft (in scientific use, convert to meters)
gigabyte	GB
gram	g
gravity	<i>g</i> (italic and closed up, eg, 200 <i>g</i>)
kilobyte	K or KB
kilogram	kg
liter	L
megabyte	MB
meter	m
micrometer (or micron)	μm

Note: If you don't have access to the mu (μ) symbol, substitute an italic *u*. Also, when exchanging documents across platforms (MAC/PC) or importing text, the symbol might "disappear" but the *u* will remain.

micromole	μmol
milligram	mg
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm
millimeters of mercury	mm Hg
minute (time)	min
month	mo
normal (solution)	N
pound	lb (in scientific use, convert to mg, kg, or g)
revolutions per minute	RPM

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second	s
square centimeter	cm ²
square foot	sq ft
square inch	sq in
square meter	m ²
square millimeter	mm ²
unit	U
volume	vol
week	wk
yard	yd
year	y

Use abbreviations for all metric measurements, with no period following the abbreviation. Unless otherwise noted, insert a space between the number and the unit of measure.

Use the abbreviations for time (y, d, min) only in a virgule construction or in tables and line art, not in text.

Spell out units of measure in text.

Example:

Tumor size should be measured in square centimeters.

(But: The tumor measured 3 cm².)

Do not capitalize abbreviated units of measure unless the abbreviation itself is always capitalized or contains capital letters.

Use the same symbol for single and multiple quantities (ie, do not add *s* to the abbreviated unit of measure).

When a specific measurement is used as an adjective, use a hyphen.

Examples:

an 8-L container

a 10-mm strip

Medicaid, Medicare *Medicaid* is a federal state program that helps pay for health care for the needy, aged, blind, and disabled, and for low-income families with children.

Medicare is the federal health care insurance program for people age 65 and older, and for the disabled. In Canada, Medicare refers to the nation's national health insurance program.

medical technologist Do not abbreviate this title as *med tech*. Note, too, that there are both technicians and technologists.

membership designations The CAP membership designations are Fellow (FCAP), Emeritus Fellow (FCAP), International Fellow (IFCAP), and Junior Member. Always include the designations when listing names of CAP members in CAP communications and marketing materials.

months Spell out the names of months in text; do not abbreviate. Do not put a comma between a month and year.

Example:

She was born in February 1942.

See also **dates**

mixups Write as one word.

more than, over *Over* generally refers to spatial relationships.

Example:

The plane flew over the city.

More than is preferred with numerals.

Example:

We offer more than 550 proficiency testing products.

myriad It originally meant *ten thousand*, but myriad now means *numerous* or a *great number of*. It can be used as a noun or an adjective.

Examples:

We have myriad choices. (adjective)
We have a myriad of choices. (noun)

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N

names On first reference, include first name, middle initial, last name, academic degrees, and CAP membership designation, as appropriate. CAP member names always precede names of nonmembers and staff.

nationwide Write as one word.

needlestick Write as one word.

negative, positive; abnormal, normal Examinations and laboratory tests and studies are not abnormal, normal, negative, or positive. These adjectives apply to observations, results, or findings.

Examples:

Findings from the examination were normal.

(Not: The examination was normal.)

The throat culture was negative for β -hemolytic streptococci.

(Not: The throat culture was negative.)

Serologic test results for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.

(Not: Serologic tests for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.)

Exceptions:

HIV-positive men

seronegative women

negative node

neither...nor, either...or The nouns that follow these words do not constitute a compound subject; they are alternate subjects and require a verb that agrees with the nearer subject.

Examples:

Neither they nor he is going.

(The singular verb *is* goes with the singular *he*.)

Neither he nor they are going.

(The plural verb *are* goes with the plural *they*.)

New Year's Day, New Year's Eve Capitalize when referring to the holiday. When not specifically referring to the holiday, use new year (eg, What will the new year bring?).

NewsPath® A series of articles and podcasts written by CAP members on the latest information in laboratory medicine.

NIH National Institutes of Health. Requires a singular verb.

non Use a hyphen when preceding a proper noun, a capitalized word, or an acronym.

Example:

non-Medicare

Do not use a hyphen unless the word becomes hard to read.

Examples:

nonmember

nongynecologic

non-nucleated

none It usually means *no single one*. When used in this sense, it always takes singular verbs and pronouns.

Example:

None of the seats was in its right place.

Use a plural verb only if the sense is *no two* or *no amount*.

Examples:

None of the consultants agree on the same approach.

None of the fees have been paid.

nonmember Do not use a hyphen after the prefix.

nonprofit Write as one word.

noon, midnight Use the word *noon* by itself; do not put a 12 in front of it. Do not capitalize. The same holds true for *midnight*.

See also **time**

normal, abnormal; negative, positive Examinations and laboratory tests and studies are not abnormal, normal, negative, or positive. These adjectives apply to observations, results, or findings.

Examples:

Findings from the examination were normal.

(Not: The examination was normal.)

The throat culture was negative for β -hemolytic streptococci.

(Not: The throat culture was negative.)

Serologic test results for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.

(Not: Serologic tests for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.)

Exceptions:

HIV-positive men

seronegative women

negative node

notes Capitalize the word *Notes* and follow it with arabic numerals in specific references (eg, see Note 2).

number Spell out zero to nine in text. Use numerals for 10 and above.

Exceptions:

Use numerals for specific measures and dates (eg, 2 mm, 5%, \$8 million, November 6)

Use numerals for specific medical terms (eg, stage I cancer, diabetes type 2, CIN III).

Abbreviate as *No.* and capitalize the *N*. Do not use the number symbol (#).

Example:

It is the No. 1 medical school in the nation, according to the survey.

Spell out first through ninth. Use ordinal numbers for higher values (eg, 10th, 11th, 12th).

Use the word *to* when specifying a range of numbers in text. Use an en dash in tables and figures. Only put the unit of measure after the second number.

Example:

10 to 30 patients

(But in a table: 10-30 patients)

Use commas in numerals that contain four or more digits (eg, 11,456).

Avoid beginning a sentence with a number. If you must use a number to begin a sentence, spell it out (unless it is a year) even if it is greater than nine.

See also **decimal**

See also **measurements**

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O

off-line Hyphenate. (But: online [no hyphen])

off-site, off site Hyphenate when preceding noun as a compound modifier.

Example:

The off-site meeting was last week.
Do not hyphenate when not preceding noun.
Example:
The meeting was off site.

OK, OK'd, OKs Do not spell out as okay. Use the terms *approve*, *approved*, or *approves* in formal communication.

onboard, on board Write as one word when the meaning is *carried or used aboard a vehicle or vessel*. For our purposes, this means it would be one word when we're talking about something being "onboard" an instrument.
Write as two words when the meaning is *aboard or on the job*.
Example:
The company had brought on board several newly graduated engineers.

one Avoid using *one* as a third-person reference, eg, one needs to, one can, one must.

one another, each other Two people look at *each other*. More than two look at *one another*. Either phrase may be used when the number is indefinite.
Examples:
We help each other.
We help one another.

online Do not hyphenate. (But: off-line [hyphenated])

only Don't use only in place of *but* or *except*.
Example:
I would go to the convention, *but* [not *only*] I will be on vacation.

on-screen, on screen Hyphenate as a compound modifier. Do not hyphenate when it stands alone as an adjective.

on-site, on site Hyphenate when preceding a noun as a compound modifier.
Example:
The on-site supervisor checked the laboratory.
Do not hyphenate when not preceding noun.
Example:
The supervisor was on site.

onto, on to If you mean on top of or aware of, use *onto*.
Examples:
The responsibility shifted onto Charles' shoulders.
I'm onto your plans.
Otherwise, use *on to*.
Example:
Hang on to your hat.
He is moving on to better things.

oral, verbal, written Use *oral* to refer to spoken words.
Example:
He gave an oral report.
Use *written* to refer to words put on paper.
Example:
We had a written agreement.
Use *verbal* to compare words with some other form of communication.
Example:
His facial expression revealed the sentiments that his verbal skills could not express.

orient Do not use *orientate*.

outpatient Write as one word.

outperform Write as one word.

ordinals Spell out first through ninth. Use ordinal numbers for anything higher than ninth (eg, 10th).

over, more than *Over* generally refers to spatial relationships.

Example:

The plane flew over the city.

More than is preferred with numerals.

Example:

We offer more than 550 proficiency testing products.

overall Write as one word.

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P

page Spell out *page* or *pages* in text (eg, see page 130). If abbreviating, use *p.* for page and *pp.* for pages (eg, p. 130, pp. 119–120).

pandemic, epidemic An *epidemic* is the rapid spreading of disease in a certain population or region; *pandemic* is an epidemic that has spread worldwide.

Pap test Do not use the term *Pap smear*. Do not spell out *Papanicolaou*.

parentheses Use parentheses to indicate supplemental explanations, identification, direction to the reader, or translation.

Examples:

The physician injected a known volume of fluid (100 mL).

The differences were not significant ($P > .05$).

Do not use two sets of parentheses back to back. Instead, use one set of parentheses and separate the material inside with a semicolon.

Use brackets to indicate parenthetical expressions within parenthetical expressions.

Examples:

A nitrogen mustard (mechlorethamine [Mustargen]) was one of the drugs used.

PAS Periodic acid-Schiff (stain)

PathPAC Note capitalization.

patient, case In clinical research, a case is a particular instance of a disease. A *patient* is a particular person under medical care.

PDF Portable document format. The abbreviation is acceptable in all references. Lowercase when part of a file name.

per In the *per* construction, use a forward slash (solid diagonal line known as a *virgule*) when:

- The construction involves units of measure (including time)
- At least one element includes a specific numerical quantity
- The element immediately adjacent on each side is either a specific numerical quantity or a unit of measure.

Examples:

The hemoglobin level was 140 g/L.

The CD4⁺ cell count was 0.20 by 10⁹/L (200/μL).

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Blood volume was 80 mL/kg of body weight.

Respirations were 60/min; pulse rate was 98/min.

Use the word *per* to mean for each or in accordance with.

Examples:

Use 4.5 mmol of potassium per liter.

Compose all communications per the CAP style guidelines.

percent Write as one word. The term *percent* and the symbol % should be used with specific numbers.

Singular: Takes a singular verb when standing alone or when a singular word follows an *of* construction.

Examples:

The teacher said 60% was a failing grade.

Fifty percent of the membership was there.

Plural: Takes a plural verb when a plural word follows an *of* construction.

Examples:

He said 50% of the members attended the meeting.

Format: If the number is spelled out, spell out *percent*. If numerals are used, use the percent symbol (%). For other-than-whole numbers, use decimals, not fractions.

Examples:

Fifty percent of people agree with your recommendation.

10%

2.5% (Note: use decimals, not fractions)

Ranges: Place the % symbol after both numbers.

Examples:

12%–15%

3% to 12%

Less than 1%: For amounts less than 1%, precede the decimal with a zero.

Examples:

The cost of living rose 0.6%.

percentage, percent *Percentage* is a more general term for any number or amount that can be stated as a percent, whereas the term *percent* and the symbol % should be used with specific numbers.

Examples:

Heart disease was present in a small percentage of the participants.

The study discovered heart disease in 5% of participants.

percentile The value on a scale of 100 that indicates the percentage of the distribution that is equal to or below it.

persuade, convince You *convince* a person of something. You *persuade* a person to do something. Usually follow *convince* with *of* or *that*, and *persuade* with *to*.

Examples:

Jean convinced the group that her plan would be the best course of action.

Mary persuaded her neighbor to remove the fence.

PhD Do not use a period after *Ph* (eg, John Smith, MD, PhD, FCAP).

phone numbers Use hyphens, not periods, in phone numbers. List only the area code and the number—do not precede the phone number with a *1*. When listing an extension, abbreviate extension as *ext.* and do not place a comma between a phone number and an extension (eg, Call 800-323-4040 ext. 7249).

Use the following guidelines:

Specific extension for US callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 ext. 5555.

Specific extension for US and potential international callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 ext. 5555 or 847-832-5555 (Country code: 001).

General number for US callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 option 1, then 2. [Substitute the options specific to your need.]

General number for US and potential international callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 option 1, then 2 or 847-832-7000 (Country code: 001). [Substitute the options specific to your need.]

physician, doctor Use *physician* only when referring specifically to a doctor of medicine or osteopathy (ie, MD, DO). Otherwise, prefer *doctor* as the more general term that includes persons who hold such degrees as PhD, DDS, EdD, DVM, and PharmD.

PIP Performance Improvement Program. Do not write *PIP Program*.

pipeline Write as one word.

plans Avoid the redundant *future plans*.

plural The plural of most nouns is formed by adding *s* or *es*.

Examples:

book books

disease diseases

loss losses

However, English is irregular enough that it pays to consult a dictionary.

Examples:

woman women

baby babies

child children

Collective nouns: Use either singular or plural verbs with collective nouns, depending on whether the word refers to the group as a unit or to its members as individuals. Most nouns naming a group regarded as a unit are treated as singular.

Examples:

Fifty percent of my time is spent on administration.

Fifty percent of all musicians do not exercise regularly.

For a unit of measure, use a singular verb (eg, five milliliters was injected).

Abbreviations and numerals: Add an *s* to all-capital abbreviations and numerals to form the plural. Do not use an apostrophe before the *s*.

Examples:

HMOs

ICUs

during the 1920s

people in their 50s

False singulars: Some nouns, because they end in a “plural” form, are mistakenly taken to be plurals even though they should be treated as singular and take a singular verb (eg, measles, mumps, mathematics, genetics).

Parenthetical plurals: Use a singular verb when *s* or *es* is added parenthetically to a word to express the possibility of a plural. However, in most instances, avoid this construction and use the plural noun instead.

Examples:

The risk factor(s) for each study participant was not always clear.

The risk factors of the study participants were not always clear.

podcast Write as one word for a noun or a verb.

point-of-care testing Hyphenate. Abbreviate *point-of-care* as *POC* and *point-of-care testing* as *POCT*.

policyholders, policymakers, policymaking Write as one word.

positive, negative; abnormal, normal Examinations and laboratory tests and studies are not abnormal, normal, negative, or positive. These adjectives apply to observations, results, or findings.

Examples:

Findings from the examination were normal.

(Not: The examination was normal.)

The throat culture was negative for β -hemolytic streptococci.

(Not: The throat culture was negative.)

Serologic test results for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.

(Not: Serologic tests for *Treponema pallidum* were positive.)

Exceptions:

HIV-positive men

seronegative women

negative node

possessives Add apostrophe s ('s) to singular or plural words that do not end in s.

Examples:

The patient's needs (referring to one patient).

Add only an apostrophe to nouns that end in s.

Examples:

The patients' needs (referring to more than one patient)

Charles' memos (Not: Charles's memos.)

Do not use 's with possessive pronouns.

Example:

The idea was hers.

Add 's to proper nouns or names ending in a silent z or x.

Examples:

Marx's theories

See also **apostrophe**

post Do not hyphenate except when it precedes a proper noun/capitalized word (eg, post-Thanksgiving), an acronym (eg, post-CLIA), or a compound noun (eg, post-lung transplantation patient).

Examples:

postanalytic

postoperative

posttransplant

postvasectomy

Note that when used as a combining adjectival form, use it without a hyphen.

When used as an adverb, write as two separate words.

Examples:

postpartum depression

depression occurring post partum

Can also be used without a hyphen to mean "after" (eg, 18 months post treatment).

postal codes Use postal abbreviation if the state name is followed by a ZIP code. Here is a list of **general state abbreviations and US postal code abbreviations**.

practitioner, clinician Use these terms to describe health professionals in the clinical practice of such fields as medicine, nursing, psychology, dentistry, optometry, and podiatry, distinguishing them from specialists in laboratory science, research, policy, or theory. When referring to a particular type of clinician, use the more descriptive term (eg, physician).

pre Do not hyphenate except when it precedes a proper noun/capitalized word (eg, pre-Thanksgiving) or an acronym (eg, pre-CLIA) or when it is used to avoid ambiguity or awkward spelling (eg, pre-establish).

Examples:

preanalytic

preoperative

prefix In general, do not hyphenate prefixes except when they precede a proper noun/capitalized word (eg, non-Medicare), an acronym (eg, non-CAP), or a number (eg, mid-20s).

Do not use a hyphen with the following common prefixes except when they precede a proper noun, a capitalized word, or an acronym: *ante-, anti-, bi-, co-, contra-, counter-, de-, extra-, infra-, inter-, intra-, micro-, mid-, non-, over-, pre-, post-, pro-, pseudo-, re-, semi-, sub-, super-, supra-, trans-, tri-, ultra-, un-, under-*.

Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguity or awkward spelling.

Examples:

co-create

co-worker

intra-aortic

premier, premiere *Premier* can mean first in rank or importance. It also can refer to a prime minister or head of state. Note there is no e at the end.

Examples:

The College is the premier organization for pathologists.

Premiere (with an e) refers to the first performance (the first of several presentations, for example). As a verb, *premiere* means to give a first public performance.

Examples:

She gave her premiere presentation at the town hall meeting.

presently Use it to mean *in a little while* or *shortly*, but not to mean *now*.

preventive Do not use *preventative*.

principal, principle *Principal* is a noun and adjective meaning someone or something first in rank, authority, importance or degree. Examples: the principal problem, a principal member of the team, school principal.

Principle is a noun that means a fundamental truth, law, doctrine, or motivating force. Example: the principle of quality patient care.

proficiency test Never follow this phrase with the word *Surveys*—it is redundant. The CAP Surveys program is a proficiency testing program.

pro forma Write as two words.

proofreading marks When working with the Creative Design department, or others who will be transcribing your changes, use standard proofreading marks. Consult Merriam Webster's **list for proofreading marks**.

PSA Prostate-specific antigen

PT Proficiency testing. Spell out in first reference.

publication titles Use italics for the names of books, journals, newspapers, and magazines. Place the names of all other printed materials in quotation marks. Capitalize the first letters of all primary words in all types of publication titles (exception: chapter or article titles in references). See also **references**

PubMed Consult **www.pubmed.org** to verify references.

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Q

Q-PROBES™ Trademarked product of the CAP.

Q-TRACKS® Registered product of the CAP.

quotation marks Use quotation marks for direct quotes.

Examples:

Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned."

"I do not object," he said, "to the tenor of the report."

The newspaper wrote that the practice is "too conservative for inflationary times."

Do not use quotation marks when emphasizing a word, when using a non-English word, when mentioning a term as a term, or when defining a term. In these instances, use italics.

Article, video, lecture titles: Use quotation marks around titles of articles in text.

Examples:

The June issue of *CAP TODAY* contained the article "HER2 Tissue Shortage."

The "Every number is a life" video was well-received by the laboratory community.

Nonstandard words: Place coined words, slang, nicknames, and words or phrases used ironically or facetiously in quotation marks at first mention.

Placement: Place closing quotation marks outside commas and periods, inside colons and semicolons. Place question marks, dashes, and exclamation points inside quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material; if they apply to the whole statement, place them outside the quotation marks.

Examples:

The September 2005 issue of *CAP TODAY* features an article entitled, "Early Prenatal Screening Matures," on the front page.

The speaker referred to "paradigm shifts"; unfortunately, no one in the audience understood what he meant.

The clinician continues to ask, "Why did he die?"

R

range Use the word *to* instead of a hyphen in text.

Examples:

Each researcher studied 10 to 20 patients.

In tables or figures, use a hyphen or en dash.

Example:

10-30 patients

In parentheses, set off with a comma.

Example:

(range, 10 to 20 kg).

Do not repeat a measurement in a range unless not doing so would cause confusion.

Examples:

20 to 50 mg/dL

(Not: 20 mg/dL to 50 mg/dL)

\$3 million to \$10 million

(\$3 to \$10 million means something else.)

rarely It means *seldom*. *Rarely ever* is redundant.

ratio Use a colon as part of a numerical ratio.

Examples:

The controls and study subjects were randomized in a 2:1 ratio.

real-time As modifier before a noun, hyphenate it. Otherwise two words.

recur, recurred, recurring Do not write *reoccur*.

re-elect, re-election Hyphenate.

refer, allude *Allude* means *to mention indirectly* or *to hint at*—to speak of something in a covert or roundabout way.

Examples:

Ralph suspected that the speaker's comment about bad taste alluded to his new tie.

Refer means *to mention directly*.

Example:

The speaker referred to Ralph's new tie as an example of bad taste.

references References can appear within text or as a numbered list at the end of the text, following the order of citation within the text. General references not specifically cited in the text (ie, a bibliography) are organized alphabetically.

references in a list Per the *AMA Manual of Style*, 10th edition, the minimal acceptable data for print references is:

Journals: Author(s). Article title. *Journal Name*. Year;volume(issue No):inclusive pages. Abbreviate the names of journals; abbreviations and other reference information can be verified online through PubMed (www.pubmed.org).

Books: Author(s). *Book Title*. City, State of publication: publisher; year: inclusive pages.

Other elements that can be included are edition (for books; abbreviated ed.), physical description (physical construction or form), series statement, supplementary notes (identifiers of uniqueness of the reference or material necessary for added clarity).

Authors: Use the author's surname followed by initials without periods. In listed references, the names of all authors should be given unless there are more than six, in which case the names of the first three authors are used, followed by *et al*. Do not use and between names. Roman numerals and abbreviations for Junior (Jr.) and Senior (Sr.) follow author's initials.

Examples:

Journal article:

1. Bostwick DG, Tazellar HD, Ballon SC. Ovarian epithelial tumors of borderline malignancy: a clinical and pathologic study of 109 cases. *Cancer*. 1986;58(2):2052-2065.
2. Yang XJ, Zhou M, Hes O, et al. Tubulocystic carcinoma of the kidney, clinicopathologic and molecular characterization. *Am J Surg Pathol*. 2008;32(2):177-187.

Entire book:

1. Dehner LP. *Pediatric Surgical Pathology*. 2nd ed. Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins; 1987: 874-885.
2. Lee GR, Bithell TC, Foerster J, Athens JW, Lukens JN, eds. *Wintrobe's Clinical Hematology*. Vol. 2. 9th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lea & Febiger; 1993.

Chapter in a book:

1. Gallagher PJ. Blood vessels. In: Sternberg SS, ed. *Diagnostic Surgical Pathology*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Raven Press; 1994.

Government bulletins:

1. US Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 1993. 113th ed. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1993.
2. *Clinical Practice Guideline Number 5: Depression in Primary Care, 2: Treatment of Major Depression*. Rockville, MD: Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 1993. AHCPR publication 93-0551.

Websites:

1. Health Care Financing Administration. 1996 statistics at a glance. <http://www.hcfa.gov/stats/stathili.htm>. Accessed December 2, 1996.
2. LaPorte RE, Marler E, Akazawa S, Sauer F, et al. The death of biomedical journals. *BMJ* [serial online]. 1995;310:1387-1390. <http://www.bmj.com/bmj/archive/6991ed2.htm>. Accessed June 26, 1997.

references within text Style for references within text is: Author (followed by *et al* if there are more than one). *Journal name*. Year;Vol(issue No):inclusive pages. Do not include the title of the article in citations presented within text.

Example for name of journal included in parenthetical phrase:

The researchers also plan to use an immunohistochemical method developed by Dr. Ellis (Smith JQ et al. *Can Res*. 1999;59:5412-5416).

Example of name of journal stated within the text:

The researchers also plan to use an immunohistochemical method developed by Dr. Ellis and recently reported in *Cancer Research* (Smith JQ et al. 1999;59:5412-5416).

regretfully, regrettably A person who's full of regret is *regretful*, and sighs *regretfully*.

Examples:

The hospital regretfully informed us they had overlooked the error.

A thing that's a cause of regret is *regrettable*, and *regrettably* that's the situation.

Examples:

The situation was regrettably beyond our control.

reimbursement This term can be used, but *payment* is preferred.

relationship, association *Association* is a connection between two variables in which one does not necessarily cause the other. *Relationship* implies cause and effect.

reluctant, reticent *Reluctant* means *unwilling to act*.

Example:

He is reluctant to commit to that deadline.

Reticent means *unwilling to speak*.

Example:

The audience member was reticent.

RSS Really simple syndication. A protocol for subscribing to and distributing feeds that notify people of new entries on news sites, blogs, podcasts, or other online information sources. Also *RSS feed*.

RSVP Uppercase and do not use periods.

RT-PCR Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction or reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction

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If you wish to jump to an alphabetical section, scroll to the top of the document.

Or use Edit > Find to search for a specific entry.

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S

SARS Severe acute respiratory syndrome

seasons Lowercase spring, summer, fall, winter, and derivatives, such as springtime, unless part of a formal name.

Examples:

Northfield Winter Carnival

Summer Olympics

second guess Write as two words for a noun (eg, to take a second guess). Hyphenate the verb form (eg, to second-guess someone).

See, Test & Treat[®] Registered program of the CAP Foundation.

semicolon Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses in a compound sentence when no connective word is used.

Example:

The conditions of 52% of the patients improved greatly; 4% of the patients withdrew from the study.

In most instances, it is equally correct to create two independent sentences.

seminar Capitalize the initial letters of major words in the names of seminars.

sera Preferred plural spelling for *serum*.

sex, gender Use *sex* to denote whether a person is genetically male or female. Use *gender* to denote a person's self-representation as a man or woman.

shelf life Write as two words.

should, would Use *should* to express an obligation.

Example:

We should do the right thing.

Use *would* to express a customary action.

Example:

You would typically save the file at this point.

sign-up, sign up Hyphenate when used as a noun or adjective.

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Example:

Several people put their names on the sign-up sheet.

Write as two words when used as a verb.

Example:

The company is encouraging employees to sign up for blood pressure screenings.

SIL Squamous intraepithelial lesion

since, as, because *As, because, and since* can all be used to mean *for the reason that*. Do not use *as* when it could be construed to mean *while*. Do not use *since* when it could be construed to mean *from the time of* or *from the time that*.

Examples:

She could not answer her page as she was examining a critically ill patient. (Ambiguous; as could mean *while* or *because*.)

She had not been able to answer her page since she was in the clinic. (Ambiguous; *since* could mean *from the time that* or *because*.)

site, cite *Cite* means *to mention or quote as an authority or example*. *Site* refers to a particular place.

Examples:

This style manual explains how to cite sources in a journal article.

We are looking for a site for the next committee meeting.

SNOMED CT® SNOMED Clinical Terms®. SNOMED and SNOMED CT are registered trademarks of IHTSDO.

social security Lowercase.

standalone Write as one word without a hyphen for a modifier.

stat Lowercase.

states Set off a state name with commas when used with a city. Be sure to spell out the state name in text; do not abbreviate. Use **postal abbreviation** if the state name is followed by a ZIP code.

Examples:

The CAP is located in Northfield, Illinois.

Please mail your registration forms to College of American Pathologists,
325 Waukegan Rd., Northfield, IL 60093.

statewide Write as one word.

stationary, stationery If the *stationery* (paper) is *stationary* (fixed or still), you can write on it, and it won't move.

Surveys Write with a capital S when referring to the CAP proficiency testing program. Include the word *Surveys* in the first reference.

Example:

the CAP proficiency testing program (Surveys)

symbols, special characters To insert symbols or special characters in a Word document, do the following:

En dash (–), em dash (—):

1. On the toolbar, click on Insert
2. Select Symbol, Advanced Symbol

3. Click on the Special Characters tab
4. Select the appropriate character
5. Click Insert
6. Click close

Depending on which version of Word you have, Word will automatically make an em dash if you type two hyphens (--) together and continue typing.

Trademark (™), registered trademark (®), copyright (©), degrees (°), less than/greater than or equal to (\leq, \geq), Greek letters (eg, μ):

1. On the toolbar, click on Insert
2. Select Symbol
3. Select the appropriate symbol
4. Click Insert
5. Click Close

Alternately, to insert a trademark, you can simply type the letters tm or TM inside parentheses and Word will automatically convert what you've typed to the trademark symbol (™). For (®), type the letter *r* or *R* inside parentheses. For copyright (©), type the letter *c* or *C* inside parentheses.

Service mark (SM): Word does not have a symbol for service mark. To create one, superscript the capital letters *SM*.

sync Short for synchronization or synchronize. Also, *syncing*. Not *synch*.

systemwide Write as one word.

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T

tables Capitalize *table* in text when referring to a specific table.

Example:

See Table 1.

Lowercase *table* when using without a specific number.

Example:

The table shows critical values for common laboratory tests.

tagline Write as one word.

TAT Turnaround time

telephone numbers Use hyphens, not periods, in phone numbers. List only the area code and the number—do not precede the phone number with a 1. For international callers, list the country code following the contact phone number [847-832-7000 (Country code: 001)]. The country code does not apply to the toll-free number. When listing an extension, abbreviate extension as *ext.* and do not place a comma between a phone number and an extension (eg, Call 800-323-4040 ext. 7249).

Use the following guidelines.

Specific extension for US callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 ext. 5555.

Specific extension for US and potential international callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 ext. 5555 or 847-832-5555 (Country code: 001). [For international callers, list the country code in parentheses following 847-832-7000.]

General number for US callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 option 1, then 2. [Substitute the options specific to your need.]

General number for US and potential international callers: For more information, call us at 800-323-4040 option 1, then 2 or 847-832-7000 (Country code: 001). [Substitute the options specific to your need. For international callers, list the country code in parentheses following 847-832-7000.]

temperature Use the degree symbol (°) when referring to temperatures in Celsius (C) and Fahrenheit (F). Do not put a space after the degree symbol.

Examples:

32°C

4° to 12°C

tertiary care center Do not hyphenate.

that Use the conjunction *that* to introduce a dependent clause if the sentence sounds or looks awkward without it.

Do not use *that* when a dependent clause follows a form of the verb to say.

Example:

The doctor said he had written the letter.

Use *that* when a time element intervenes between the verb and the dependent clause.

Example:

The doctor said *Monday* that he had written the letter.

Use *that* before subordinate clauses beginning with conjunctions such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *before*, *in addition to*, *until* and *while*.

Example:

He said that after he submitted the report, he realized it was still a draft.

that, which The word *that* introduces a restrictive clause, one that is essential to the meaning of the sentence. The word *which* introduces a nonrestrictive clause, one that adds more information but is not essential to the meaning. Use a comma preceding clauses that begin with *which*.

Examples:

A study on the impact of depression on US labor costs was published in the 2003 JAMA theme issue on depression, which contains articles on a range of similar topics.

The issue of JAMA that contained the article on the impact of depression on US labor costs was the 2003 depression theme issue.

Rule of thumb: If you can drop the clause and not lose the point of the sentence, use *which*. If you can't, use *that*.

that, who Use *that* to refer to a thing. Use *who* to refer to a person.

their, there, they're Use *their* to indicate possession.

Example:

The members went to their meeting.

Use *there* to indicate direction.

Example:

We went there for dinner.

Use *they're* when you mean they are.

Example:

They're in the conference room.

till Or *until*. But not *'til*.

time Spell out numbers below 10 when referring to such elements of time as hours, minutes, and seconds within text. Use the abbreviations *h*, *min*, and *s* in tables and figures.

Capitalize AM and PM, and use without periods. Do not repeat AM or PM. Do not put 12 in front of *noon* or *midnight*, and do not capitalize. Use the en dash for specific time ranges.

Examples:

6:30–9:30 PM

8:30 AM–Noon

9:00 AM–1:00 PM

Time zones: Use ET, CT, or PT when readers from different time zones would need to know this information.

time-consuming Hyphenate.

titles Lowercase a title in text when it follows a person's name.

Example:

Gary Myers, PhD, chief of the clinical chemistry branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is speaking at the meeting.

Uppercase a title when it directly precedes a name without punctuation.

Example:

President Stephen R. Smith, MD, FCAP, spoke to the committee.

Uppercase a title in instances when it is listed directly under the name (stacked).

Examples:

Gary Myers, PhD
Chief, Clinical Chemistry Branch
Division of Laboratory Sciences
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Atlanta

Spell out military titles and set them in lowercase.

TNM Tumor, node, metastases (cancer staging system). The TNM system classifies cancers by the size and extent of the primary tumor (T), involvement of regional lymph nodes (N), and the presence or absence of distant metastases (M). The stage of the disease is determined by TNM groupings.

total, totaled, totaling Note the single */*.

Often, the phrase *a total of* is redundant. It may be used, however, to avoid a figure at the start of a sentence.

Example:

A total of 50 members were at the meeting.

touchscreen Write as one word.

toward Do not write *towards*.

trademark™, registered trademark ®, service mark SM Use the symbols next to the trademark on first mention in text. Do not use the symbols in journal articles or references. Capitalize the initial letter of a trademarked word unless the name is an acronym (eg, IBM) or uses an intercapitalized construction (eg, iTunes). Whenever the specific use of a trademark is not necessary, use the generic term (eg, *tissue*, not *Kleenex*).

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U

UAE United Arab Emirate.

ultrasound Write as one word.

uninterested, disinterested *Disinterested* means *impartial* or *neutral*.

Example:

A good judge should be disinterested.

Uninterested means *bored* or *lacking interest*.

Example:

The jury seemed uninterested in the case.

unique *Unique* means *one of a kind*. Do not describe something as *rather unique*, *most unique*, or *very unique*—it's redundant.

units of measure Follow these guidelines.

Use the following abbreviations with a numerical quantity:

Celsius	C (use closed up with degree symbol, eg, 40°C)
centimeter	cm
cubic centimeter	cc ³ (use milliliter for liquid and gas)
cubic micrometer	μm ³
cubic millimeter	mm ³ (use microliter for liquid and gas)
dalton	Da
day	d
Fahrenheit	F (use closed up with degree symbol, eg, 70°F)
foot	ft (in scientific use, convert to meters)
gigabyte	GB
gram	g
gravity	<i>g</i> (italic and closed up, eg, 200 <i>g</i>)
kilobyte	K or KB
kilogram	kg
liter	L
megabyte	MB
meter	m
micrometer (or micron)	μm

Note: If you don't have access to the mu (μ) symbol, substitute an italic *u*. Also, when exchanging documents across platforms (MAC/PC) or importing text, the symbol might "disappear" but the *u* will remain.

micromole	μmol
milligram	mg
milliliter	mL
millimeter	mm
millimeters of mercury	mm Hg
minute (time)	min
month	mo
normal (solution)	N
pound	lb (in scientific use, convert to mg, kg, or g)
revolutions per minute	RPM
second	s
square centimeter	cm ²
square foot	sq ft
square inch	sq in
square meter	m ²
square millimeter	mm ²
unit	U
volume	vol
week	wk
yard	yd
year	y

Use abbreviations for all metric measurements, with no period following the abbreviation. Unless otherwise noted, insert a space between the number and the unit of measure.

Use the abbreviations for time (y, d, min) only in a virgule construction or in tables and line art, not in text.

Spell out units of measure in text.

Example:

Tumor size should be measured in square centimeters.

(But: The tumor measured 3 cm³.)

Do not capitalize abbreviated units of measure unless the abbreviation itself is always capitalized or contains capital letters.

Use the same symbol for single and multiple quantities (ie, do not add s to the abbreviated unit of measure).

When a specific measurement is used as an adjective, use a hyphen.

Examples:

an 8-L container

a 10-mm strip

US Do not use periods. Avoid *USA* except in mailing addresses.

use, utilize *Use* is almost always preferable to *utilize*, which has the specific meaning of to find a profitable or practical use for, suggesting the discovery of a new use for something.

Exceptions:

Utilization review and *utilization rate* are acceptable terminology.

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V

VA Department of Veterans Affairs (not Veterans Affairs)

vendor Use *company* or the specific company name in lieu of *vendor* whenever possible.

verbal, oral, written Use *oral* to refer to spoken words.

Example:

He gave an oral report.

Use *written* to refer to words put on paper.

Example:

We had a written agreement.

Use *verbal* to compare words with some other form of communication.

Example:

His facial expression revealed the sentiments that his verbal skills could not express.

versus Abbreviate as *vs* only when referring to lawsuits and in headlines, tables, and figures. Note: if a lawyer refers to a lawsuit in written communication as Smith v Jones, do not change it.

via *Via* means *by way of*, not *by means of*.

Example:

We drove to Chicago via Palatine.

(Not: We drove to Chicago via car.)

victim Do not use the word *victim* to describe people who survive physical, domestic, sexual, or psychological violence or a natural disaster. Similarly, avoid labeling people with a disability or disease as victims (eg, AIDS patient, not AIDS victim).

The term *victim* may be appropriate when referring to a person who has experienced trauma and died as a consequence (eg, victim of a land mine explosion).

videotape Write as one word.

voice mail Write as two words.

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W

Washington, DC Use a comma before and no periods for DC.

Web Capitalize because *Web* is a proper noun. The term *World Wide Web* is no longer used.

webinar A combination of the words *web* and *seminar*, a webinar is an interactive seminar conducted over the Internet.

website Write as one word, not capitalized.

Usage note: The transition from *World Wide Web site* to *Web site* to *website* as a single uncapitalized word mirrors the development of other technological expressions, which have tended to take unhyphenated forms as they become more familiar.

weekend, weeklong Write as one word.

wherever Write as one word.

which, that The word *that* introduces a restrictive clause, one that is essential to the meaning of the sentence. The word *which* introduces a nonrestrictive clause, one that adds more information but is not essential to the meaning. Use a comma before clauses that begin with *which*.

Examples:

A study on the impact of depression on US labor costs was published in the 2003 *JAMA* theme issue on depression, which contains articles on a range of similar topics.

The issue of *JAMA* that contained the article on the impact of depression on US labor costs was the 2003 depression theme issue.

Rule of thumb: If you can drop the clause and not lose the point of the sentence, use *which*. If you can't, use *that*.

who's, whose *Who's* is a contraction for *who is*, not a possessive.

Example:

Who's there?

Whose is the possessive.

Example:

I do not know whose file this is.

who, that Use *that* to refer to a thing. Use *who* to refer to a person.

who, whom Use *who* as the subject (never the object) of a sentence, clause, or phrase.

Examples:

The woman who reserved the room left the lights on.

Who is there?

Use *whom* when someone is the object of a verb or preposition.

Examples:

The woman to whom the room was rented left the window open.

Whom do you wish to see?

Hint: Try mentally substituting *he* or *him* where *who* or *whom* should go. If *him* fits, you want *whom* (both end in *m*); if *he* fits, you want *who* (both end with a vowel).

work group Write as two words. Capitalize when part of a proper noun (eg, Digital Pathology Validation Work Group). Abbreviate as *WG*.

work up, workup Write as two words when used as a verb.

Example:

The technician needed to work up the results.

Write as one word when used as a noun.

Example:

The doctor requested a workup.

workflow Write as one word.

workstation Write as one word.

worldwide Write as one word.

worthwhile Write as one word.

would, should Use *should* to express an obligation.

Example:

We should do the right thing.

Use *would* to express a customary action.

Example:

You would typically save the file at this point.

written, oral, verbal Use *oral* to refer to spoken words.

Example:

He gave an oral report.

Use *written* to refer to words put on paper.

Example:

We had a written agreement.

Use *verbal* to compare words with some other form of communication.

Example:

His facial expression revealed the sentiments that his verbal skills could not express.

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X

x-ray Write in lowercase and use a hyphen.

Y

year Do not include the year if the date given (eg, August 2) is in the current year and it would be clear without using the year.

Include the year if the date given is not the current year (eg, August 2, 2007).

Specify future years.

When referring to a particular decade, do not place an apostrophe before the s (eg, 1990s).

See also **dates**

year-end Hyphenate for a noun and an adjective.

yearlong Write as one word.

Z

ZIP code Use all caps *ZIP* (for Zoning Improvement Plan), but always lowercase the word *code*.

Use the United States Postal Service's **ZIP code lookup** to find a ZIP code for a given address, find a code for a city, or find all of the cities in a given ZIP code.

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