



STYLE AND GRAMMAR GUIDELINES ▾

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An *abbreviation* is a shortened form of a word or phrase; abbreviations of phrases are often composed of the first letter of each word of the phrase (i.e., acronym). To maximize clarity, use abbreviations sparingly.

Also consider readers' familiarity with the abbreviation before using it. Although abbreviations can be useful for long, technical terms in scholarly writing, communication is often garbled rather than clarified if an abbreviation is unfamiliar to readers. In general, use an abbreviation if (a) it is conventional and readers are likely to be more familiar with the abbreviation than with the complete form and (b) considerable space can be saved and cumbersome repetition avoided.

Periods are not used with abbreviations in APA Style (e.g., write "FBI" and "PhD" not "F.B.I." and "Ph.D.").



Abbreviations are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the [Publication Manual](#) (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition/) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide](#) (/products/concise-guide) Chapter 5

DEFINITION OF ABBREVIATIONS (/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/ABBREVIATIONS/DEFINITION)

GROUP AUTHOR ABBREVIATIONS (/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/ABBREVIATIONS/GROUP-AUTHORS)

LATIN ABBREVIATIONS (/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/ABBREVIATIONS/LATIN)

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Capitalization

APA Style is a “down” style, meaning that words are lowercase unless there is specific guidance to capitalize them. For example, capitalize the first word of a sentence, unless the sentence begins with the name of a person whose name starts with a lowercase letter.

The *Publication Manual* contains guidance on how to capitalize words beginning a sentence; proper nouns and trade names; job titles and positions; diseases, disorders, therapies, theories, and related terms; titles of works and headings within works; titles of tests and measures; nouns followed by numerals or letters; names of conditions or groups in an experiment; and names of study factors, variables, and effects. Only a subset of the guidance is presented on the website to answer users’ most common questions.



Capitalization is covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the *Publication Manual* ([/products/publication-manual-7th-edition/](#)) Chapter 6 and the *Concise Guide* ([/products/concise-guide](#)) Chapter 5

PROPER NOUNS ([/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/proper-nouns](#))

DISEASES, DISORDERS, THERAPIES, AND MORE ([/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/diseases-disorders-therapies-and-more](#))

TITLE CASE CAPITALIZATION ([/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/title-case](#))

SENCE CASE CAPITALIZATION ([/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/sentence-case](#))

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Italics and Quotation Marks

Italics and quotation marks are used to draw attention to text. For example, italics are used to draw attention to key terms and phrases when providing definitions and to format parts of reference list entries (e.g., titles of books and periodicals). Quotation marks are used to present linguistic examples and titles of book chapters and articles in the text.

When writers follow guidelines for the use of italics and quotation marks, their papers become more consistent and readable.

Note that this category addresses the use of quotation marks other than in the presentation of direct quotations. For information on how to use quotation marks when presenting quotations, see the In-Text Citations category ([/style-grammar-guidelines/citations](#)).



Italics and quotation marks are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the [Publication Manual](#) ([/products/publication-manual-7th-edition](#)) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide](#) ([/products/concise-guide](#)) Chapter 4

USE OF ITALICS([/style-grammar-guidelines/italics-quotations/italics](#))

USE OF QUOTATION MARKS

([/style-grammar-guidelines/italics-quotations/quotation-marks](#))

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Journal Article Reporting Standards

Guidelines for effective communication of behavioral science research

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Lists

Just as heading structure alerts readers to the order of ideas in a paper, lists help readers understand a related set of key points within a sentence or paragraph.

When writing a list, ensure all items are syntactically and conceptually parallel. For example, all items might be nouns or all items might be phrases that begin with a verb. Most lists are *simple lists*, in which commas (or semicolons in the case of lists in which items contain commas) are used between items, including before the final item ([see more information and examples on the lettered lists page \(/style-grammar-guidelines/lists/lettered\)](#)). To draw additional attention to items, APA Style also supports the use of lettered lists, numbered lists, and bulleted lists.

When writers follow guidelines for the creation of lists, their papers become more consistent and readable.

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

Lists are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the [Publication Manual \(/products/publication-manual-7th-edition\)](#) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide \(/products/concise-guide\)](#) Chapter 4

LETTERED LISTS

(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/LISTS/LETTERED)

NUMBERED LISTS

(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/LISTS/NUMBERED)

BULLETED LISTS

(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/LISTS/BULLETED)

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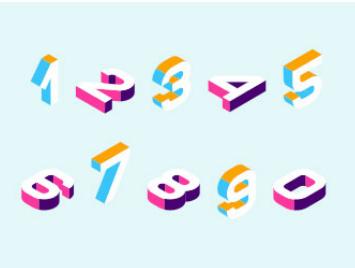
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Numbers

Numbers are used in all sorts of scholarly works. For example, writers may report numerical information about participants (number of participants, demographic information such as age, etc.) as well as the results of statistical analyses.

Even writers who are not conducting empirical research often use statistical information to support key points. For example, writers conducting a literature review or writing a response paper may report numerical information such as the percentage of people diagnosed with a particular disease or disorder, the staffing levels of psychologists or nurses, or the number of terms on a topic they were familiar with.

When writers follow guidelines for number usage, their papers become more consistent and readable.



Numbers are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the [Publication Manual](#) (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide](#) (/products/concise-guide) Chapter 6

NUMBERS EXPRESSED IN WORDS(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/NUMBERS/WORDS)

NUMBERS EXPRESSED IN NUMERALS

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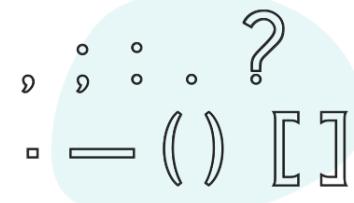
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Punctuation

Punctuation establishes the cadence of a sentence, telling readers where to pause (comma, semicolon, and colon), stop (period and question mark), or take a detour (dash, parentheses, and square brackets). Punctuation of a sentence usually denotes a pause in thought; different kinds of punctuation indicate different kinds and lengths of pauses.

Ensure you neither overuse nor underuse various kinds of punctuation marks. For example, many writers overuse dashes. If the punctuation within a sentence becomes challenging to read, try rewording the sentence or splitting the sentence into multiple shorter sentences.

The *Publication Manual* contains guidance on how to use periods, commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, quotation marks, parentheses, square brackets, and slashes. Only a subset of the guidance is presented on the website to answer users' most common questions.



Punctuation is covered in APA Style manuals in the seventh edition [The Publication Manual](#) ([/products/publication-manual-7th-edition/](#)) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide](#) ([/products/concise-guide](#)) Chapter 4

SPACING AFTER A PERIOD

(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/PUNCTUATION/SPACE-AFTER-PERIOD)

SERIAL COMMA(/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/PUNCTUATION/SERIAL-COMMA)

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Spelling and Hyphenation

Guidelines for spelling and hyphenation ensure that writers use consistent spellings for terms within and across works. In general, spelling and hyphenation should match the spellings given in either the [Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary](https://www.merriam-webster.com) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>) or the [APA Dictionary of Psychology](https://dictionary.apa.org) (<https://dictionary.apa.org>).

Use the automatic spell-check function of your word-processing program to check for spelling errors. Although spell-check cannot take the place of careful proofreading (because words spelled correctly may be used incorrectly), it will lessen the chances that typographical errors make their way into a published article or a submitted assignment.

Some spelling questions are actually capitalization questions; see the [guidance on capitalization](#) ([/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization](#)) for more.



Spelling and Hyphenation is covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the [Publication Manual](#) ([/products/publication-manual-7th-edition](#)) Chapter 6 and the [Concise Guide](#) ([/products/concise-guide](#)) Chapter 5

SPELLING ([/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/SPELLING-HYPHENATION/SPELLING](#))

PREFERRED ([/STYLE-GRAMMAR-GUIDELINES/SPELLING-SPELLINGS](#) [HYPHENATION/PREFERRED-SPELLINGS](#))

HYPHENATION
PRINCIPLES

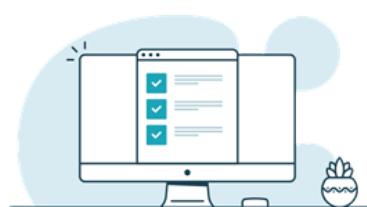
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