

APA Guidelines on Abbreviations

In APA style, abbreviations should only be used when they enhance clarity and efficiency in your writing. Specifically, abbreviations are appropriate when they are widely recognized and do not hinder the reader's understanding, or when they help avoid excessive repetition and save space. However, it's important to strike a balance: overusing abbreviations can make your text harder to follow, while underusing them might miss opportunities for conciseness. As a general rule, use an abbreviation only if it appears at least three times in your document, ensuring the reader retains its meaning.

When introducing an abbreviation, spell out the full term on first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. For example: American Psychological Association (APA). Once introduced, the abbreviation can be used on its own in the rest of the text.

Standard abbreviations—such as those for units of measurement or U.S. states—do not require introduction. Additionally, abbreviations that are recognized as words in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (e.g., IQ, HIV, RNA, CIA, UNESCO) may be used without explanation.

When using all-uppercase abbreviations, avoid periods or spaces, unless referring to proper names or anonymized participant labels (e.g., G. R. R. Martin, J. K. Rowling, P. T. Barnum, F.I.M., S.W.F.). Examples without periods include: MA, FBI, URL, HTML, APA.

Exception: When the term 'United States' is used as an adjective, a period should be included (e.g., U.S. Navy, U.S. Congress).

Use periods with Latin abbreviations or reference indicators (e.g., etc., et al., e.g., a.m., Vol. 1, p. 68, 3rd ed.).

Abbreviations for measurements (e.g., mm, ft, lb, min) typically do not use periods. However, the abbreviation for inch (in.) does include a period to prevent confusion.

Only abbreviate units of measurement and statistical terms when they appear with numerical values (e.g., 10 mg, 300 mi, $M = 4.6$). In contrast, when these terms appear in narrative text, spell them out (e.g., measured in kilograms, several miles away).

Abbreviations for units of time follow specific rules. Do not abbreviate 'day,' 'week,' 'month,' or 'year.' However, it is acceptable to abbreviate 'hour' (hr), 'minute' (min), 'millisecond' (ms), 'nanosecond' (ns), and 'second' (s).

To form the plural of abbreviations, simply add an 's' without an apostrophe or italicization (e.g., CDs, Eds.). An exception applies to units of measurement—avoid pluralizing them with an 's' to prevent confusion (write '12 m' instead of '12 ms').

Abbreviations in Citations

In APA citations, brevity is preferred. Always abbreviate authors' first and middle names using initials (e.g., White, E. B.; Chomsky, N.). Familiarize yourself with commonly accepted citation abbreviations to maintain clarity and uniformity.

Common APA citation abbreviations include:

Book Part	Abbreviation
edition	ed.
revised edition	Rev. ed.
second edition	2nd ed.
Editor(s)	Ed. or Eds.
Translator(s)	Trans.
No date	n.d.
Page(s)	p. or pp.
Volume(s)	Vol. or Vols.
Number	No.
Part	Pt.
Technical Report	Tech. Rep.
Supplement	Suppl.