

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES ARE A CORNERSTONE OF CLEAR AND CONSISTENT ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL WRITING. UNDERSTANDING THESE GUIDELINES IS CRUCIAL FOR AUTHORS, EDITORS, AND ANYONE AIMING FOR POLISHED PROSE. THIS COMPREHENSIVE ARTICLE DELVES INTO THE INTRICACIES OF THE CHICAGO MANUAL'S APPROACH TO ABBREVIATIONS, COVERING EVERYTHING FROM GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO SPECIFIC CATEGORIES LIKE UNITS OF MEASUREMENT, GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES, AND COMMON TERMS. WE WILL EXPLORE THE NUANCES OF WHEN TO ABBREVIATE AND WHEN TO SPELL OUT, THE CORRECT PUNCTUATION FOR ABBREVIATIONS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY WITHIN A GIVEN TEXT. BY MASTERING THESE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES, WRITERS CAN ENHANCE THE READABILITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THEIR WORK, ENSURING A PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION THAT ADHERES TO ESTABLISHED EDITORIAL STANDARDS.

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GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE (CMOS) ADVOCATES FOR CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY AS THE PRIMARY DRIVERS BEHIND ITS ABBREVIATION RULES. GENERALLY, IT RECOMMENDS SPELLING OUT WORDS IN THE TEXT UNLESS THEIR ABBREVIATED FORMS ARE WIDELY RECOGNIZED AND COMMONLY USED, OR IF USING THE ABBREVIATION SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES READABILITY AND SAVES SPACE WITHOUT SACRIFICING COMPREHENSION. THE GOAL IS ALWAYS TO MAKE THE TEXT ACCESSIBLE TO THE BROADEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE.

A KEY PRINCIPLE IS THAT ABBREVIATIONS SHOULD NOT OBSCURE MEANING. IF AN ABBREVIATION IS LIKELY TO BE UNFAMILIAR TO A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE READERSHIP, IT IS BEST TO SPELL IT OUT ON FIRST USE, FOLLOWED BY THE ABBREVIATION IN PARENTHESES, ESPECIALLY FOR TECHNICAL OR SPECIALIZED TERMS. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE MIGHT WRITE "THE PROJECT INVOLVED EXTENSIVE USE OF GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)." SUBSEQUENT USES CAN THEN EMPLOY THE ABBREVIATION GIS.

THE MANUAL DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT AND THOSE FOUND IN NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY SECTIONS. IN NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES, WHERE SPACE IS OFTEN AT A PREMIUM, MORE LIBERAL USE OF ABBREVIATIONS IS PERMITTED, PROVIDED THEY ARE CONVENTIONAL AND UNDERSTOOD WITHIN SCHOLARLY CONTEXTS.

ABBREVIATIONS IN TEXT VS. NOTES

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN TEXT AND NOTES IS FUNDAMENTAL TO CHICAGO'S APPROACH TO ABBREVIATIONS. IN THE MAIN BODY OF A WORK, THE EMPHASIS IS ON ENSURING MAXIMUM CLARITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE GENERAL READER. THIS OFTEN MEANS SPELLING OUT COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES, EVEN IF THEIR ABBREVIATIONS ARE TECHNICALLY PERMISSIBLE.

CONVERSELY, NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, INDEXES, AND TABLES ARE AREAS WHERE CONCISENESS IS HIGHLY VALUED. HERE, THE CMOS PERMITS A WIDER RANGE OF ABBREVIATIONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT ARE STANDARD WITHIN SPECIFIC ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES OR ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR TO A SCHOLARLY AUDIENCE. FOR INSTANCE, UNITS OF MEASUREMENT ARE ALMOST

ALWAYS ABBREVIATED IN TABLES AND OFTEN IN NOTES, WHILE IN THE RUNNING TEXT, IT MIGHT DEPEND ON CONTEXT AND FREQUENCY OF USE.

THE PRINCIPLE OF "FIRST USE" IS ALSO IMPORTANT. EVEN IN THE TEXT, IF AN ABBREVIATION IS NECESSARY AND NOT UNIVERSALLY KNOWN, IT SHOULD BE DEFINED UPON ITS FIRST APPEARANCE. THIS PRACTICE BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN THE STRICTNESS OF TEXT AND THE CONCISENESS OF NOTES, ENSURING THE READER IS NEVER LEFT GUESSING.

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS AND THEIR USAGE

MANY ABBREVIATIONS ARE SO COMMON THAT THEY ARE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED. THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON MANY OF THESE, GENERALLY PERMITTING THEIR USE IN TEXT IF THEY ENHANCE READABILITY. THESE INCLUDE TITLES, COMMON UNITS OF TIME, AND CERTAIN LATIN PHRASES FREQUENTLY USED IN SCHOLARLY WORK.

TITLES AND FORMS OF ADDRESS

TITLES PRECEDING NAMES ARE TYPICALLY ABBREVIATED. FOR EXAMPLE, MR., MRS., MS., DR., REV., PROF., AND THEIR FEMALE EQUIVALENTS ARE STANDARD. HOWEVER, TITLES USED IN A GENERAL SENSE, SUCH AS "THE PRESIDENT" OR "A DOCTOR," ARE USUALLY SPOelled OUT. THIS DISTINCTION HELPS MAINTAIN FORMALITY AND RESPECT WHEN REFERRING TO INDIVIDUALS.

TIME AND MEASUREMENT

ABBREVIATIONS FOR UNITS OF TIME LIKE "A.M.," "P.M.," "B.C.," AND "A.D." ARE COMMON. SIMILARLY, UNITS OF MEASUREMENT, PARTICULARLY IN TECHNICAL OR SCIENTIFIC CONTEXTS, ARE OFTEN ABBREVIATED (E.G., KM, LB, OZ, FT, IN, CM, G, KG). THE CHICAGO MANUAL PROVIDES EXTENSIVE LISTS FOR THESE IN ITS APPENDICES.

UNITS OF MEASUREMENT ABBREVIATIONS

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE OFFERS SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON ABBREVIATING UNITS OF MEASUREMENT, WHICH CAN VARY DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT AND THE STYLE GUIDE'S SPECIFIC EDITION. GENERALLY, IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL WRITING, AND ESPECIALLY IN TABLES AND FIGURES, ABBREVIATIONS ARE PREFERRED FOR CLARITY AND CONCISENESS.

FOR METRIC UNITS, ABBREVIATIONS ARE STANDARD AND TYPICALLY DO NOT TAKE A PERIOD (E.G., CM FOR CENTIMETER, M FOR METER, KG FOR KILOGRAM). FOR CUSTOMARY UNITS, THE CMOS OFTEN RECOMMENDS PERIODS FOR ABBREVIATIONS (E.G., IN. FOR INCH, FT. FOR FOOT, LB. FOR POUND), THOUGH THIS CAN SOMETIMES BE FLEXIBLE BASED ON PREVAILING USAGE IN A PARTICULAR FIELD.

- METRIC UNITS: G, KG, CM, M, L, ML
- CUSTOMARY UNITS (OFTEN WITH PERIODS): IN., FT., YD., MI., OZ., LB., GAL.

IT IS CRUCIAL TO MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY IN THE USE OF PERIODS FOR CUSTOMARY UNITS THROUGHOUT A DOCUMENT. CONSULTING THE LATEST EDITION OF THE CHICAGO MANUAL IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE RECOMMENDATIONS.

GEOGRAPHICAL NAME ABBREVIATIONS

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ADVISES CAUTION WITH GEOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS IN THE TEXT. WHILE SOME ARE WIDELY RECOGNIZED, LIKE U.S. (FOR UNITED STATES), OTHERS CAN LEAD TO CONFUSION. FOR MAJOR ENTITIES LIKE STATES OR COUNTRIES, SPELLING THEM OUT IS GENERALLY PREFERRED IN THE MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT.

HOWEVER, IN CONTEXTS WHERE SPACE IS LIMITED OR FOR ESTABLISHED ABBREVIATIONS, THE CMOS DOES OFFER GUIDANCE. FOR INSTANCE, U.S. IS ACCEPTABLE WHEN USED AS AN ADJECTIVE (E.G., U.S. HISTORY). POSTAL ABBREVIATIONS FOR U.S. STATES (E.G., IL FOR ILLINOIS, CA FOR CALIFORNIA) ARE GENERALLY NOT RECOMMENDED IN PROSE BUT ARE STANDARD FOR MAILING ADDRESSES.

FOR FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND REGIONS, THE MANUAL GENERALLY RECOMMENDS SPELLING THEM OUT IN FULL UNLESS A SPECIFIC, UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTOOD ABBREVIATION EXISTS AND IS USED CONSISTENTLY. THE CONTEXT OF THE READERSHIP IS PARAMOUNT; ABBREVIATIONS THAT ARE STANDARD IN ONE REGION OR DISCIPLINE MIGHT BE OBSCURE TO ANOTHER.

LATIN ABBREVIATIONS

LATIN ABBREVIATIONS ARE COMMON IN SCHOLARLY WRITING, PARTICULARLY IN LEGAL, HISTORICAL, AND CLASSICAL STUDIES. THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE PROVIDES RULES FOR THEIR USAGE, INCLUDING WHETHER TO USE PERIODS AND IN WHICH CONTEXTS THEY ARE APPROPRIATE.

SOME FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED LATIN ABBREVIATIONS INCLUDE:

- *I.E.* (ID EST - THAT IS)
- *E.G.* (EXEMPLI GRATIA - FOR EXAMPLE)
- *ETC.* (ET CETERA - AND SO FORTH)
- *ET AL.* (ET ALII - AND OTHERS)
- *OP. CIT.* (OPERA CITATO - IN THE WORK CITED)
- *LOC. CIT.* (LOCO CITATO - IN THE PLACE CITED)
- *IBID.* (IBIDEM - IN THE SAME PLACE)

THE CHICAGO MANUAL GENERALLY RECOMMENDS USING PERIODS FOR THESE ABBREVIATIONS. THEIR USE IS TYPICALLY CONFINED TO NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES, ALTHOUGH *I.E.* AND *E.G.* ARE SOMETIMES FOUND IN TEXT IF USED JUDICIOUSLY AND CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ABBREVIATIONS

WHEN WRITING ABOUT OR QUOTING FROM FOREIGN LANGUAGES, THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ADVISES ADHERING TO THE CONVENTIONS OF THAT LANGUAGE'S SCHOLARLY TRADITION WHERE POSSIBLE, WHILE STILL PRIORITIZING CLARITY FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING READER.

FOR ABBREVIATIONS SPECIFIC TO A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, IT IS OFTEN BEST TO SPELL THEM OUT IN THE TEXT ON FIRST USE, WITH THE ABBREVIATION (IF COMMONLY USED) PROVIDED IN PARENTHESES, PARTICULARLY IF THE ABBREVIATION IS NOT UNIVERSALLY KNOWN. ALTERNATIVELY, IF THE ABBREVIATION IS VERY COMMON WITHIN A SPECIFIC ACADEMIC FIELD, IT MAY BE PERMISSIBLE TO USE IT DIRECTLY AFTER ENSURING THE CONTEXT MAKES ITS MEANING CLEAR.

THE MANUAL EMPHASIZES THAT THE PRIMARY GOAL IS INTELLIGIBILITY. IF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ABBREVIATION MIGHT CAUSE CONFUSION, SPELLING OUT THE FULL TERM OR PROVIDING A TRANSLATION IS THE SAFEST APPROACH.

PUNCTUATION WITH ABBREVIATIONS

PUNCTUATION, PARTICULARLY THE USE OF PERIODS, IS A CRITICAL ASPECT OF ABBREVIATION RULES IN THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE. THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF A PERIOD CAN SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE APPEARANCE AND, IN SOME CASES, THE MEANING OF AN ABBREVIATION.

GENERALLY, ABBREVIATIONS FORMED FROM INITIAL LETTERS OF A PHRASE OR NAME TAKE PERIODS (E.G., U.S., PH.D., M.A.). HOWEVER, THERE ARE MANY EXCEPTIONS, ESPECIALLY FOR ABBREVIATIONS OF UNITS OF MEASUREMENT (AS DISCUSSED PREVIOUSLY) AND ACRONYMS THAT ARE PRONOUNCED AS WORDS (E.G., NASA, NATO), WHICH TYPICALLY DO NOT TAKE PERIODS.

- ABBREVIATIONS OF LATIN PHRASES LIKE *I.E.* AND *E.G.* USE PERIODS.
- ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES LIKE MR. AND MRS. USE PERIODS.
- ACRONYMS THAT HAVE BECOME WORDS (E.G., RADAR, SCUBA) USUALLY OMIT PERIODS.
- MANY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ORGANIZATIONS RECOMMEND OMITTING PERIODS IN ABBREVIATIONS FOR UNITS OF MEASUREMENT (E.G., KM, M, KG).

THE CHICAGO MANUAL PROVIDES EXTENSIVE LISTS, BUT THE OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE IS TO BE CONSISTENT WITHIN A DOCUMENT AND TO FOLLOW ESTABLISHED CONVENTIONS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF ABBREVIATIONS.

CONSISTENCY IN ABBREVIATION USAGE

ONE OF THE MOST VITAL TENETS OF THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES, AND INDEED OF ANY STYLE GUIDE, IS THE DEMAND FOR UNWAVERING CONSISTENCY. ONCE A DECISION IS MADE ABOUT HOW TO ABBREVIATE A PARTICULAR TERM OR WHETHER TO ABBREVIATE IT AT ALL, THAT DECISION MUST BE APPLIED UNIFORMLY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORK.

THIS CONSISTENCY APPLIES TO THE USE OF PERIODS (E.G., ALWAYS USING "IN." OR NEVER USING "IN."), CAPITALIZATION, AND THE CHOICE BETWEEN ABBREVIATING OR SPELLING OUT A TERM. INCONSISTENCY CAN BE JARRING TO THE READER AND CAN UNDERMINE THE CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHOR AND THE PUBLICATION.

FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU CHOOSE TO ABBREVIATE "UNITED STATES" AS "U.S." IN ONE INSTANCE, YOU MUST DO SO CONSISTENTLY WHEREVER IT APPEARS IN THE TEXT, OR PREFERABLY, STICK TO SPELLING IT OUT IF IT'S IN THE MAIN BODY. SIMILARLY, IF YOU USE "DR." FOR DOCTOR WHEN IT PRECEDES A NAME, ENSURE IT'S USED FOR ALL SUCH INSTANCES AND NOT MIXED WITH "DOCTOR" OR OTHER VARIATIONS.

EDITORS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ENFORCING THIS CONSISTENCY, OFTEN REFERRING BACK TO THE AUTHOR OR ESTABLISHED STYLE SHEET TO ENSURE ADHERENCE TO THE CHOSEN CONVENTIONS.

WHEN TO AVOID ABBREVIATIONS

WHILE THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE OFFERS EXTENSIVE GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ABBREVIATE, IT ALSO PROVIDES CLEAR DIRECTION ON WHEN IT IS BEST TO AVOID THEM ALTOGETHER. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE IS THAT IF AN ABBREVIATION DOES NOT ENHANCE CLARITY, CONCISENESS, OR READABILITY, IT SHOULD NOT BE USED.

IN GENERAL PROSE, ESPECIALLY IN LESS FORMAL OR MORE NARRATIVE SECTIONS OF A WORK, SPELLING OUT TERMS IS OFTEN PREFERRED. ABBREVIATIONS CAN SOMETIMES CREATE AN UNNECESSARILY TECHNICAL OR ABRUPT TONE. IF A TERM IS ONLY USED ONCE OR TWICE IN THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT AND ITS ABBREVIATED FORM IS NOT IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS, SPELLING IT OUT IS THE MORE READER-FRIENDLY CHOICE.

FURTHERMORE, IF AN ABBREVIATION IS OBSCURE OR LIKELY TO BE UNFAMILIAR TO THE INTENDED AUDIENCE, IT SHOULD BE AVOIDED OR EXPLAINED. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR HIGHLY SPECIALIZED JARGON OR LESS COMMON ACRONYMS. THE GOAL OF WRITING IS COMMUNICATION, AND ABBREVIATIONS SHOULD SERVE THAT PURPOSE, NOT HINDER IT.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE ABBREVIATION RULES

Q: WHAT IS THE GENERAL RULE FOR ABBREVIATING IN THE MAIN TEXT ACCORDING TO THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE?

A: THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE GENERALLY ADVISES SPELLING OUT WORDS IN THE MAIN TEXT UNLESS THE ABBREVIATION IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AND UNDERSTOOD, OR IF ITS USE SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES READABILITY AND CONCISENESS WITHOUT SACRIFICING CLARITY.

Q: HOW DOES THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE TREAT ABBREVIATIONS FOR UNITS OF MEASUREMENT?

A: FOR UNITS OF MEASUREMENT, CHICAGO GENERALLY PERMITS ABBREVIATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL CONTEXTS, AND IN TABLES. METRIC UNITS TYPICALLY DO NOT USE PERIODS (E.G., CM, KG), WHILE CUSTOMARY UNITS MAY USE PERIODS (E.G., IN., FT.), THOUGH CONSISTENCY IS KEY.

Q: SHOULD I USE PERIODS IN ABBREVIATIONS LIKE "I.E." AND "E.G." ACCORDING TO CHICAGO STYLE?

A: YES, ACCORDING TO THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE, COMMON LATIN ABBREVIATIONS SUCH AS "I.E." (ID EST) AND "E.G." (EXEMPLI GRATIA) REQUIRE PERIODS.

Q: ARE THERE SPECIFIC RULES FOR ABBREVIATING GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN CHICAGO STYLE?

A: CHICAGO STYLE GENERALLY RECOMMENDS SPELLING OUT GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES LIKE STATES AND COUNTRIES IN THE MAIN TEXT. ABBREVIATIONS LIKE U.S. ARE ACCEPTABLE WHEN USED ADJECTIVALLY, BUT POSTAL ABBREVIATIONS ARE TYPICALLY RESERVED FOR ADDRESSES.

Q: WHEN DOES THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE RECOMMEND DEFINING AN ABBREVIATION?

A: IF AN ABBREVIATION IS NOT UNIVERSALLY KNOWN OR MIGHT BE UNFAMILIAR TO A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE READERSHIP, CHICAGO STYLE RECOMMENDS SPELLING OUT THE FULL TERM ON ITS FIRST USE, FOLLOWED BY THE ABBREVIATION IN PARENTHESES.

Q: WHAT IS THE STANCE ON ACRONYMS IN CHICAGO STYLE?

A: ACRONYMS THAT ARE PRONOUNCED AS WORDS (E.G., NASA, NATO) TYPICALLY DO NOT TAKE PERIODS. FOR OTHER ACRONYMS, THE RULE OF SPELLING OUT ON FIRST USE WITH THE ABBREVIATION IN PARENTHESES APPLIES IF THE ACRONYM MIGHT NOT BE IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED.

Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS CONSISTENCY IN ABBREVIATION USAGE ACCORDING TO THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE?

A: CONSISTENCY IN ABBREVIATION USAGE IS PARAMOUNT IN CHICAGO STYLE. ONCE A DECISION IS MADE ON HOW TO ABBREVIATE A TERM OR WHETHER TO ABBREVIATE IT, THAT CHOICE MUST BE APPLIED UNIFORMLY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT.

Q: ARE ABBREVIATIONS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TERMS HANDLED DIFFERENTLY IN CHICAGO STYLE?

A: FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE ABBREVIATIONS, CHICAGO STYLE SUGGESTS FOLLOWING THE CONVENTIONS OF THAT LANGUAGE'S SCHOLARLY TRADITION WHERE APPROPRIATE, BUT ALWAYS PRIORITIZING CLARITY FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING READER. EXPLAINING OR SPELLING OUT IS OFTEN PREFERRED IF THE ABBREVIATION IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN.

Q: WHEN SHOULD ABBREVIATIONS BE AVOIDED ENTIRELY ACCORDING TO CHICAGO STYLE?

A: ABBREVIATIONS SHOULD BE AVOIDED WHEN THEY DO NOT ENHANCE CLARITY, CONCISENESS, OR READABILITY. IN GENERAL PROSE, ESPECIALLY IF A TERM IS USED INFREQUENTLY, SPELLING IT OUT IS OFTEN THE MORE APPROPRIATE CHOICE.

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