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Chapter 19

Mechanics

General Mechanics Overview

It's likely that you have a fair sense of proper mechanics in written texts, but even the best writers can benefit from a quick brushup or a quick reference now and then. This chapter provides an overview of writing issues involving spelling, capitalizing, and abbreviating words; using symbols; writing numbers; and using italics.

19.1 Mastering Commonly Misspelled Words

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize ways to become a better speller.
2. Implement methods of monitoring your common spelling problems.

Regardless of how good a speller you are, knowing the type of spelling errors you are likely to make can help you correct the errors.

Common Causes of Spelling Errors	Examples	Ways to Deal with the Problems
Some words do not follow common spelling rules.	<i>i</i> before <i>e</i> except after <i>c</i> , so is it height or hieght?	Know the rules, know some of the exceptions, and use a dictionary or spell checker (see Section 19.1.1 "Spell Check") if you have the slightest hesitation.
You interchange homophones ¹ without realizing it.	I want to go to .	Be extra careful with each homophone you use; learn the commonly confused pairs of homophones.
You often do not recognize that a word has a homophone or you do not know which homophone to use.	The cat chased its tale for an hour.	Read through your work once (preferably aloud) looking (and listening) only for homophone issues. Ask someone to proofread your work.
You misspell some words almost every time you use them.	I can't make a comittment today.	Keep a list of your problem words where you can easily glance at them.
You find words from other languages confusing since they do not follow standard English spellings.	I'm going to make an orderve for the party.	Add foreign words you often use to your list of problem words. Look the others up each time you use them.

1. Words that sound alike but have different spellings and different meanings.

Spell Check

The combination of extensive computer use and **spell checkers**² have changed the way we look at spelling. Today's software programs often provide both manual and automatic spell checking. Manual spell checking lets you go through the entire document or selected text from it and checks for spellings not present in the dictionary of reference. Automatic spell checking underlines spelling errors for you (usually in red). By right-clicking on the misspelled word, you'll be given one or more correctly spelled alternatives. When you find the spelling you think is correct, clicking on that word will change the text automatically. Sometimes automatic spell checking underlines words that aren't misspelled, but it rarely misses words that are. So if you check all the marked words, you can "spell check as you write."

Just make sure you don't rely on spell check to have a human eye. Consider the following sentence: "It was sunny win I drove of this mourning, so I lift my umbrella in the car port." If you use a spell checker on this sentence, you will be alerted to fix the problem with "umbrella." You won't, however, be given any indication that "win," "mourning," "of," "lift," and "car port" are problems. Spell checkers have no way to tag misspelled words if the misspelling forms another word, incorrectly used homophones, or compound words that are presented as two words. So even though spell checkers are great tools, do not give them the sole responsibility of making sure your spelling is accurate.

Spell checkers can also suggest the wrong first choice to replace a misspelled word. Consider the following sentence: "My shert was wet cleer thrugh to my skin, and my shos slosed with every step." A spell checker might list "though" as a first-choice for "thrugh" and "through" as the second choice, thus forcing you to know that "though" is not right and to look on down the list and choose "through."

As a rule, only very common proper nouns are part of the dictionaries on which a spell checker is based. Consequently, you are left to check your spelling of those words. Many software programs allow users to add words to the dictionary. This permission lets you incorporate proper nouns you use often into the dictionary so you will not have to address them during a spell check. You might, for example, add your name or your workplace to the dictionary. Besides adding proper nouns, you can also add your list of other words you've commonly misspelled in the past.

Common Spelling Rules

Although they all have exceptions, common spelling rules exist and have become known as common rules because they are true most of the time. It is in your best interest to know both the rules and the common exceptions to the rules.

2. A software program tool that identifies spelling errors.

Common Spelling Rules

- **Rule:** *i* before *e*

Examples: belief, chief, friend, field, fiend, niece

Exceptions: either, foreign, height, leisure

- **Rule:** ...except after *c*

Examples: receive, ceiling

Exceptions: conscience, financier, science, species

- **Rule:** ...and in long-*a* words like neighbor and weigh

Examples: eight, feint, their, vein

- **Rule:** In short-vowel accented syllables that end in a single consonant, double the consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

Examples: beginning, mopped, runner, sitting, submitting

Exceptions: boxing, buses (“busses” is also acceptable), circuses, taxes

- **Rule:** There is no doubling if the syllable ends in two consonants, the last syllable is not accented, or the syllable does not have a short vowel.

Examples: asking, curling; focused, opening; seated, waited

- **Rule:** With words or syllables that end in a silent *e*, drop the *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

Examples: achieving, baking, exciting, riding, surprising

- **Rule:** If the suffix doesn’t start with a vowel, keep the silent *e*.

Examples: achievement, lately

Exceptions: hoeing, mileage, noticeable, judgment, ninth, truly

- **Rule:** With syllables that end in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding a suffix (including the plural *-es*).

Examples: carries, cities, dries, enviable, ladies, luckiest, beautiful, bountiful

Exceptions: annoyance, babyish

- **Rule:** Keep the final *y* when it is preceded by a vowel.

Examples: keys, monkeys, plays

- **Rule:** ...and when the suffix begins with *i*, since English words do not typically have two *i*'s in a row.

Examples: babyish, carrying, marrying

Exceptions: skiing

- **Rule:** When forming the plural of a proper noun, just add *-s* unless the proper noun ends in *ch*, *s*, *sh*, *x*, or *z*.

Examples: Bartons, Blairs, Hubbards, Murphys, Bushes, Collinses, Lynches, Martinezes, Wilcoxes

- **Rule:** When forming plurals of hyphenated nouns, use the plural form of the main word, regardless of where it falls within the word.

Examples: brothers-in-law, clearing-houses, ex-wives, not-for-profits, runners-up, T-shirts

- **Rule:** Add *-es* to words ending in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, or *z*.

Examples: classes, dishes, couches, quizzes, taxes

Exceptions: epochs, monarchs (*ch* spelling makes *k* sound)

- **Rule:** For words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *-es*.

Examples: heroes, potatoes, tomatoes, zeroes

Exceptions: memos, photos, zeros (also acceptable)

- **Rule:** For words ending in a vowel and an *o*, add *-s*.

Examples: patios, radios, zoos

- **Rule:** For words ending in *f* or *fe*, either change the *f* to *v* and add *-s* or *-es* or just add *-s* with no changes.

Examples: knives, leaves OR cuffs, roofs

- **Rule:** Some words have whole word changes for the plural forms.

Examples: children, feet, geese, mice, women

- **Rule:** Some words have the same spellings for singular and plural forms.

Examples: deer, fish, sheep

Homophones

Homophones are words that sound alike but have different spellings and different meanings. The best way to handle these words is to view them as completely separate words by connecting the spellings and the meanings rather than relying totally on the sounds. You can make **mnemonics**³ (memory clues) to use with words that are a problem for you. Here's a small sampling of the thousand or more homophones in the English language:

ad/add	him/hymn	rose/rows
ant/aunt	hole/whole	sail/sale
band/banned	hour/our	scene/seen
be/bee	in/inn	sew/so/sow
beat/beet	knead/need	sight/site
billed/build	knew/new	soar/sore
bold/bowled	knight/night	some/sum
bridal/bridle	lead/led	son/sun
ceiling/sealing	lessen/lesson	suite/sweet
cents/scents/sense	loan/lone	tail/tale
chews/choose	maid/made	tea/tee
clothes/close	might/mite	their/there/they're
creak/creek	miner/minor	throne/thrown
crews/cruise	none/nun	toe/tow

3. A memory assistance technique (e.g., a word or picture clue).

days/daze	pail/pale	time/thyme
dear/deer	pain/pane	to/too/two
die/dye	pair/pare/pear	undo/undue
ewe/yew/you	passed/past	vain/vane/vein
feat/feet	patience/patients	very/vary
fairy/ferry	peace/piece	wail/wale/whale
flour/flower	pedal/peddle/petal	ware/wear/where
for/fore/four	plain/plane	weather/whether
genes/jeans	poor/pore/pour	weak/week
groan/grown	principal/principle	which/witch
guessed/guest	rain/reign/rein	whine/wine
hair/hare	read/red	wood/would
heal/heel/he'll	ring/wring	yoke/yolk
hear/here	road/rode/rowed	your/you're

Commonly Misspelled Words

The following list includes some English words that are commonly used and often misspelled. You, personally, might or might not have problems with many of the words in the list. The important issue is for you to identify your problem words and negate the problems. You can handle your spelling problems by keeping a list of those words handy. Another way to deal with spellings that puzzle you is to use mnemonics such as those shown for the *words in bold italics* on this list:

abscess	deterrent	innocence	once	<i>scissors</i>
accidentally	diaphragm	innovate	ounce	seize
accommodate	disastrous	inoculate	paraffin	separate
acquaintance	discipline	insistence	parliament	separately
acquiesce	disguise	iridescence	parallel	sergeant
acquire	dissipate	irrelevant	particularly	serviceable
acquit	ecstasy	irresistible	pastime	several
allotted	effervescence	<i>judgment</i>	pavilion	shriek
all right	efficiency	knowledgeable	permanent	siege

amateur	embarrass	legible	permissible	sieve
anoint	euphemism	leisure	perseverance	silhouette
apologize	exercise	liaison	personnel	similar
argument	exhilarated	library	pharaoh	sincerely
beautiful	existence	license	phenomenon	sophomore
benefited	exorcise	lieutenant	pigeon	souvenir
bicycle	extraordinary	lightning	playwright	spatial
bookkeeper	familiar	liquefy	precede	subtle
bureau	fascinate	llama	precedent	succeed
bourgeois	fatigue	loneliness	prejudice	suffrage
business	February	maintenance	prevalent	supersede
<i>calendar</i>	foreign	manageable	privilege	surprise
camaraderie	forest	maneuver	proceed	symmetry
camouflage	<i>forty</i>	massacre	propaganda	therefore
canoeing	fourth	mayonnaise	questionnaire	thorough
changeable	friend	mediocre	queue	through
chauffeur	frolicking	millennium	<i>quiet</i>	<i>tomorrow</i>
chauvinism	<i>gauge</i>	miniature	quite	tragedy
collectible	genealogy	minimum	quizzes	transferable
colonel	government	miniscule	rarefy	truly
column	grateful	miscellaneous	raspberry	tyranny
commitment	guarantee	mischievous	receipt	ukulele
committee	guard	misspell	receive	unfortunately
competitive	guinea	mnemonic	recommend	unmistakable
completely	harass	moccasin	reconciliation	unnecessarily
conceivable	hemorrhage	month	reference	usually
conciliate	heresy	mortgage	referred	vacuum
<i>conscience</i>	heroes	nauseous	remember	variety
conscientious	hierarchy	necessary	reminisce	vehicle
conscious	humorous	<i>ninth</i>	reparable	vengeance

contemptible	hygiene	noticeable	restaurant	vicious
convenience	hypocrisy	nuclear	resuscitator	villain
courageous	<i>icicle</i>	obedience	rhythm	Wednesday
criticism	immediate	occasion	riveted	<i>weird</i>
criticize	incidentally	occurred	sacrilegious	whether
daiquiri	incredible	occurrence	salve	whose
descendant	indispensable	odyssey	sarcasm	
desperate	inevitable	omitted	schedule	

Selected Mnemonics

- *calendar*: Remember that a calendar is made up of many *days*.
- *conscience*: If you *con* people about your *science* work, your conscience should bother you.
- *forty*: *Forty* people are hiding in the fort.
- *icicle*: “Icy Icy Ellie” (“*IC IC LE*”) is a cold cold woman.
- *gauge*: You use a *gas gauge*.
- *judgment*: The *general manager* might pass judgment, but the lowly employee won’t even be there.
- *ninth*: *Ninth*...Take the *e* out so you can use it for the tenth.
- *quiet*: You need to be *qui(end)(talking)*.
- *scissors*: She used some sharp *s(cut)iss(off)rs*.
- *tomorrow*: There’s only one morning, but every day there are two *rred* skies (sunrise and sunset).
- *weird*: Halloween last year was wild and *erie*.

Of course, these mnemonics are not universal. Some of the suggestions on this list might seem corny or even incomprehensible to you. The point is to find some that work for you.

Words from Other Languages

English is an ever-evolving language. Part of this ongoing evolution is the incorporation of words from other languages. These words often do not follow typical English spelling rules, and thus require extra attention. This chart shows a very small portion of such words that are used in English.

Borrowed Word	Source	Borrowed Word	Source
ad hoc	Latin	en route	French
adios	Spanish	et cetera (etc.)	Latin
armadillo	Spanish	faux pas	French
art deco	French	fiancé	French
attaché	French	frankfurter	German
ballet	French	garbanzo	Spanish
bon appétit	French	gourmet	French
bratwurst	German	homo sapiens	Latin
burrito	Spanish	hors d'oeuvre	French
café	French	incomunicado	Latin
chauffeur	French	jalapeño	Spanish
Chihuahua	Spanish	kaput	German
concierge	French	kindergarten	German
cul-de-sac	French	margarita	Spanish
curriculum vitae	Latin	megahertz	German
Dachshund	German	née	French
déjà vu	French	per capita	Latin
diesel	German	résumé	French

Many common words in British and American English are spelled differently. For example, American English words ending in *-er* are often spelled with *-re* in British English. American English tends to use *-yze* or *-ize* while British English prefers *-yse* or *-ise*. Words that include the letter *o* in American English are often spelled with an *ou* in British English. American English uses *-ck* or *-tion* as word endings, whereas British English often uses *-que* or *-xion*.

American English	British English	American English	British English
anemia	anaemia	fetus	foetus
analyze	analyse	humor	humour
anesthetic	anaesthetic	judgment	judgement
apologize	apologise	inflection	inflexion

American English	British English	American English	British English
canceled	cancelled	labor	labour
center	centre	licorice	liquorice
check	cheque	mold	mould
civilization	civilisation	mustache	moustache
color	colour	pajamas	pyjamas
connection	connexion	realize	realise
cozy	cosy	smolder	smoulder
criticize	criticise	theater	theatre
defense	defence	traveled	travelled

Some words from other languages have plural formations that appear unusual within the English language. A good approach is to simply memorize these plural formations. If you don't want to memorize them, remember that they are unusual and that you will need to look them up.

Singular Spelling	Plural Spelling	Singular Spelling	Plural Spelling
alumnus	alumni	datum	data
analysis	analyses	medium	media
antenna	antennae	memorandum	memoranda
appendix	appendices	phenomenon	phenomena
basis	bases	radius	radii
chateau	chateaux	stimulus	stimuli
criterion	criteria	syllabus	syllabi (Americanized: syllabuses)
crisis	crises	thesis	theses

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The English language includes some general spelling rules, but most of these rules have at least some exceptions.
- You need to take personal responsibility for dealing with the words that are spelling problems for you. Spell checkers can help handle spelling problems, but you cannot completely rely on them.
- Words from other languages have been incorporated into English and require special spelling attention.

EXERCISES

1. Using words from the lists in this section and other words you know you have trouble spelling, make a personal spelling checklist. Include only words that you find yourself having trouble spelling.
2. Write a two-page essay on a topic of your choosing. Then use spell check on the document. Finally, proofread the essay to find errors that the spell checker missed.
3. Choose ten words that you routinely use and struggle to spell correctly. Create clues to help you remember how to spell the words. Post your clues to a common site so that you can share them with your classmates.

19.2 Using Capital Letters

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize standard capitalization conventions.
2. Utilize capitalization in proper situations.

With the advent of new **social networking**⁴ structures, such as text messaging, IM (instant messaging), and Facebook, the reliance on traditional standard capital letters has been relaxed in informal settings. This laxity got its start as a means of expediency since the use of capital letters required additional efforts for people using only a couple of fingers or thumbs for typing words. Rather quickly, the use of abbreviations and lack of capital letters became fashionable—almost like a status symbol indicating a person’s social networking awareness. Despite this now common exclusion of capital letters in personal situations, capital letters are still the proper choice in professional and academic settings. If you are someone who writes far more often on a cell phone than on a computer, you are likely to benefit from a brush up on capitalization rules for those occasions when you are composing more official documents.

Proper Nouns, Trade Names, I, and O

Some words are capitalized whenever they are used. Proper nouns, trade names, the pronoun “I,” and “O” when used as an interjection make up this category of words.

Proper nouns⁵ include names of specific persons, places, or things. Words that are typically **common nouns**⁶ can become proper nouns when they are used as part of a name.

4. A method of meeting and talking with people online.
5. A word that names a specific, not a general, person, place, or thing (e.g., Clyde Smith, Eisenhower Middle School, Wednesday).
6. A word that names a general, not a specific, person, place, or thing (e.g., queen, house, plate).

People

Proper Nouns

- Mike Smith
- Mrs. Fenora
- Judge Halloway
- Slick (used as a name)
- President Abraham Lincoln
- Mom (used as a name)

- Methodist
- Kelly

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- girl
- teacher
- mom (my mom)
- friend
- judge
- president

Places

Proper Nouns

- Florida
- Disney World
- Tampa
- Africa
- Stockton High School
- Winnie's Grocery Store
- 1432 W. Cherry Ave.
- Museum of Modern Art
- Atlantic Ocean

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- state
- city
- street
- park
- town
- store
- kitchen
- museum

Things

Proper Nouns

- Washington Monument (a monument)
- Great Wall of China (a landmark)
- Chico (a dog)

- *USS California* (a ship)
- US History 101 (a course)
- University of Arizona (a university)
- Renaissance (an era)
- Bible (a book)
- Tuesday (a day)
- April (a month)

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- boat
- newspaper
- dog
- house
- book
- history
- university
- century

Trade Names

Trade names include names of specific companies and products.

Proper Nouns

- Kellogg's
- Panasonic
- Starbucks
- BlackBerry
- Chevrolet
- Land's End

Common Nouns (Not Proper)

- cereal
- television
- doll
- phone
- car
- company

I and O

The letters “I” and “O” each represent words that are always capitalized.

- I (as a proper noun): If you have time, I will go with you.
- O (as a vocative in direct address): O you who are about to enter here, beware!

First Word in a Sentence

Capitalizing the first word in a sentence appears fairly straightforward at first glance. But there are actually some variations you should keep in mind.

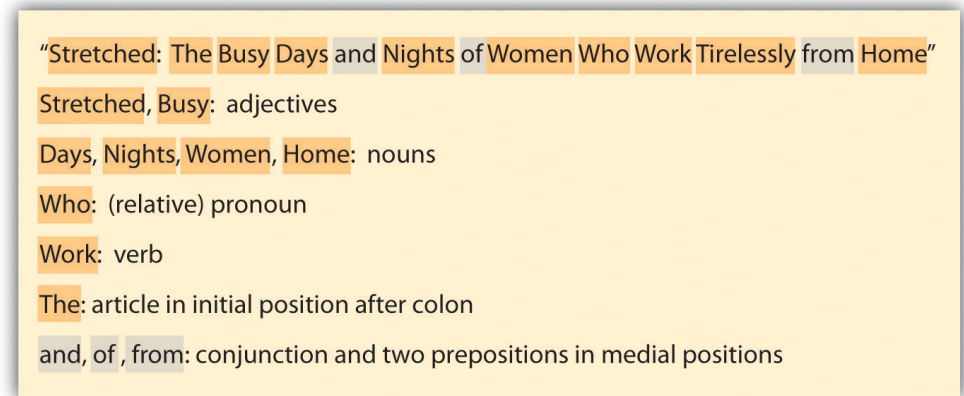
Capitalize the first word of a standard, simple sentence.	We usually start mowing our lawn in March.
Capitalize the first word in a sentence of dialogue.	Beth said, “Please help me lift this box.”
Do not capitalize the first word of dialogue that continues after the speaker’s name when the sentence has not yet ended.	“Please,” Beth said, “help me lift this box.”
Capitalize the first word in a quoted sentence when it is written in dialogue formation.	Ellery Jones noted, “Online education is here to stay.”
Do not capitalize the first word in quoted text when it is imbedded in an existing sentence.	Ellery Jones agrees that online education is “here to stay.”
Do not capitalize the first word of a sentence that follows a colon, unless the colon introduces two or more sentences.	Sports carry a lot of weight at our school: the football program is the only program that is funded at 100 percent each year.
Capitalize stand-alone sentences within parentheses.	Order your binders ahead of time. (You’ll need one for each course.)
Do not capitalize sentences within parentheses if they are included as part of another sentence.	Order your binders ahead of time (one for each course).
Capitalize the first word of continuation questions.	Are you attending on the eighth? The ninth? The tenth?

<p>Do not capitalize the first letter of a noncapitalized proper noun even if it falls at the beginning of a sentence. (Generally try not to place such words at the beginning of sentences.)</p>	<p>iPhones took the market by storm.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The iPhone took the market by storm.</p>
<p>Defer to the capitalization used in poetry or in other sources. (In some cases, the poem will not capitalize the first word of each line.)</p>	<p>I think that I shall never see</p> <p>A poem lovely as a tree</p> <p>A tree whose hungry mouth is prest</p> <p>Against the earth's sweet flowing breast...</p> <p>from "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer</p>

Key Words in Titles and Subtitles

In titles and subtitles, capitalize key words, including first words, last words, nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, and adjectives. Do not capitalize articles, conjunctions, or prepositions unless they are in the initial position (either at the beginning of the entire title or at the beginning of the phrase after a colon if there is one). Look at the [Figure 19.1](#) and consider why each word is capitalized or not.

Figure 19.1



Abbreviations

Capitalize abbreviations of proper nouns, such as the following:

- Schools: UNL, ISU, U of I
- Government agencies: USDA, CIA, FBI
- Countries and states: USA, NY, TX
- Organizations: BSA, AFS
- Corporations: IBM, AT&T
- Television and radio stations: NBC, CBS, WLS

Bulleted Items

If the items in a bulleted list are sentences, capitalize the first word of each item, as follows:

Semester exam schedule:

- Semester exams for M-W-F classes will be given on December 12.
- Semester exams for T-Th classes will be given on December 13.
- Semester exams for once-a-week classes will be given as arranged by the professor.

If the items are not sentences and are not continuations of a sentence stem, capitalize the first word of each item, as follows:

Semester exam schedule:

- Classes held on M-W-F: December 12
- Classes held on T-Th: December 13
- Classes held once-a-week: As arranged by instructor

If the items are continuations of a sentence stem, do not capitalize the first word unless it happens to be a proper noun.

Semester exams will be held on

- December 12 for M-W-F classes,
- December 13 for T-Th classes,
- a date arranged by the professors for once-a-week classes.

Common Misuse of Capital Letters

Avoid the unnecessary use of capital letters. As a rule, you can avoid capitalization errors by adhering to the rules for capitalization. But the following “don’t capitalize” suggestions can help you to avoid making some common mistakes.

- Capitalize names of holidays and months but not seasons:
winter, spring, summer, fall
- Do not capitalize words such as “mom” and “dad” when they are used to talk about someone as opposed to when used as a name:
Capitalize: “What did you say, Mom?”
Don’t capitalize: “My mom and dad came with me.”
- Do not capitalize words that are often used as part of a name when they are used in other ways:
“My family tree includes a general, a US president, and a princess.”
- Only capitalize direction words that designate a specific location:
Capitalize: “I live out West.”
Don’t capitalize: “I live west of Nebraska.”
- You can choose to capitalize a word for emphasis, but avoid overusing this technique since it will lessen the effect.

- Entire words and sentences written in capital letters are hard to read. Also, in online situations, this type of typing is referred to as shouting. So except in very rare situations, avoid typing in all capitals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Capitalize proper nouns, trade names, the word “I,” and the interjection “O.”
- Capitalize the first word in a sentence and key words in titles and subtitles.
- Capitalize abbreviations of proper nouns and the first word of items in a bulleted list.

EXERCISES

1. Write a (short) short story that uses five capitalization rules in this section. Use a color-coded key and word highlighting to identify where the capitalization rules are satisfied.
2. Make a copy of a page from a textbook. Assign each capital letter on the page to one of the capitalization rules by placing a letter from *a* through *f* (representing Section 2.1 through Section 2.6) next to each capital letter. Make sure to use a color of ink that will stand out. Circle any missing or misused capitalization.

19.3 Abbreviating Words and Using Acronyms

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Be familiar with common abbreviations.
2. Understand when to use and not to use abbreviations.
3. Recognize common symbols when you see them and learn to use them.

Abbreviations⁷ are shortened forms of words that are used for convenience or to manage space. In its purest form, an abbreviation includes initial letters of a word followed by a period, such as “in.” for “inches.” However, many abbreviations skip over letters, such as “yd.” for “yard,” and are still written with a period. Some multiword terms are abbreviated by using the first letter of each word and are called **acronyms**⁸ rather than abbreviations. An example of an acronym is “FBI” for “Federal Bureau of Investigation.”

Some abbreviations or acronyms require a period (etc.), but quite a few never take periods (IBM or FBI). You simply have to learn these differences through the experience of seeing specific examples in print.

You need to know two main things about abbreviations: when to use them and how to write them appropriately. The following sections will clarify these two points.

Common Abbreviations for Titles with Names

Titles that are used with names are often abbreviated—in fact, they are almost always abbreviated. You should spell out religious, academic, and government titles in academic writing, but otherwise, use the standard abbreviations.

7. A shortened form of a word that is used for convenience, to manage space, or both.

8. A multiword term that is abbreviated by using the first letter of each word.

Common Abbreviations

Use these standard abbreviations before names: Mrs. Jones, Mr. Hernandez, Ms. Fieldston, Sen. Brown, Rev. Arles, Gen. Bradford, Dr. Borray, Rep. Anderson, Prof. Cruz, St. Francis, Sgt. Appleby

Use these standard abbreviations after names: Alex Jones, DDS; Arnold Wilson, PhD; George A. Ortiz, Jr.; George A. Ortiz, Sr.; Hannah Borray, MD; Phil Horace, BA; Millie Mance, MA; Gloria Wills, MBA; Fred Flores, CPA

Do not use an abbreviation both before and after a name: Write Dr. Joseph Pfeiffer or Joseph Pfeiffer, MD, but do *not* write Dr. Joseph Pfeiffer, MD.

Spell out these titles in academic writing: Professor Robert Jones, Reverend Martin Luther King, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Senator John Smith

Do not use these title abbreviations if not attached to a name: Do not use any of these abbreviations on their own without a name. Instead spell the titles out, as in “I’m going to see the doctor after my meeting with my professor.”

Commonly Used Stand-Alone Abbreviations and Acronyms

Many abbreviations and acronyms are widely used as stand-alone words. A small sampling of these abbreviations and acronyms is listed in the following tables.

Word	Abbreviation
Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
chapter	ch.
company	co.
Incorporated	Inc.
January	Jan.
Katherine	Kathy
maximum	max.

Word	Abbreviation
miscellaneous	misc.
months	mos.
North	N.
Ohio	OH
package	pkg.
page	p.
pages	pp.
paid	pd.
Robert	Bob
September	Sept.
Southwest	SW
Tuesday	Tues.
University	Univ.

Phrase	Acronym
Alcoholics Anonymous	AA
Bachelor of Arts	BA
Central Intelligence Agency	CIA
digital video disk	DVD
Environmental Protection Association	EPA
Food and Drug Administration	FDA
Internal Revenue Service	IRS
Parent-Teacher Association	PTA
World Wide Web	www

Abbreviations with Numbers

Some abbreviations are used almost exclusively to describe or clarify numbers. These abbreviations should not be used as stand-alone abbreviations. In other words, you can use the dollar-sign abbreviation to write “\$5.00” but not to write “I earned several \$ last night.” Some of these abbreviations can be used within text, such as BC, p.m., and CST. Measurement abbreviations, however, should be used

only in tables, graphs, and figures and should be spelled out within continuous text. Some of these abbreviations will be addressed as symbols later in this section.

Abbreviation	Purpose/Meaning
300 BC	Before Christ
300 BCE	Before the Christian Era or Before the Common Era
1900 AD	Anno Domini (in the year of the lord)
34 m	meters
28 in.	inches
5¢	cents
6:00 p.m.	post meridiem (after noon)
1:00 a.m.	ante meridiem (before noon)
15 cm	centimeters
No. 8	number
85 lbs.	pounds
#5	number
11:30 a.m. EST	Eastern Standard Time
4 hr. 10 min. 30 sec.	hours, minutes, and seconds
4 + 3	plus
$\frac{1}{2} = .5$	equals
7 ft.	feet
$7n < 21$	is less than
$432 \neq 430$	does not equal
44 cu. in.	cubic inches

Abbreviations in Academic Writing

Academic citations include their own set of common abbreviations. They vary somewhat depending on the citation style you're using, so always follow your specific style guidelines. Some typical academic citation abbreviations are provided here. (For much more on documentation, see [Chapter 22 "Appendix B: A Guide to Research and Documentation"](#).)

Abbreviation	Purpose/Meaning
anon.	anonymous
b.	born
c. or ca.	circa; about (used with dates)
ch. or chap.	chapter
d.	died
ed., eds.	editor, editors
et al.	et alia (Latin: “and others”)
illus.	illustrated
n.d.	no date available
n.p.	no publisher information available
p., pp.	page, pages
vol., vols.	volume, volumes

Topic- or Profession-Specific and Incident-Specific Abbreviations

If you are writing for an audience that is familiar with a specific vocabulary that incorporates abbreviations—for example, readers with a strong military base—you can use those abbreviations freely. But be aware when you are writing for readers who do not share that common knowledge base that you will have to spell out abbreviations.

Incident-specific abbreviations are created for use in one specific situation and thus require obvious references so the audience can understand their meaning. For example, say you are writing a story about a teacher named Mr. Nieweldowskilty. If you refer to him by his full name once and then note that students call him Mr. Niews for short and then refer to him as Mr. Niews the rest of the time, your audience can easily understand that Mr. Niews is short for Mr. Nieweldowskilty. But if you write a second story about him, you cannot assume that readers will know the abbreviated name, Mr. Niews.

Recognizing and Using Symbols

Symbols are actually a form of abbreviating and are used widely in mathematics, on maps, and in some other situations. Here’s a small sample:

75%	Percent sign
-----	--------------

#5	Number sign
4 + 3	Plus sign
@	At sign
\$5.00	Dollar sign
5¢	Cents sign
$\frac{1}{2} = .5$	Equals sign
432 \neq 430	Not equal to sign
>	Greater than
$7n \leq 21$	Less than or equal sign
©	Copyright
98.6°	Degrees

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You should become familiar with common abbreviations so you can use them in casual situations and in tables and figures.
- As a rule, do not use abbreviations in formal writing except within citations.
- Keep your audience in mind when you decide whether to use abbreviations.
- Many symbols are used in mathematics, on maps, and in other situations.

EXERCISES

1. Write a short poem using as many abbreviations as possible.
2. Make a copy of a scholarly paper. Highlight all the abbreviations.
3. Make a list of twenty abbreviations or symbols that are not included in the lists in this section.

19.4 Inserting Numbers into Text

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand general rules for using numbers in text.
2. Recognize exceptions to the general rules for using numbers in text.

Proper writing of **numbers**⁹ in text is rather simple as long as you are familiar with the general guidelines and the exceptions to those guidelines.

General Guidelines for Using Numbers in Text

APA style¹⁰ calls for writing out numbers from one to nine in words and using **numerals**¹¹ for all other numbers. The Chicago Manual of Style calls for spelling out zero through one hundred as well as certain round multiples such as five thousand or six hundred. **MLA style**¹², however, requires that all numbers that are composed of one or two words be written out in words (e.g., one hundred, thirty-six, five million), and all numbers with more than two words be written in numerals (137; 6,482; 3,500,000). There are two general exceptions in MLA:

1. If a number falls at the beginning of a sentence, it should be written out in words.
2. If both large and small numbers are used within a single sentence or passage, all should be written as numerals in order to be consistent.

Exceptions to the General Guidelines for Using Numbers in Text

Exceptions to the general guidelines are logical, and they help avoid awkward situations. These exceptions are in place in all citation formats and style sheets.

Numerals with Abbreviations

In a situation where abbreviations are used, use numerals, not number words, with the abbreviations.

- 6 in.
- 25 cm
- 125 lbs.

9. A numeral written in words or in digits (e.g., seven, 88).
10. A widely accepted style of preparing manuscripts and documentation developed by the American Psychological Association.
11. A number written in digits (e.g., 245, 49).
12. A widely accepted style of preparing manuscripts and documentation developed by the Modern Language Association.

- 4 mos.

Numerals for Time of Day

Within text, you can use either words or numbers to write the time of day. Within a document, be consistent in your choice.

- 4:30 in the morning
- four thirty in the morning
- (but) 4:30 a.m.

Numerals in Dates

Use words to write months and numerals to write years. When the month, day, and year are all included, also use a numeral to write the day. If the year is not included, you can use either a numeral or a word to write the day. Express decades in numerals or words.

- July 23, 1985
- July 23 or July twenty-third
- the sixties or the 1960s

Numerals in Sports' Scores and Statistics

Use numerals to write sports' scores and sports' statistics.

- The Bulls have a 34–6 record.
- The score was 4 to 3.

Numerals Used Side by Side

To avoid confusion when using two numbers side by side, spell out one of the numbers and use a numeral for the other one. Generally, you should write out the number with fewer letters and leave the longer one as a numeral.

- Two 20-page papers
- 24 three-pound bags

Numerals in Addresses and Phone Numbers

Generally, you should use numerals in addresses and phone numbers. One exception is that, when a street is a numeral, you can either use the numeral or spell out the word.

- 3545 N. Willow
- Denver, CO 80202
- Fifth Street or 5th Street
- 210-555-7485

Numerals as Part of Proper Nouns

Numbers that are part of proper nouns should always be written as they appear.

- Psychology 101
- Room 222
- 7-Up
- Fifth Third Bank
- Second City

Numerals as Divisions of Books and Documents

Use numerals to indicate page, volume, chapter, unit, and section numbers as well as other divisions that are used to organize written text.

- Section 2, Chapter 4
- page 8
- Act 2, Scene 7
- Volume 2, Unit 7, Item 12

Numerals in Decimals and Percentages

As a rule, numerals are used to express decimals and percentages.

- 34.72
- 75 percent

Numerals Used for Identification

Use numerals when writing identification numbers, such as the serial number for a computer, a driver's license number, or a social security number.

- Serial: 25485359243642
- Driver's license: 245Y823

Numerals in Money Amounts

When a money amount is briefly mentioned in a piece of writing that is not necessarily about money, spell the money amount out. However, if you are writing about money or are writing text that will reference money amounts on multiple occasions, use numerals and symbols.

- Offhand reference: ten dollars
- Repeated reference: \$10 or \$10.00

Punctuating Numerals

When writing numerals, use a decimal point to separate dollars and cents and use a comma to divide numbers of one thousand or more into units of three digits. Do not use these punctuation marks when writing numbers in words.

45,329	forty-five thousand three hundred twenty-nine
\$12.43	twelve dollars and forty-three cents

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Consult the style manual you are following to determine which numbers to write out in words and which to express as numerals.
- The Chicago Manual of Style calls for numbers to be written out from zero through one hundred.
- Be aware of special situations where numbers are written other than by the general rule.

EXERCISES

1. Write five sentences using as many of the number rules and exceptions as possible. Write all the numbers in words. Trade papers with a partner and edit the numbers according to the guidelines in this section.
2. Make a copy of a newspaper or magazine article that includes numbers. In the margins, jot the rules that guide the use of each number.
3. Create a bookmark using all the number-writing guidelines from this section.

19.5 Marking Words with Italics

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Know when to use italics versus quotation marks in titles of works.
2. Review other circumstances when italics are appropriate.
3. Understand how to use italics in moderation for emphasis.

Traditionally, underlining was used as a means of emphasis in handwritten text. Since the advent of the personal computer, italics have replaced underlining. If you are creating text by hand or by some other means where italics are not available, use underlining instead of italics.

Italicize Titles of Published Texts, Lengthy Works, and Legal Cases

As a rule, you should italicize the titles of published works, but you should not italicize parts of published works, such as a poem within a book, or unpublished works. Some exceptions that should be italicized include lengthy works, such as a very long poem within a book, and legal cases. Some exceptions that should not be italicized include titles of published short stories and titles of television shows. Works that are not italicized are typically placed in quotation marks. Some other exceptions that should not be italicized include long religious works, such as the Bible and the Koran, and easily recognizable texts, such as the US Constitution.

Italicize Titles of Books, Magazines, and Newspapers

- *The Runaway Jury*
- *People*
- *The New York Times*

Italicize Titles of Long Poems, Plays, and Television Series (but Not Individual Television Shows)

- *The Odyssey*
- *Billy Elliot the Musical*
- *The Mentalist*

Italicize Names of Spacecraft, Aircraft, and Ships

- *Apollo 13*
- *Boeing 777*
- the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa María*

Italicize Foreign Words Used in English Sentences

- We would like to develop a very positive *esprit de corps* within the company.
- His actions over the past month have made him *persona non grata* within my group of friends.

Italicize Words, Letters, and Numbers That Are Called Out or Emphasized

- She is, by the very definition, *irascible*.
- Make a list of words that begin with *hu*.
- The numbers *36*, *84*, and *300* are all divisible by *6*.

Italicize Scientific Names

- *Homo sapiens* are members of the *Animalia* kingdom.

Do Not Overitalicize

You might be tempted to use italics to emphasize a key phrase, word, or idea even though it doesn't fall into any these categories. Fight off the temptation since an overuse of italics is distracting for readers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Italics have replaced underlining, thanks to word processing.
- Know the rules for what should and should not be italicized.
- Do not overitalicize by italicizing assorted words just to make them stand out.

EXERCISES

1. Write sentences demonstrating your choice of five of the guidelines given in Section 19.5 "Marking Words with Italics" for using italics.
2. In a textbook, find as many examples of the different italicizing guidelines as possible. Copy the pages and identify each guideline you find.
3. Complete these sentences:
 - a. If you use the word “magnum opus” in a sentence, you should italicize it because...
 - b. Read this sentence: The word *city* has a soft *c*. The two italics rules used in this sentence are...
 - c. Read this sentence: A *Canis familiaris* is a *dog*. The problems with this sentence are...