

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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

- Examples: SPA, CCD, NCAA

An *acronym* is an abbreviation that is read as a word.

- Examples: SMART Registration System, CAM, NASA

General Rules

Use abbreviations and acronyms in moderation.

When using uncommon abbreviations or acronyms (ones that people outside of your field of study, school or department will not recognize) define them on first use—spell out the abbreviation or acronym followed by the abbreviation or acronym in parenthesis.

- Example: The College of Arts and Media (CAM) is sponsoring an art exhibit at the museum next month. Exhibits hosted by CAM are free to all students.

NOTE: If the abbreviation or acronym is not used after the first mention, **do not** abbreviate it. Common-knowledge abbreviations and acronyms do not need to be defined on first use.

- Examples: GPA, GMAT, ACT, SAT

Use of Articles (a, an, the) with Acronyms and Abbreviations

Use the article that you would use when speaking.

- Examples: an M.A. degree, a Ph.D. degree

In general, if the acronym or abbreviation is used as a noun, no article is necessary.

- Example: The theater production is sponsored by CAM and CLAS (not the CAM and the CLAS).

Degrees

Include periods when abbreviating academic degrees fewer than three letters: B.A., BFA,

M.A., Ph.D., M.D., etc.

Abbreviated Courtesy Titles

Use a period with abbreviated courtesy titles (Dr., Ms., Mr., Sen., Gov., etc.).

When possible, use degrees instead of courtesy titles; degree names are more accurate. Do not use both.

- Example: John Smith, DDS vs. Dr. John Smith (Dr. is a relatively general title);
not Dr. John Smith, DDS

State Abbreviations

Use Associated Press (AP) state abbreviations. Never use the two-letter postal abbreviations, unless part of a complete mailing addresses.

- Examples: The Office of the President is located in Denver. The building address is 1800 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203.

Only abbreviate state names when used with the name of a city.

The list of AP state abbreviations is as follows:

Alabama	Ala.	Kentucky	Ky.	North Dakota	N.D.
Alaska	Alaska	Louisiana	La.	Ohio	Ohio
Arkansas	Ark.	Maine	Maine	Oklahoma	Okla.
Arizona	Ariz.	Maryland	Md.	Oregon	Ore.
California	Calif.	Massachusetts	Mass.	Pennsylvania	Pa.
Colorado	Colo.	Michigan	Mich.	Rhode Island	R.I.
Connecticut	Conn.	Minnesota	Minn.	South Carolina	S.C.
Delaware	Del.	Mississippi	Miss.	South Dakota	S.D.
District of Columbia	D.C.	Missouri	Mo.	Tennessee	Tenn.
Florida	Fla.	Montana	Mont.	Texas	Texas
Georgia	Ga.	Nebraska	Neb.	Utah	Utah
Hawaii	Hawaii	Nevada	Nev.	Vermont	Vt.
Idaho	Idaho	New Hampshire	N.H.	Virginia	Va.
Illinois	Ill.	New Jersey	N.J.	Washington	Wash.
Indiana	Ind.	New Mexico	N.M.	West Virginia	W.Va.
Iowa	Iowa	New York	N.Y.	Wisconsin	Wis.

Kansas

Kan.

North Carolina

N.C.

Wyoming

Wyo.

United States / United States of America

Only abbreviate United States when it is used as an adjective.

- Examples: U.S. history; history of the United States

Use periods when abbreviating United States (U.S.).

Do not use periods when abbreviating United States of America (USA).

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