2025

Canada's Drug Agency Style

A Guide for Authors and Editors

CDA-AMC

Canada's Drug Agency Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors

The 2025 edition of *Canada's Drug Agency Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors* provides the most current style and language conventions for writing and editing and is based on the latest medical, scientific, and editorial industry standards.

Our style guide is a valuable resource for our organization. Its use by researchers, authors, and editors at Canada's Drug Agency helps to ensure that our writing is respectful, accessible, and uniform in style, tone, and language.

Employees who have questions about language conventions or style issues can send them to copy.editors@cda-amc.ca.

Table of Contents

Preferred Usage

Canada's Drug Agency Corporate Style

Referring to Canada's Drug Agency

Use the full name, *Canada's Drug Agency*, on its first mention. The French name (to be used in French-language documents only) is *Agence des médicaments du Canada*.

Use the organizational name only when needed. When it can be deleted in a title, heading, or sentence without changing meaning, delete it.

Avoid using the name as a possessive noun (e.g., do not write "*Canada's Drug Agency*'s review of…" or "CDA-AMC's review of").

Do not use *Canada's Drug Agency* before the full names of our programs and services.

Use *the Health Technology Expert Review Panel* not *the CDA-AMC Health Technology Expert Review Panel*.

Abbreviation

The abbreviation for *Canada's Drug Agency* is *CDA-AMC*. It is not *CDA* (which could be confused with the Canadian Dental Association or the Canadian Dermatology Association), *AMC*, or *AMC-CDA*.

The abbreviation *CDA-AMC* should be used in both English and French documents.

Use the abbreviation only if the full name appears 3 or more times in the body text.

If the full name appears 3 or more times, always spell it out on first mention with the abbreviation placed in parentheses directly after it: *Canada's Drug Agency* (*CDA-AMC*). Use the abbreviation consistently thereafter.

Avoid using the abbreviation in titles or subheadings unless necessary for understanding.

Organizational Pronouns

For internal documents and marketing content, it's fine to use first-person pronouns (i.e., *we*, *us*, or *our*) when referring to our organization.

For other documents, ensure consistency with respect to how you refer to the organization.

When referring to another company, organization, directorate, or manufacturer, use *it* and *that* (not *they* or *who*). The reference is to the entity rather than to the elements (individuals) within it.

Companies don't take action; it's the people at companies who take action. Use *who* and *they* to refer to people but not entities.

Terms Commonly Used in Our Products and Reports

For the spelling and usage of any terms or words that do not appear in this table or elsewhere in this style guide, check the _Canadian Oxford Dictionary_ first, then _Dorland's Medical Dictionary_ (if not found in the _Canadian Oxford Dictionary_).

Table 1: Canada's Drug Agency Common Terms

Our style	Not our style
A	
alpha	α
Alzheimer disease	Alzheimer's disease
anti-inflammatory	antiinflammatory
anti–tumour necrosis factor (TNF), anti–vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) **Note:** There is an en dash, not a hyphen, after _anti_; however, a hyphen is OK in the abbreviations _anti-TNF_ and _anti-VEGF_.	anti-tumour necrosis factor
attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder	attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
B	
B cell, B-cell receptor	B-cell, B cell receptor
beta	β
beta2, beta2-agonists, beta2-microglobulin	beta-2, beta 2, beta-2-microglobulin, β-2
beta-blocker	beta blocker, β blocker
C	
Canada-wide (noun and adjective)	Canada wide
caregiver	care giver, care-giver
CAR T-cell therapy, but CAR T cell and T cell	CAR T-cell, CAR-T cell therapy, CAR T cell therapy, T-cell, T cell therapy
Clinical Study Report (CSR)	clinical study report
C_{max} (peak concentration)	Cmax
coauthor	co-author
co-chair	cochair
comorbidity, comorbidities	co-morbidity, co-morbidities
COVID-19	COVID
Crohn disease	Crohn's disease

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Our style	Not our style
D	
dataset	data set
decision-maker, decision-making	decision maker, decisionmaker, decision making, decisionmaking
de-emphasize	deemphasize
direct-acting antiretroviral (DAA)	direct acting anti-retroviral (DAAR)
disease-modifying antirheumatic drug (DMARD), biologic or nonbiologic DMARD	disease modifying, anti-rheumatic biological or non-biological DMARD
drop-off (noun and adjective) but drop off (verb)	dropoff
drugs for rare diseases (DRD)	DRDs
E	
emergency department (ED)	emergency room (ER)
end point	endpoint
F	
factor V Leiden	factor v leiden
false-negative, false-positive (noun and adjective)	false negative, false positive
forced expiratory volume in the first second (FEV_1)	FEV1
H	
handsearch, handsearching	hand search
health care (no hyphen in compound adjective form)	healthcare, health-care
health-related quality of life (HRQoL)	health related quality of life, HRQOL, HRQL
hemoglobin (do not abbreviate)	Hb, hb, HB, Hgb
hemoglobin A1C	HbA1c, A1c, A_1C
I	
industry-wide (noun and adjective)	industry wide
inpatient	in-patient, in patient
inquire	enquire
intra-abdominal	intraabdominal
L	
least squares mean (LSM)	least-squares mean

Our style	Not our style
life-year	life year, lifeyear
low-molecular-weight heparin	low-molecular-weight heparins, low molecular weight heparin

M

Our style	Not our style
meta-analysis	meta analysis
multicentre	multi-center, multi-centre, multi centre
multiple sclerosis (MS), primary-progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS), progressing-relapsing multiple sclerosis (PRMS), relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS), secondary-progressive multiple sclerosis (SPMS)	primary progressive multiple sclerosis, progressing relapsing multiple sclerosis, relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis, secondary progressive multiple sclerosis

N

Our style	Not our style
naive	naïve
non-oncology, non-oncological	nononcology, nononcological
non−small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) **Note:** en dash, not hyphen, after *non*	non-small cell lung cancer
non−ST elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI) **Note:** en dash, not hyphen, after *non*	non-ST elevation myocardial infarction
number needed to treat (NNT)	number-needed-to-treat

O

Our style	Not our style
offsite, onsite	off-site, on-site
orthopedic	orthopaedic
outpatient	out-patient, out patient
overtreatment	over-treatment

P

Our style	Not our style
Parkinson disease	Parkinson's disease
percent	per cent
pharmacoeconomic	pharmaco-economic
phosphodiesterase type 4 (PDE4), phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5)	phosphodiesterase-4, PDE-4, phosphodiesterase-type 5, PDE-5
policy-maker, policy-making	policymaker, policy maker, policymaking, policy making
post−COVID-19 condition	long COVID, long COVID-19

Our style	Not our style
preventive	preventative
P value	*P* value, *p* value, P-value, p-value
Q	
quality-adjusted life-year (QALY)	quality adjusted life year
R	
re-treat, re-treatment (meaning *to treat again*)	retreat, retreatment
S	
semi-independent	semi independent
severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)	SARS-CoV-2 virus
sociocultural	socio-cultural
socioeconomic	socio-economic
sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2)	sodium/glucose, sodium glucose, co-transporter, cotransporter 2
standard of care (SOC)	standard-of-care (SoC)
subscale	sub-scale
subsequent entry biologic	subsequent-entry biologic
T	
T cell, T-cell therapy	T-cell, T cell therapy
time point	timepoint
tissue plasminogen activator (TPA)	t-PA
T_{max}	Tmax, TMAX, T_{MAX}
touch point	touchpoint
transplant	transplantation
t score, z score (in statistical usage), T-score (for bone density)	t-score, T score, z-score, Z score
tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNF alpha)	TNF-alpha, TNF-α
U	
under-resourced	underresourced
W	
well-being	well being, wellbeing

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Citations and References

EndNote is the citation management software provided to employees of *Canada's Drug Agency*. Employees can reference the *Canada's Drug Agency* Hub for more information about using EndNote.

In Text and Tables

Use superscript for reference citation numbers and place them directly following punctuation in chronological order with commas (not spaces) between. Reference citation numbers may also appear midsentence.

> Three randomized controlled trials delivered the same results.[5,6,9]
>
> Three studies[1-3] were excluded.

Refer to the authors of a study in either of the following ways:

> The Smith et al. study[1]
>
> The study by Smith and colleagues[1]

Note Include the year of publication only if there are multiple studies with the same first author name. When including the year, put it in parentheses after the author's name.

> The Jones et al. (2010)[3] and Jones et al. (2011)[4] studies

Do not use *et al.* when referencing a publication with only 1 or 2 authors. Use *et al.* with studies with 3 or more authors.

> Two authors: Bentley and Smith[15]
>
> More than 2 authors: Bentley et al.[19]

In tables, if the publication year is necessary or relevant, add it in parentheses after the author(s).

> Bentley et al. (2007)[15] (Not: Bentley et al., 2007[15])

References for Quotations

Quoted text that is shorter than 3 full lines in a Word document should appear in quotation marks within the paragraph and must be followed by a superscript reference citation number. If a page number is referenced, include it outside the quotation mark but inside the closing punctuation.

> The study author reported that "clinical outcomes for leukemia are improving."[1]
>
> Patients should be advised to "drink noncaffeinated fluids and that a daily multivitamin may be beneficial" (p. 7).[2]

For quotations of 3 or more lines, indent the quotation on a new line but do not italicize it or place it in quotation marks. To cite pages at the end of a quotation, add *p.* followed by a space and the page number in parentheses before the closing punctuation. Add the reference number after the punctuation.

> The authors of the study stated:
>
> > The mean age ranged from 32 years to 43 years and the mean number of prior hospitalizations ranged from 6 to 12, as reported in 3 trials. In the 4 trials that enrolled a mixed population of patients with schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder, the majority of patients had schizophrenia (p. 262).[2]

Citing Personal Communications

Cite personal communications directly within the text and do not include them in the reference list. Place the citation within parentheses after the cited text and before the period. Include the person's full name, followed by their title and affiliation, and the date of communication. The date of the communication should be as precise as possible and displayed as Mmm dd, yyyy.

> (Jane Smith, Director, Canadian Cardiovascular Collaboration Project Office, McMaster University: email communication, Mar 22, 2019).

For subsequent references to communications from the same person within the same document, use the following shortened format: name, personal communication, date.

> (Lee Yang, verbal communication, Sep 28, 2019).

Referring to Reference Titles

The titles of the following should be italicized:

- journal names (*BMJ, CMAJ, Canadian Journal of Health Technologies*)
- books (*The Catcher in the Rye, Room, The Hunger Games*)
- newspapers (*Ottawa Citizen, The Globe and Mail*)
- newsletters (*Canadian Realty News, Hospital News*)
- report titles (*Guidelines for the Economic Evaluation of Health Technologies: Canada*).

When referring to a document type, capitalize the report name without italicizing it.

> The article made reference to the Rapid Review report.

Capitalize the names of newspaper and magazine articles, essays, lectures, songs, dissertations, theses, and specific web pages and place them in quotation marks, but do not italicize them. Capitalize website names, but do not place them in quotation marks or italicize them.

> The article "Docusate for Constipation: Money Down the Toilet?" has garnered media attention.
>
> The "About Us" page on the Canada's Drug Agency website provides a description of the organization.

Note Check whether *the* is part of the proper name of a publication. If it is, capitalize and italicize it; if it is not, use lower case and do not italicize it.

> *The Lancet,* the *New England Journal of Medicine*

Style for Reference Sections

At *Canada's Drug Agency*, we follow the *AMA Manual of Style* reference format.

General guidance for references:

- List the references in numerical order.
- For publications with 6 or fewer authors, list all of the authors. For publications with more than 6 authors, list the first 3 followed by *et al.*
- In titles and subtitles of articles, books, parts of books, and other materials, retain the spelling, abbreviations, and number style used in the original.
- Put the abbreviated journal title in italics.

- Use the following format for page numbers: XX-XX.
- Include a digital object identifier (DOI), if available. If a DOI is not available, use a URL and access date. Do not put periods at the end of DOIs or URLs.
- Use the following format for the access date: Accessed October 29, 2024.

References to Journal Articles

Canada's Drug Agency. Reimbursement recommendation: Burosumab (Crysvita). *Can J Health Technol*. 2024;4(10):1-29. doi:10.51731/cjht.2024.1013

Cooper-Jones B, Mason J, Kamel C, Mittmann N, Dunfield L. Virtual care and health technology assessment considerations. *Healthc Manage Forum*. 2022;35(3):127-129. doi:10.1177/08404704211061954

References to Government or Organization Reports

Sobieraj DM, Baker WL, Martinez BK, et al. *Adverse Effects of Pharmacologic Treatments of Major Depression in Older Adults: Comparative Effectiveness Review No. 215*. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; 2019. Accessed April 26, 2024. https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/cer-215-depression-older-adults-final.pdf

NPDUIS: National Prescription Drug Utilization Information System. *Meds Pipeline Monitor 2023*. Patented Medicine Prices Review Board; November 2024. Accessed November 14, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/patented-medicine-prices-review/services/npduis/analytical-studies/meds-pipeline-monitor-2023.html

References to Websites

Canada's Drug Agency. Procedures for reimbursement reviews. 2024. Accessed October 29, 2024. https://www.cda-amc.ca/procedures-reimbursement-reviews

Bank of Canada. Inflation calculator. 2024. Accessed October 28, 2024. https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/

References to Trial Registry Records

Eli Lilly and Company. NCT04847557: A Study of Tirzepatide (LY3298176) in Participants With Heart Failure With Preserved Ejection Fraction (HFpEF) and Obesity: The SUMMIT Trial. ClinicalTrials.gov. Updated July 22, 2024. Accessed November 18, 2024. https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT04847557

Inclusive and Respectful Language

We strive to use language that is inclusive, nonbiased, and respectful of how groups and individuals refer to themselves.

Avoid using language that promotes stereotypes or shows insensitivity or disrespect (based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or ability). If possible, ask representative organizations and/or individuals how they want to be referred to and addressed.

Be as inclusive as possible. Use person-first language (emphasize the individual before their condition or characteristic; refer to Table 2 for examples).

Language is fluid and rapidly evolving; as a result, these conventions may change over time. For example, *Canada's Drug Agency* no longer uses the term *stakeholder* because of its harmful association with colonialism. There are several terms that can be used as alternatives, such as *rights holders* (for Indigenous Peoples), *advisors*, *advocacy groups*, *affected groups*, *collaborators, contributing partners*, *groups, interested parties*, and *partners* (for those who co-own or can influence the outcome). If the people or groups are known, be specific (e.g., *patient group input* or *clinician input*).

Employees can contact the Copy-Editing team if they have any questions.

Indigenous Language

Elements of Indigenous Style by Gregory Younging (available to employees in the *Canada's Drug Agency* library) is a primary reference for Indigenous Language. Other valuable references include *Indigenous Writes* by Chelsea Vowel and *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph. Indigenous style rules override our conventional style rules.

There are hundreds of distinct communities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples living in Canada with their own cultures, languages, and dialects. Be as specific as possible to respect the diversity of these groups.

The term *Indigenous* is often the preferred general term, but some groups prefer to be called by their traditional names. Whenever possible, verify preference with the specific group or person. Note that the term *Aboriginal* in Canada is outdated, although it is still sometimes used in legal names (e.g., the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health). The term *Indian*, although outdated and no longer supported by Indigenous Peoples, is still a legal term in Canada and used in certain situations, such as the Certificate of Indian Status and the *Indian Act*.

Indigenous Peoples is interchangeable with *First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples*, but the former is an umbrella term and the latter recognizes the distinct Nations. Each of these distinct societies is considered an Indigenous People.

In recognition of the diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, a distinctions-based approach is preferred. Do not use possessives to describe Indigenous Peoples (use *Indigenous Peoples in Canada* or *Indigenous Peoples in what is now Canada,* not *Canada's Indigenous Peoples* or *Canadian Indigenous Peoples).*

As a noun, *First Nations* is singular or plural depending on the context.

> Buffalo Point First Nation
>
> the First Nations of the Prairies

As an adjective, *First Nations* is always plural.

> She is First Nations.
>
> She is a First Nations person.

The singular of *Inuit* is *Inuk*. *Inuit* means *the people*; *the Inuit people* is redundant. *Inuit* can also be an adjective.

> Inuit values
>
> The person is an Inuk.

As a noun, *Métis* can be plural or singular. *Métis* can also be an adjective.

> Alberta is the only province in Canada that has designated land for the Métis.
>
> a Métis lawyer

Capitalization

Indigenous style rules may use different capitalization than our conventional style. Some common examples include *Elder*, *Indigenous Land*, *Indigenous Peoples*, *Indigenous Right(s)*, *Oral Tradition*, *Survivor*, *Traditional Knowledge(s)*, and *Traditional Territory*.

Capitalize *Peoples* when referring to *Indigenous Peoples* collectively. The capitalization of *Peoples* shows that we recognize these groups as distinct societies (e.g., "Indigenous Peoples have experienced systemic inequities").

Lower case the *P* in Indigenous people when referring to individuals who identify as Indigenous. In this case, each person is acting individually. Therefore, use *people* as the plural of *person*.

> Many Indigenous people have enrolled in the study.

Racial and Ethnic Identity

Do not use terms that stereotype or generalize a person's race, ethnicity, and/or place of origin. Only refer to race, ethnicity, and/or place of origin if they are relevant to the context (e.g., taken from the study population or communication piece).

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities and peoples. Capitalize *Black* when referring to skin colour and ethnicity. Do not capitalize *white*.

Do not hyphenate dual nationalities.

When listing races or ethnicities, put the entries in alphabetical order. If there is an *other* category, list it last.

> The patients in the study self–identified as African American, Chinese, Japanese, white, or other.

Include all groups reported in the data. Avoid generic groupings such as *nonwhite*.

Avoid *Caucasian*. It is not a synonym for *white*.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Sexual orientation and gender identity are ever-evolving constructs that require flexibility and open-mindedness. Whenever possible, use the Language used by the specific person or group you're referring to.

Sex and gender, although often used interchangeably, have different meanings:

- *Sex* refers to one's biological or reproductive attributes, which include chromosomes, anatomy, gene expression, hormones, and physical characteristics.
- *Gender identity* refers to an individual's internal sense of their gender; this can include identifying as a woman, trans, a man, or outside gender confines.
- *Gender expression* refers to an individual's outward presentation.
- *Sexual orientation* refers to who an individual is attracted to.

When sex is relevant to a trial, refer to *males* and *females* instead of *men* and *women* (as *men* and *women* also incorporates gender identity and gender expression).

Do not rely on a male default when reporting data from a study; ideally, all groups should be reported. If this is not possible, report the group with the largest percentage.

Sex- and gender-inclusive language acknowledges how people self-identify and encompasses a spectrum of self-expression, such as:

- 2SLGBTQ+: an overarching term that refers to the 2-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and others community

- 2-Spirit (2S): a term created by and used by some Indigenous communities to describe people with diverse gender identities, expressions, roles, and sexual orientations
- asexual: refers to someone with little to no sexual feelings or associations
- bisexual: refers to someone who is sexually attracted to more than 1 gender
- cisgender: refers to someone who identifies with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth (note that although being cisgender does not necessarily make a person part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, many people who identify as part of the community are cisgender)
- gay: refers to someone sexually attracted to the same gender
- gender fluid: refers to someone whose gender identity is not fixed
- lesbian: refers to a woman who is sexually attracted to the same gender
- multigender: refers to someone who identifies as more than 1 gender
- nonbinary, gender nonconforming, or genderqueer: describes any gender identity outside of the male-female binary
- queer: refers to the range of people not defined by heteronormativity (in sexuality and identity)
- trans(gender): an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from their assigned gender or sex at birth.

When referring to more than 1 gender, use *all genders*.

Do not use *sexual preference*, as that indicates that sexual orientation is a choice.

Pronouns

When using pronouns, respect the pronoun that an individual wishes to use for themselves. Avoid using *he* or *she*, unless you know that the person uses that same pronoun. Instead, use plural pronouns as singulars (*they, them, their, theirs, themselves*) or rewrite the sentence to avoid using a pronoun.

> The participant was part of the control group. They indicated their pronouns.

It is also acceptable to vary a person's pronouns throughout a document if they use more than 1 pronoun (e.g., to refer to a person with the pronouns of *she* and *they* as *she* in 1 sentence and *they* in the next).

Gendered Language

Avoid gendered or heteronormative language. (Heteronormativity is the concept that heterosexuality is the "default" or "correct" mode of sexual orientation.) Be mindful to treat all genders equally and without stereotyping. For example, use *human race*, not *mankind*.

Whenever possible, choose neutral terms that avoid bias.

> A teacher is responsible for ensuring the safety of their students.

Use position-centred and function-centred language.

> mail carrier (not: mailman)
>
> caregiving (not: mothering)

Do not assume that a person who is pregnant or lactating is a woman or that they are breastfeeding. Use *person who is pregnant* and other inclusive wording.

Use terms such as *perinatal transmission* or *vertical transmission* rather than *mother-to-child transmission* to avoid gendered Language and placing blame.

Do not assume that only women get breast cancer. All genders can get breast cancer.

Disabilities and Diseases

Use person-first language. Use language that emphasizes the person and not their condition or disorder. Avoid categorizing or labelling people.

> She has epilepsy. (Not: She is epileptic.)
>
> An individual living with diabetes must check their blood glucose levels often. (Not: A diabetic must check their blood glucose levels often.)

Avoid using language that suggests frailty or infirmity (such as *victim*, *afflicted with*, *stricken with*, or *suffering*). A disability does not necessarily mean physical or mental impairment.

Avoid euphemisms and descriptors with negative connotations such as *physically challenged*, *special*, *special needs,* and *handicapped*.

> Jasper has paraplegia and uses a wheelchair. (Not: Jasper is a paraplegic and has special needs.)

Avoid ableist language (an assumption that those without a disease or disability are "normal"). Do not refer to people or groups as *normal* or *able-bodied*.

Avoid phrasing that may not translate well or may sound stigmatizing or disrespectful (e.g., *tone deaf*, *blind spot*).

Age

Ageism is discrimination based on age (young or old). Avoid negative stereotypes related to age. Be as specific as possible when referring to age or age groups (e.g., those aged 65 years and older). Use *older people* or *older adults* instead of the *elderly* or *seniors*.

Referring to People and Patients

Use *patient* (someone under medical care) or *participant* (someone enrolled in a study) rather than *subject* when referring to individuals in studies.

Avoid language that may unintentionally blame people, such as *patient was noncompliant.* *Noncompliant* has a negative connotation. It is often not a personal choice to stop treatment (e.g., cost, side effects, miscommunication). Try *participants with barriers to treatment adherence.*

Do not use *the patient failed treatment*. It implies the patient was responsible for an unfavourable outcome. It is the disease that does not respond to the treatment, not the person. More accurate wording would be *the treatment failed* or *the drug was not effective*.

Avoid referring to people by their study group (e.g., *patients in the metformin group* **not** *metformin patients*).

Avoid referring to people by the severity of the condition or the disease, such as *severe patients* or *high-risk patients*. Better options would be *patients with severe disease* or *patients who are considered to be at high risk*.

Do not use the terms *normal* and *abnormal* when referring to a person's health status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and so on. People are not abnormal, but test results may be.

Insensitive Language From Another Source

There will be times when language that does not meet our inclusivity guidelines is used in an original source and the wording cannot be changed in our report. In these instances, you can:

- rephrase to avoid using the term
- put the word or phrase in quotes and add *[from original source]* after it
- put the word or phrase in quotes and add *[from original source and referred to as* (respectful term) *hereon]* after it.

Acceptable Language

Table 2 presents recommended terms and terms not to use.

Table 2: Inclusive and Respectful Language

Recommended	Do not use
Indigenous language	
Indigenous Peoples in Canada	Canada's Indigenous people
Inuk (singular) and Inuit for more than 1 person	Inuit people (saying *Inuit people* is like saying *the people people*)
Find out what the specific community uses (or avoids); this may be *territory*, *reserve*, or something else entirely	reservation

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Recommended	Do not use
Use appropriately First Nations, Inuit, or Métis (unless part of an organizational name such as Native Women's Association of Canada)	Native
Use appropriately First Nations, Inuit, or Métis (unless referring to the *Indian Act* specifically or using it as a legal term; e.g., *status Indian, Indian band, Musqueam Indian Reserve*; in the US, *American Indian, Native American,* and *Native Indian* are acceptable)	Indian
Racial and ethnic identity	
IBPOC	BIPOC
people who are biracial, people who are multiracial	mixed race, mulatto, biracial people, multiracial individuals
person who is Chinese, Japanese, Korean (i.e., be specific)	Oriental
people living in Canada	Canadian people
preferably use specific ethnicity or race; if not able, use people of colour, racialized	visible minority, non-white, minorities
Sexual orientation and gender identity	
all genders	both genders
gay (adj.), gender nonconforming (adj.), genderqueer (adj.), lesbian (noun and adj.), nonbinary (adj.)	gay (noun), gender nonconforming (noun), genderqueer (noun), homosexual (noun), nonbinary (noun)
gay, lesbian, same-sex relationship (or couple)	homosexual relations(hip), homosexual couple, homosexual sex
same-sex relationship	gay lifestyle, homosexual lifestyle
sexual orientation	sexual preference
transgender, cisgender	transgendered, cisgendered
Disabilities and diseases	
preferably use specific disability or disorder; if not able, use person with intellectual disability	retarded, cognitively or developmentally challenged
little person, person of short stature	dwarf, midget
overweight, obesity (e.g., people with overweight or obesity)	fat (adjective)
people who are blind, people with low vision	the blind, the visually impaired
person living with AIDS	AIDS sufferer
a person who has schizophrenia	a schizophrenic
person who uses a wheelchair or mobility device	wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Recommended	Do not use
person with a brain injury	brain damaged
person with cancer	cancer patient
person with depression, person with anxiety, person with mental illness (preferable to be specific)	mentally ill
a person with diabetes, a person with epilepsy	a diabetic, an epileptic
a person with paraplegia	a paraplegic
person without a disability, person with a disability (preferable to name specific disability)	able-bodied, handicapped, crippled, challenged, afflicted with, suffers with, impaired
Substance use and addiction	
person with addiction, person with drug or alcohol dependency, person in recovery, person with lived experience of substance use	alcoholic, addict, user, abuser, former addict
substance use, substance dependence	substance abuse
Age	
use specific age (or age range) if possible, persons 65 years and older, older persons, older people, older adults, older patients, older individuals, the older population	seniors, elderly, the aged, aging dependents
Mental health	
use specific disorder if possible, person with depression, person living with a mental health problem or illness, people with a pre-existing mental health disorder, people experiencing mental distress or high anxiety (when experiencing symptoms but without a diagnosis)	crazy, mentally ill, insane, mental defect
died by suicide, death by suicide, suicide death, suicide attempt, fatal suicide behaviour, person with suicidal ideation	committed or completed suicide, failed suicide attempt, suicide epidemic, killed themselves, took their own life, ended their life
Others	
artificial, synthetic	manmade
carer, caregiver	caretaker
explain how or why groups are marginalized or at risk; people facing barriers; people who are at increased (or higher) risk for [X]; groups that are underserved; groups that are underrepresented; equity-deserving groups	disadvantaged youth, disadvantaged groups, vulnerable groups, at-risk, marginalized, equity-seeking groups

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Recommended	Do not use
nonfixed address (versus fixed address), unhoused, those experiencing homelessness	homeless
people who are unemployed, low income, no income	the poor, the unemployed
people (e.g., people have conquered the moon), business person, chair (or chairperson), the vice-president, humans, human beings, human race, humankind, personnel, staff, workforce, working hours	man (when used exclusively, as in man has conquered the moon), businessman, chairman, mankind, manpower, man hours
refer to (e.g., *refer to Table 1*)	see (e.g., *see Table 1*)
spokesperson, constable (or police officer), firefighter, mail carrier	spokesman, policeman, fireman, mailman

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, and environments for people who experience disabilities. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* is a statute enacted in 2005 by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Canada, which requires that all documents that we publish on the web must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.

Some people with disabilities (e.g., those with low vision or who cannot use a mouse) use assistive technologies, such as screen readers that read the text on the screen out loud. Our documents need to be structured so that screen readers can navigate the text, tables, and figures successfully.

When we're talking about figures and colour, there are 3 groups we need to be concerned about: people who have blindness, people who have low vision, and those with colour blindness. There are different considerations for each group, and we try to consider all 3 when designing the figures we publish.

General Principles

The following are a few general accessibility tips for authors when drafting reports:

- Use plain language.
- Apply heading styles in a hierarchical structure.
- Provide alternative text for all images.
- Use descriptive links.
- Designate headers for all columns when creating tables and do not add tables within other tables or leave cells blank.
- Do not use colour as the only method for conveying meaning or distinguishing visual elements.

Headings

It is important to have a uniform, clear, and concise heading structure in our documents. People who use screen readers and other assistive technologies navigate a document by its heading structure.

- Apply headings and subheadings using a hierarchical structure (e.g., heading 1, heading 2) per the CDA-AMC templates.
- Do not skip heading levels (e.g., jumping from heading 1 to heading 3).

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Descriptive Links

Descriptive links inform users where they will go when they click on the link. Descriptive links improve accessibility, usability, and clarity by providing meaningful context about the destination or action. Full URLs are acceptable in the References section.

Tips for creating descriptive links:

- Descriptive links should convey clear and accurate information about the destination.
- Avoid using *click here* or *for more information* or *learn more*, which provide no information about where the link leads.
- Link to the full title of the report, document, or web page if possible.
- Keep the amount of text in the link to a minimum.
- To add a link, highlight the text to be linked, then right-click on it. Click Link in the menu, which will open the Insert Hyperlink box. The highlighted text should be in the Text to Display field. Add the URL to the Address field.
- Use unique links (do not repeat the same text for different links).

Note   Linked text should be the only text that is underlined in our documents.

Examples of descriptive links:

WCAG guidelines on descriptive links

Procedures for CDA-AMC Reimbursement Reviews

Tables

Tables should have a simple structure. Avoid merging or splitting cells, if possible. Screen readers count table cells to keep track of location within a table. The more complex the table structure, the harder it is for screen readers to navigate through the table.

- All columns require a header, especially the first column because screen readers read left to right and top to bottom.
- Do not nest or insert tables within tables. Find other options to present data.
- Do not use tables to line text up or for design layout.

Tables should not have blank data cells. That is, cells that would contain numerical or textual data should **not** be empty; this does not apply to cells beside a row head. Instead use *NA* (not applicable), *NR* (not reported), or an em dash (—) with the definitions included in the abbreviations list in the table footer. No definition is needed for an em dash.

Figure 1: Example of an Accessible Table

Table 1: Example Table

Characteristic	Trial A		Trial B	
	Drug A (n = 46)	Placebo (n = 43)	Drug B (n = 48)	Placebo (n = 45)
Age (years), median (range)	50 (35 to 65)	52 (38 to 68)	48 (32 to 66)	53 (41 to 65)
Sex, n (%)				
Female	26 (56.5)	21 (48.8)	30 (62.5)	23 (51.1)
Male	20 (43.5)	22 (51.2)	18 (37.5)	22 (48.9)
Years since diagnosis, mean (SD)	7.4 (2.1)	5.8 (1.9)	6.5 (2.4)	8.2 (2.7)
Prior therapies, n (%)				
0	12 (26.1)	10 (23.3)	14 (29.2)	11 (24.4)
1	20 (43.5)	18 (41.9)	22 (45.8)	19 (42.2)
≥ 2	14 (30.4)	15 (34.9)	12 (25.0)	15 (33.3)

Figures

Do not use colour as the only method for conveying meaning or distinguishing visual elements in figures. Consider using shapes and/or dashed lines.

Alternative Text

Alternative (alt) text is used to convey the meaning and content of an image. People who are blind or have low vision use alt text to understand the meaning of images, figures, or other graphics through words. Well-written and descriptive alt text dramatically reduces ambiguity and improves the user experience. *AODA* requires that all figures include alt text.

Tips for writing alt text:

- Place alt text between the figure title and the figure.
- Focus on the reader: What information would a reader need to know about this figure?
- Keep it short and simple (not so easy with complex graphs).
- Clearly describe the beginning, progress, and conclusion of flow charts, diagrams, and other nontext content.
- Avoid starting alt text using phrases like *image of or graphic of*.
- For graphs, describe the type (e.g., *line graph of*) and key data trends (not each individual data point).
- For figures, summarize only what is presented; do not include information from the surrounding text or repeat information from the figure title.

- Avoid using symbols that screen readers may not recognize (e.g., Greek letters).
- Spell out uncommon abbreviations.
- Avoid using the alt text "Generate a Description" tool because the descriptions are usually poor.

Figure 2: Example of a Figure With Alt Text

Alt text: A flow diagram showing 496 citations were identified and 473 were excluded. There were 3 potentially relevant reports retrieved from other sources, for a total of 26 potentially relevant articles and grey literature reports retrieved for scrutiny. In total, 23 were excluded and 3 reports were included in the review.
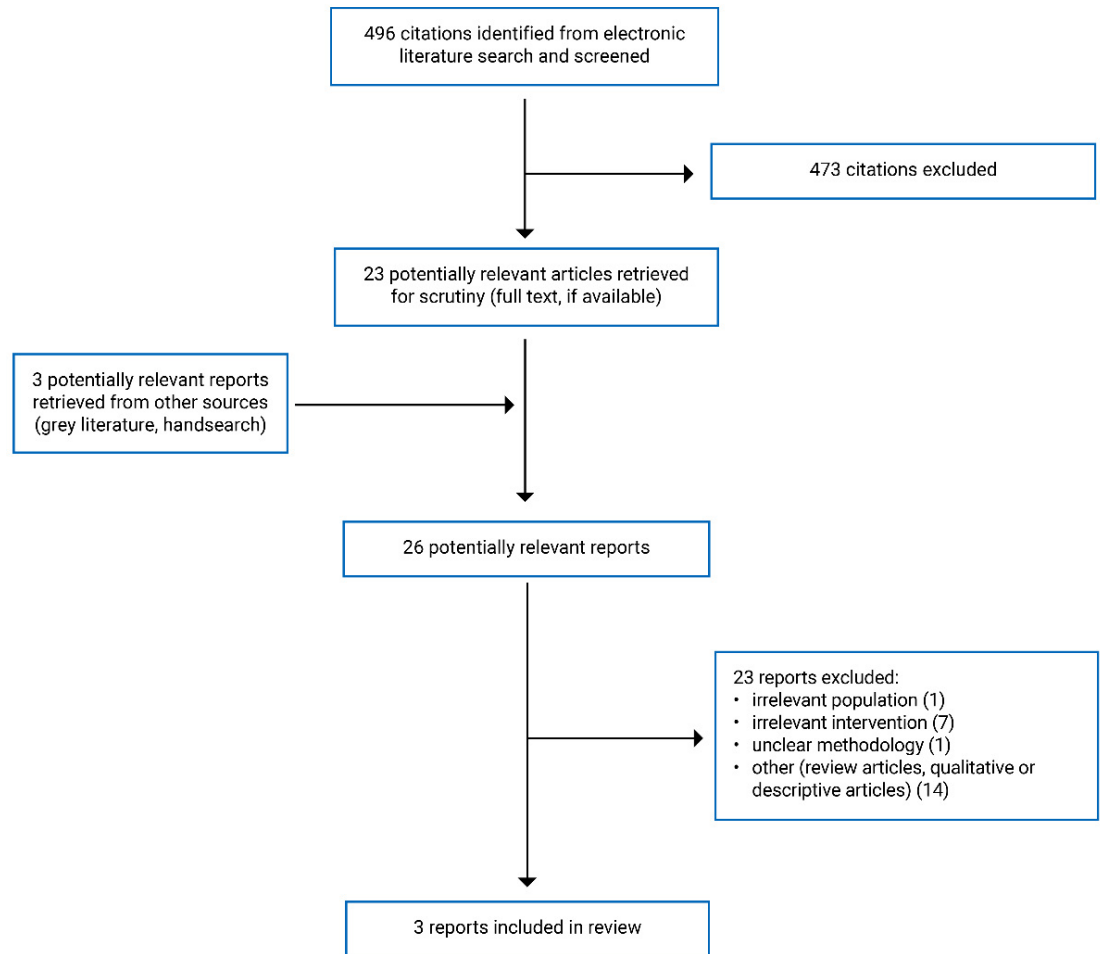
Use of Colour

Colour should not be used as the only method for conveying meaning or distinguishing visual elements. People with low vision or colour blindness may not be able to differentiate between colours. If using colour, also use labels, patterns, and/or shapes. Do not rely on just a colour-based legend. Refer to Figure 3.

Figure 3: Inappropriate and Appropriate Use of Colour in Figures
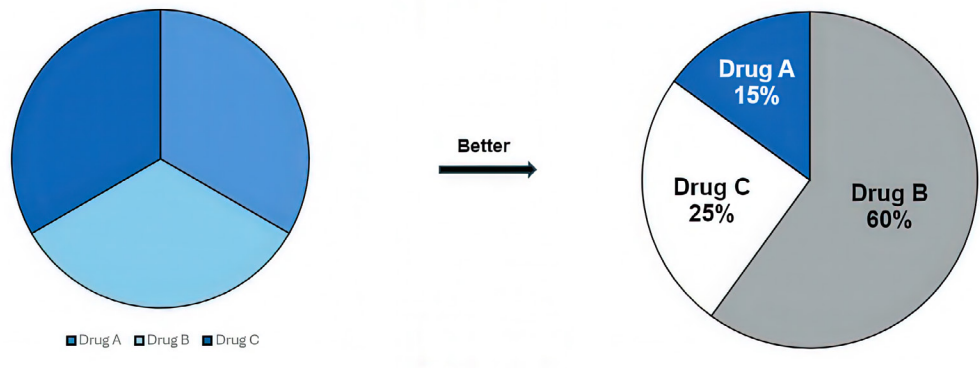
Note: The colour codes used in the "better" pie chart are blue (HEX #0067b9 or RGB 0, 103, 185), medium grey (HEX ##A2AAADor RGB 162, 170, 173), and white (HEX #FFFFFF or RGB 255, 255, 255).

Punctuation

For guidance on using punctuation in lists, refer to Lists in the Formatting section.

Ampersands

The ampersand (&) should not be used in text, titles, tables, figures, or headings. Ampersands should only be used if they are part of an official name.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes (') can be used in contractions and with some plurals to indicate possession.

Contractions

A contraction is a word made by combining 2 words into a shorter form (e.g., *it's, can't, don't, they're, shouldn't*).

Possession

Apostrophes are used to show possession.

> The researcher's report has been completed.

When multiple nouns or names are being shown as possessive, only add the *'s* after the last noun or last word of the name.

> Slade and Calderon's study

Plurals

When a noun is plural and possessive, use an apostrophe after the *s*.

> 3 weeks' vacation

Indicate the plural of letters or numbers with an *'s*.

> Mind your p's and q's.

Parentheses and Brackets

When to Use Parentheses

Use parentheses (like this) to set off helpful, nonessential, or additional information when other forms of punctuation will not suffice.

> Patients were randomly assigned (1:1) to receive drug A or drug B.

Avoid using parentheses when the information might easily be included in the sentence.

> The family medicine physicians attended. Not: The physicians (family medicine) attended.

When expressing the possibility of a plural, parentheses can also be used around the letters *s* or *es*.

> Fill in the name(s) of the researcher(s) in the box(es).

Parentheses are okay to use in headings and titles.

> Table 4: Key Assumptions of the Submitted Economic Evaluation (Not Noted as Limitations to the Submission)

Brackets Inside Parentheses

When parentheses occur within parentheses, the outside parentheses should be round (like this) and the inside parentheses should be square brackets [like this].

> (their estimated glomerular filtration rate [eGFR] was 65 mL/min/1.73 m^2)
>
> (95% confidence interval [CI], 56 to 82)

Square brackets can also be used to enclose any words that have been inserted into quoted material for clarity.

> "The control group participants [from Study B] showed similar rates of deterioration."

Capitalization

Do not capitalize the first word within parentheses unless it is the beginning of a complete sentence or is a proper name or noun.

> The physicians (not the scientists) presented their findings. (The scientists were not invited.)

Punctuation

Punctuation is placed outside the closing parenthesis unless the punctuation mark follows a complete sentence.

> Most investigators used the information readily (because it helped speed along the process).
>
> Most investigators used the information readily. (It helped speed along the process.)

Commas, Semicolons, and Colons

Commas

Commas (,) separate phrases and items in a list; they can also introduce information, set off parenthetical expressions, split 2 independent clauses, indicate nonrestrictive information, and separate digits in large numbers.

Note

A **clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. An **independent clause** can stand as a sentence on its own (e.g., He is playing); a **dependent clause** does not express a complete thought and cannot stand on its own (e.g., because it was raining).

A **phrase** is a combination of 2 or more words that are related to one another and act as a single unit but do not contain a subject and verb. Phrases are generally used to clarify context (e.g., *in the field* is the phrase in the sentence "He is playing in the field").

A **conjunction** is a word used to connect clauses or sentences (e.g., *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*).

Introductory Clauses, Phrases, and Adverbs

Use a comma after an introductory clause that begins with a conjunction or an introductory phrase or adverb (e.g., *if, nevertheless, in short, rather, however*).

> If the child's temperature does not decrease after 3 days, consult a physician.

Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Clauses

A **restrictive clause** provides information that is essential to a sentence's meaning. A **nonrestrictive clause** is information in a sentence that won't affect the meaning of the sentence if it is taken out. Use commas around nonrestrictive clauses only.

> Nonrestrictive: The request, which you wrote yesterday, was approved.
>
> Restrictive: The request that you wrote yesterday was approved.

Clauses Joined by Conjunctions

Use a comma between independent clauses joined by conjunctions unless both clauses are short.

> The results were inconclusive, but further testing is planned.
>
> She ran and he walked.

Note Commas are not needed before conjunctions when a subject is followed by 2 verb phrases (as the verb phrases are not each considered independent clauses).

> The participants filled out a survey and participated in a phone interview. (Not: The participants filled out a survey, and participated in a phone interview.)

Serial Commas

We use the serial (Oxford) comma. That means a comma is added before the final *and* or *or* in a list of 3 or more items.

> The study included infants, children, and adults.

Multiple Adjectives Preceding a Noun

Use a comma to separate 2 or more adjectives that modify the same noun.

> The study was a phase III, double-blind, single-arm, randomized controlled trial.

With Numbers

Use commas to denote numbers of 4 or more digits (hundreds, thousands, millions), except for house, telephone, page, or year numbers.

> There were 2,500 tests in 1994.
>
> Refer to page 1000.
>
> In 2005, there were 30,000 subscribers.

Latin Abbreviations

A comma is required after the period when using the Latin abbreviations for *that is* (i.e.,) and *for example* (e.g.,).

> This involves escalating (i.e., stepping up) pharmacological treatment as necessary.
>
> There are many types of reusable medical devices (e.g., stethoscopes and forceps).

Placement With Other Punctuation

Commas are placed inside closing quotation marks, as well as before superscript citations and after a closing bracket.

> When the director said he needed the report "by Monday," I told him, "I don't think that will be a problem."
>
> All patients had experience with the drug under review (i.e., warfarin),[6] but none had experience with the comparator.[7]

Semicolons

Semicolons (;) separate 2 distinct clauses of equal importance that are closely related.

> The data were collated; phase II of the study was complete.

With Lists

Use semicolons in complex lists that contain their own commas.

> The meeting consisted of artists, both visual and literary; modern dancers, classically trained; local actors, both professional and amateur; and representatives from the municipal and provincial governments.
>
> Members of the committee include John Smith, President; Jane Doe, Vice-President; and George Jones, Secretary.

With Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon and a comma when independent clauses are joined with a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase (e.g., *however*, *furthermore*, *nevertheless*, *therefore*, *thus*, *hence*, *on the other hand*).

> The meeting did not reach quorum; thus, it was cancelled.
>
> She wanted to join the operating team; however, she was still on rotation duties at the clinic.

Placement With Other Punctuation

Place semicolons outside of quotes and parentheses but before superscript reference citation numbers.

> They said, "It helped me get through my day-to-day routine";[87] however, others did not agree.

Colons

Colons (:) introduce clauses and lists and are also used in ratios.

With Lists

Use a colon before an in-text list.

> The report was made up of 4 sections: Background, Methods, Results, and Conclusion.

Introducing a Clause

Use a colon when a word or phrase introduces a clause.

> Note: This table has been edited from its original version.

Placement With Other Punctuation

Place colons outside of quotes and parentheses but before a superscript reference citation number.

> There were 2 drugs available (at that time):[2] acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Hyphens and Dashes

Hyphens (-) are used as connectors or to join 2 or more words (or parts of words) together.

En dashes (–) are used to denote ranges in fiscal years, connect triple-compound adjectives, and represent minus signs.

Em dashes (—) help create strong breaks in a sentence and fill blank data cells in tables. They are also used in headings and titles.

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Hyphens

Compounds

Hyphenate adjectives, adverbs, and nouns made up of 2 or more words that are meant to modify the noun they precede.

> high-quality data
>
> state-of-the-art equipment
>
> 5-year-old boy
>
> 30-day trial

Note   Adjectival compounds using *middle*, *high*, and *low* are generally hyphenated.

For Clarity

Use hyphens to clarify an otherwise ambiguous sentence.

> A dog-free play area (dogs are not allowed) versus a dog free-play area (dogs are allowed).

Equally Weighted Words

Use a hyphen to connect words of equal importance.

> patient-physician relationship
>
> the Kaplan-Meier estimate

However, use an en dash between names of places.

> Ottawa–Gatineau region

Single Letters

Hyphenate the following:

- B-cell receptor (but: B cell)
- T-cell marker (but: T cell)
- T-shirt
- X-ray.

Do not hyphenate the following:

- P value
- z score.

Prefixes and Suffixes

Prefixes

Prefixes are a group of letters placed before a word that modify the meaning of that word.

Most common prefixes do not require a hyphen — common prefixes include anti, bi, co, extra, inter, intra, micro, mid, multi, non, over, pre, post, pro, re, semi, sub, trans, un, and under (e.g., *antidiabetic*, *reuse*).

Use a hyphen with all prefixes that precede a proper noun, capitalized word, number, or abbreviation.

> mid-July

Also use a hyphen with the prefixes *all-, self-, quasi-,* and *ex-*.

> It was self-reported.
>
> She was all-knowing.

When 2 different prefixes are used to modify the same adjective or noun, it's best to write out both words.

> The patients attended the hospital for both preoperative and postoperative exams.

Suffixes

Suffixes are letters or words that are added to the end of words to change their meaning. Most suffixes do not require a hyphen unless they follow a proper noun.

Tip   Use a hyphen if eliminating a hyphen after a prefix or before a suffix would cause 2 (or more) of the same letters to appear next to each other.

> pre-existing
>
> bell-like

When Not to Hyphenate

Do not hyphenate compounds if the preceding adverb ends with *ly*.

> clinically relevant variables

Do not place a hyphen between a number and a unit of measurement.

> 60 mg tablet

En Dash

En dashes can be inserted by typing Alt + 0150 on the number keypad. They can also be found by clicking on Symbols under the Insert tab and then selecting the en dash symbol.

Triple-Compound Adjectives

Use an en dash instead of a hyphen in a compound adjective when:

- 1 or more of its elements is an open compound (e.g., *non–small cell lung cancer*; *Health Canada–approved indication*) or a hyphenated compound (e.g., *non–evidenced-based report*)
- the en dash applies to multiple words rather than just the 1 that follows it (e.g., *the post–World War II years*).

Minus Sign

Use an en dash to indicate a minus sign.

> The temperature outside was –30ºC.

Numerical Ranges

Use en dashes to indicate ranges in a fiscal year, with no space before or after the en dash.

> The 2016–2017 strategic plan was posted.

Em Dash

Em dashes can be inserted by typing Alt + 0151 on the number keypad. They can also be found by clicking on Symbols under the Insert tab and then selecting the em dash symbol.

For Emphasis and Strong Breaks

Use the em dash in place of parentheses, commas, or colons to create a strong break or emphasis.

> To replace parentheses: Upon discovering the anomalies — 5 of them — the study was recalled.
>
> To replace commas: Uncertainty exists around the extent of the correlation — ranging from none to strong — between the drug under review and improved health state.
>
> To replace a colon: The drug dosage was varied — once daily, twice daily, and once weekly.

Limit em dashes to 2 per sentence, and ensure there is a space on both sides of each em dash.

In Titles and Headings

Always use a colon first when a break appears in a title or heading. When more than 1 break occurs, use a colon for the first break and an em dash for the second break.

> Drugs for Rare Diseases: A Health Technology Assessment — Budget Impact Analysis
>
> Table 1: Drugs for Rare Diseases — Preliminary Results

Ellipses

Ellipses (...) should be used sparingly in text to represent the omission of 1 or more words, lines, or paragraphs from quoted material.

Punctuation Around Ellipses

Do not add spaces on either side of an ellipsis, except when it precedes a new sentence.

> "I become short of breath with any exertion…walking, carrying items, and so forth."
>
> "Asthma affects all aspects of my life… I struggle to keep my symptoms under control."

Periods

Placement With Other Punctuation

Leave only 1 space after a period and before the next sentence.

Place periods **before** ending quotation marks, reference citations, and a closing parenthesis if the text within the parentheses is a full sentence. Place periods **after** parentheses if the text within the parentheses is not a complete sentence.

> The patient indicated that their pain was "intense."
>
> We followed the methods described by Drummond and colleagues.[5]
>
> The patient experienced a hypoglycemic episode. (They were predisposed to hypoglycemia.)

When Not to Use

Do not use periods in abbreviations for degrees (such as *PhD*, *MA*, *BSc*, or *MSc*).

Do not use a midline period or dot (·) to denote multiplication; instead, use the multiplication symbol (×).

Quotation Marks

Double and Single

Double quotation marks (" ") are used to enclose a quoted sentence, phrase, or word.

> Patients indicated that the disease caused "intense trauma."

Enclose the following in double quotation marks on first mention and do not use quotation marks in subsequent mentions:

- slang
- nicknames
- words or phrases used ironically or facetiously
- specific Language from the original source (particularly if the wording does not meet the inclusive and respectful language guidelines outlined in this style guide).

> Hypertension is often called "the silent killer." The silent killer nickname is a result of the disease showing no early symptoms.
>
> The report stated that the patient was acting "crazy" [from original source].

Use single quotation marks (' ') to enclose quotations within quotations.

> "The study authors noted that 'data retrieved were potentially biased.'"

Quoted Materials

Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation of limited length that is integrated into the paragraph text. Insert a superscript reference citation number after each quotation.

> The study author reported that "clinical outcomes for leukemia are improving."[1]

For long quotations (3 or more lines), indent the quotation in its own paragraph. Do not italicize or place this text in quotation marks.

> The patient expressed the following regarding their treatment:
>
> > Since starting the new medication, I've noticed a significant decrease in my symptoms. I feel like I can finally get back to my daily activities without the constant pain I used to have. It's amazing to see how much my quality of life has improved.[1]

For multiple quotations in a row, place each on a separate indented line without quotation marks or italics.

Titles of Works

Use quotation marks for citing names of articles, essays, lectures, songs, dissertations, and theses (but use italics for citing names of longer works such as reports, books, journals, newspapers, and magazines).

Slashes

Avoid using slashes (/) between words. It is always preferable to use *and* or *or*.

When to Use

When referring to a situation in which you can either choose between 2 alternatives or choose both of them, it's okay to use *and/or*.

> Patients may experience nausea and/or diarrhea.

It's acceptable to use slashes between words if they were specifically used in the study or source material.

> Respondents rated their discomfort on a scale from 1 to 5 for the following symptoms: headache/migraine, difficulty breathing, sleep disturbances, and nausea/vomiting.

Use slashes to indicate *per* (e.g., 10 mg/L).

When Not to Use

Do not use a slash in dates or to indicate a subset; always use *of* when indicating a subset of a total.

> Improvement occurred in 132 of 138 patients. (Not: Improvement occurred in 132/138 patients.)

Spacing

Do not add spaces around slashes.

Capitalization

Capitalize all proper names; names of departments and agencies of federal, provincial, and territorial governments; trade names; brand names; and names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, places, and addresses. Otherwise, use lower case.

For additional direction on capitalization for tables and figures, refer to the Formatting section.

Drugs

Capitalize the brand name of a drug (e.g., Valium, Tylenol).

Do not capitalize the generic name of a drug, except at the beginning of a sentence or in a table heading.

> We had 2 reviews on zoster vaccine live and sevelamer.

When a drug name is in all capital letters or a mix of upper and lower case letters, only capitalize the first letter.

> Buprenorphine transdermal (Butrans) patch. Not: BuTrans.

Titles

Document Titles

Capitalize all major words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Do not capitalize a coordinating conjunction, a preposition shorter than 4 letters, or an article unless they begin a title or are part of the name of an organization. To help you recognize the most common coordinating conjunctions, use the acronym FANBOYS: *for*, *and, nor, but, or, yet,* and *so*.

> What Is Diabetes?
>
> Assessing the Risk in Patients With Type 2 Diabetes From a Socioeconomic Perspective

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Capitalize the first word after a colon in a title or heading.

> The Annual Report: An Update

In a title, always capitalize the second element of a hyphenated compound.

> Self-Reported Adverse Events

In titles, headings, and subheadings, capitalize words that appear in parentheses.

> Where Will We Be in the Year 2030? (And How Will We Rate?)
>
> The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ontario Ministry of Health)
>
> Table 1: Baseline Characteristics (Per-Protocol Population)

Job Titles

Capitalize job titles unless they are in their plural form or preceded by *an*, *a*, or *the*.

> Jane Doe, Vice-President of Communications, and John Smith, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, both spoke at the event.
>
> The deputy ministers of health met yesterday.
>
> The director of drug reimbursement said there were 50 drugs in the queue to review.

Advisory Bodies and Committees

Capitalize the formal names of advisory bodies and committees. If a proper name or abbreviation has irregular capitalization, maintain it even at the beginning of a sentence or in a title or heading.

> The pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review Expert Review Committee (pERC) met last Thursday. pERC is an appointed advisory panel.
>
> Use lower case for informal references.
>
> The committee met last Thursday.

Programs and Services

Capitalize the names of programs, services, and products when using their proper names, but maintain any irregular capitalization within a program name when it occurs.

> Scientific Advice
>
> pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance

Unless specifically referring to advisory bodies, programs, or services, do not use capital letters.

> Canada's Drug Agency provides solid scientific advice (not: Canada's Drug Agency provides solid Scientific Advice)

Faculties, Academic Programs, Departments, and Groups or Units

Capitalize the full name of a faculty or department. Use lower case if a faculty or department is referred to in a partial or informal way.

> Carleton University's Department of Journalism; the department
>
> Formulary Working Group; the group
>
> Central Processing Agency; the agency

Do not capitalize names of faculties, schools, departments, or offices when referring to more than 1.

> The departments of journalism, linguistics, and biomedicine were all involved.

Studies

Capitalize the name of a specific study, including the word *Study,* if it's part of the formal name. Do not capitalize any specified days, weeks, months, or years mentioned in a study, or the word *study* when used in a general sense.

> Study 619, week 4; the PREEMPT study
>
> day 1, month 3 of the study

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Parts of a Document

Capitalize all parts of a document and do not use abbreviations.

> Table 4, Appendix 3
>
> Figure 2 (not: Fig. 2)

Capitalize in-text references to specific section titles of a document.

> Refer to the Results section for more information.

Do not capitalize in-text references to locations such as page, line, paragraph, or section numbers.

> Refer to section 1, page 6, line 4.

With Colons

In text, capitalize the first word after a colon if what follows is a complete sentence or question.

> Intention-to-treat population: This group included only children younger than 10 years.
>
> In the study there was a major concern: Would the limited population size make it difficult to generalize the results?

Time

Do not capitalize *a.m.* or *p.m.* Use the 12-hour clock for all references to time in our documents, including Symposium materials.

> Our core work hours are between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
>
> Symposium 2035 has its first plenary session taking place at 2:00 p.m.

Quotations

Capitalize the first word of quotations that are complete sentences, but use lower case for the first word when incorporating quoted terms or phrases within a sentence.

> CDEC Chair Dr. Peter Jamieson summarized, "Based on the clinical evidence and economic review, we can make solid recommendations."
>
> The drug effects were described as "painful and intense" by the participants.

Geographic Locations

Capitalize a directional indicator when it refers to a geographic location.

> the North, the West Coast, Western Canada

Do not capitalize informal directional indicators.

> The team was headed west on the 417.

Seasons, Centuries, and Decades

Do not capitalize the names of seasons, centuries, or decades unless they are part of specialized names.

> spring, the 20th century, the fifties
>
> the Roaring Twenties, the School Spring Fling.

Letters as Words

Capitalize most single letters that are used as words.

> vitamin A, T-shirt, X-ray

Abbreviations

An abbreviation is any shortened word or phrase (e.g., *US* for *United States*). Acronyms and initialisms are specific types of abbreviations. An **acronym** is an abbreviation that is pronounced as a word (e.g., pERC). An **initialism** is an abbreviation that is read as individual letters (e.g., CIA or FYI).

Minimize Usage

Abbreviations can be overwhelming and confusing to a reader; limit the number of abbreviations used in text whenever possible. Do not make up abbreviations.

Use an abbreviation only if the term appears **3 or more times** in the body text (including headings and appendices, but not including tables and figures).

Spell Out on First Reference

When using an abbreviation in body text, always spell out the full term on first reference with the abbreviation placed in parentheses directly after it. Then, use the abbreviation consistently for all subsequent instances.

> The Canadian Drug Expert Committee (CDEC) has released its most recent report. The patient input group has been awaiting the CDEC recommendation.

Note Units of measurement (e.g., mL) do not need to be written out on first mention in text nor do they need to be defined in table or figure footers.

Abbreviations at the Beginning of Sentences

You can begin a sentence with an abbreviation if it has already been defined.

Well-Known Abbreviations

If a term is better known by its abbreviation, you can include the abbreviation in parentheses beside the term, even if it is not used 3 or more times in the body text. (If it is not used 3 or more times, do not include it in the abbreviations list.) Examples include organizational names, scales and scores, and tests.

> The Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux (INESSS) agreed with the recommendation.

Abbreviations With Different Meanings

Do not use the same abbreviation for more than 1 word or term in a report. Instead, choose 1 of the terms to spell out on each use (generally the term that is used fewer times or is less well known). Some examples of possibly confused terms:

- SD = standard deviation or stable disease?
- RR = relative risk or risk ratio?
- EGFR = estimated glomerular filtration rate or epidermal growth factor receptor?

Headings and Titles

Abbreviations are acceptable in headings as well as table and figure titles; however, do not use abbreviations in a document's title (rare exceptions can be made for extremely long titles or terms).

Do not introduce an abbreviation in a heading; instead, write the term out in full in the heading and introduce the abbreviation at the first mention in the text that follows.

Do not use a single abbreviation as a heading (e.g., *AEs*); use the full term instead (e.g., *Adverse Events*).

Tables and Figures

Abbreviations are acceptable in tables or figures (and their titles) as long as they are included in an abbreviations list in the table or figure footer. Minimize use if possible; do not make up abbreviations.

Articles Before Abbreviations

Use the appropriate article (i.e., *a*, *an*, *the*) before an abbreviation or initialism according to the sound (not the letter) following the article.

> a NATO member, an MRI, the CGP

Acronyms (abbreviations pronounced as a word) are rarely preceded by an article.

> NICE recommends numerous ways to protect yourself from COVID-19.

Possessives

If the term is in its possessive form on first mention, the abbreviation should be as well.

> The National Institutes of Health's (NIH's) report is now available.

Plurals

Use a lower case *s* (without an apostrophe) to make an abbreviation plural. If the term is in its plural form on first mention, then the abbreviation should also be plural. Following this, the abbreviation can be singular or plural depending on the context.

> Three randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were described in the sponsor's report and 1 RCT was identified in the literature search.

Italics

Italicize an abbreviation only if the full term would be italicized when spelled out.

> *COD* (*Canadian Oxford Dictionary*)

Format

When an abbreviation in parentheses immediately precedes another set of information in parentheses, do not combine these into the same parentheses.

> They experienced myocardial infarction (MI) (relative risk = 0.58; 95% confidence interval, 0.48 to 0.70).
>
> Not: They experienced myocardial infarction (MI; relative risk = 0.58; 95% confidence interval, 0.48 to 0.70).

Geographic Locations

Always spell out the city, county, country, province, state, and territory name in full when it appears in text. The only 2 exceptions to this rule are *UK* for *United Kingdom* and *US* for *United States*, which never need to be spelled out in full.

Include the province, territory, or state only if another, better-known location of the same name exists.

> London, Ontario

Do not abbreviate words such as *County*, *Fort*, *Island*, *Mount*, *North*, *Pointe*, or *Sainte* unless they are abbreviated in the proper name of the location.

> Sainte-Foy
>
> Fort McMurray
>
> St. John's, Newfoundland

In text, don't abbreviate the names of provinces, countries (with the exceptions of *UK* and *US*), and road descriptors. However, these are acceptable in tables to save space.

> Ontario, Avenue, Road (Not: Ont, Ave., Rd.)

Postal Abbreviations

Use abbreviations for road descriptors, provinces, territories, and countries in postal addresses.

> 600-865 Carling Ave.
> Ottawa ON K1S 5S8

Drugs

Drug names may be abbreviated in text once they have been defined in full. They may also be abbreviated in tables as long as they are defined in the table legend.

Use hyphens for combination drugs (2 or more drugs in a single dosage form at a fixed dose).

Use the word *plus* for combination drugs that are administered along with an additional drug when they are spelled out in full, and use a plus symbol in their abbreviated forms.

> Patients with cystic fibrosis were prescribed elexacaftor-tezacaftor-ivacaftor (ELX-TEZ-IVA).
>
> The cost of ombitasvir-paritaprevir-ritonavir plus dasabuvir (OMB-PAR-RIT + DAS) was reviewed.

Employees who are unsure about the proper presentation and/or abbreviation for a combination drug can contact the copy editors for guidance.

Genus and Species Names

Spell out genus names on first reference (using a capital) followed by the species name (in lower case); italicize the full name.

> *Callisaurus draconoides*
>
> *Tyrannosaurus rex*

After its first mention, abbreviate the genus name to a single, italicized capital letter that is followed by a period, and then followed by the species name. (Do not place the abbreviation in parentheses, and do not include the term in the abbreviations list or in table footnotes).

> The patient was prescribed *Hypericum perforatum*. The physician indicated that *H. perforatum* has minimal side effects.

If there is a possibility of confusing 1 genus name with another in the same document (e.g., the *S.* in *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus faecalis*), keep both terms spelled out throughout the document.

Genes and Proteins

The abbreviated form of a gene name is typically 3 to 7 characters long. Human gene symbols contain capitalized letters and may also contain (but never begin with) numerals. Human gene symbols are in capital letters and italicized. Protein names should not be italicized.

> *BRCA1* (gene)
>
> PD-1 (protein)

Genes and their associated protein names do not need to be spelled out and may appear in their abbreviated form on first mention (these do not need to be defined in text, in the main abbreviations list, or in table or figure footers).

Days of the Week and Months

Do not abbreviate days of the week and months within text. In tables and figures, their 3-letter abbreviations (e.g., Apr, Aug, Tue, Wed) can be used if they are defined in the table footer (refer to the Formatting section for more information on defining abbreviations in table and figure footers). However, do not abbreviate the words *day*, *week*, and *month*, even in tables or figures.

> The cut-off date was January 1, 2019.

Degrees

When listing degrees within text, use commas (without periods between the letters).

> John Doe, BSc, MD, FRCPC

Use lowercase *master* unless it is part of a specific degree name.

> She has a master's degree in philosophy.
>
> She has a Master of Philosophy and a Master of Humanities.

When listing degrees next to a person's name, order them from lowest to highest earned.

> Gregory Tooms, BSc, MBA, PhD

MD and PhD

When *MD* follows a medical practitioner's name, do not write *Dr.* (doctor) before the name, as it is already represented by *MD*.

> John Smith, MD, FRCPC or Dr. John Smith

If the person you are referring to is not a medical doctor, add *PhD* to the person's name.

> Beverley Atchison, PhD

If it's unclear whether the person cited is an MD or PhD, try to confirm the designation and then place the appropriate designation following the name. If confirmation is not possible, cite as *Dr.* instead.

Latin Abbreviations

The following Latin abbreviations can be used in tables and figures, as well as within parentheses in body text, without being defined:

- *e.g.* means *for example* and should always be followed by a comma (e.g.,).
- *et al.* means *and others* and should always end with a period.
- *i.e.* means *that is* and should always be followed by a comma (i.e.,).

However, in text outside of parentheses, use the full term.

> There were other end points considered; for example, progression-free survival.

The abbreviation *vs.* means *versus* and should always end with a period. *Versus* should be spelled out in text, but the abbreviation can be used in tables.

Note that *etc.* should not be used in our materials. Use wording such as *and so on* or *and so forth* instead.

Abbreviations List in Reports

Many of our reports include a list of abbreviations used in the report. This list should include abbreviations that are used 3 or more times in the body text of the report; however, it should not include abbreviations that only appear in tables or figures or those that were introduced because the abbreviation is the more well-known term (but used fewer than 3 times). Place any abbreviation that begins with a number at the top of the list (e.g., 5MWT).

List terms in alphabetical order by abbreviation. Begin each spelled-out term with a lower case letter unless it is a proper noun. Terms should appear in their singular forms.

> OL   open label
>
> RCT   randomized controlled trial

Abbreviations That Do Not Require Definition

Table 3 presents abbreviations that do not need to be defined in the text, in the abbreviations list, or in the footers of tables or figures.

Table 3: Abbreviations Allowed in Text Without Defining

Abbreviation	Full term (not to be used)
2SLGBTQ+	2-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and others
3D	3 dimensional
a.m.	ante meridiem (before midday)
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
app	application
COVID-19	coronavirus 2019
CT (not CAT)	computed tomography
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
degrees and designations	do not spell out in text or define in table footers
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format

Abbreviation	Full term (not to be used)
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HPV	human papillomavirus
ID	identification
Inc.	incorporated (unless spelled out in an official company name used in the text)
IQ	intelligence quotient
IT	information technology
IV	intravenous
Ltd.	limited (unless spelled out in an official company name used in the text)
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging
n	total sample or subsample size
N	total population or sample size
P value	probability value
PDF	portable document format
PET	positron emission tomography
p.m.	post meridiem (after midday)
QR code	quick response code
RSS	really simple syndication
UK	United Kingdom
units of measure	do not spell out in text or define in table abbreviation lists
URL	uniform resource locator
US	United States
USB	Universal Serial Bus
UV	ultraviolet
WHO	World Health Organization

Scales and Scores

Table 4 includes the most common scales and scores used in our documents. To ensure accuracy, verify definitions from source.

Table 4: Abbreviations for Scales and Scores

Abbreviation	Scale or score
6MWT	6-minute walk test (note that the score is 6-minute walk distance [6MWD])
10MWT	10-metre walk test
ACR20 (or 50 or 70)	American College of Rheumatology 20% (or 50% or 70%) improvement in rheumatoid arthritis
BMI	body mass index
BSI	Brief Symptom Inventory
CGI, CGI-I, CGI-S	Clinical Global Impression, Clinical Global Impression–Improvement, Clinical Global Impression–Severity of Illness
DSM-5 (but *DSM-IV*)	*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fifth Edition)*

Abbreviation	Scale or score
EASI	Eczema Area and Severity Index
ECOG PS	Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group Performance Status
EORTC QLQ-C30	European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer Quality of Life Questionnaire Core 30
EQ-5D, EQ-5D-5L	These are the test names and not abbreviations.
EQ VAS	EQ visual analogue scale
GAD-7	Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation
HUI	Health Utilities Index
IGA	Investigator's Global Assessment
MADRS	Montgomery-Åsberg Depression Rating Scale
PASI	Psoriasis Area and Severity Index (expressed as PASI 50 for 50% reduction)
PedsQL	Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory
PHQ-9	Patient Health Questionnaire-9
RECIST 1.1	Response Evaluation Criteria in Solid Tumours Version 1.1
SAGER	Sex and Gender Equity in Research
SF-36	Short Form (36) Health Survey
sPGA	static Physician's Global Assessment

Dose Frequencies and Routes of Administration

Table 5 shows the abbreviations that should be used to represent dose frequencies and routes of administration in tables and figures. These should be spelled out in text.

Table 5: Dose Frequencies and Routes of Administration

Abbreviation	Definition
b.i.d.	twice a day
p.c.	after meals
p.o.	orally
p.r.n.	as needed
q.d.	every day
q.h.	every hour
q.i.d.	4 times a day
q.o.d.	every other day
q.w.	every week
q.2.w.	every 2 weeks
t.i.d.	3 times a day

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful
Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Spelling

Spell Check in Microsoft Word

We use Canadian English spelling in our documents (as per the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary),* but Word often defaults to US English. To *Canadianize* your document, ensure Track Changes is off, then click Review from the top menu, go to Review > Language > Set Proofing Language. Choose English (Canada) and select for "Current Document."

Word's Canadian spelling doesn't exactly align with the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, so if you're unsure of something, check the dictionary.

Resources

General Language

Unless this style guide already offers direction on the spelling of a word, check the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. If the dictionary offers more than 1 spelling option for that word, use the first listed. For our spelling conventions and spelling anomalies, refer to Table 1 in the Preferred Usage section.

Medical Language

For all scientific and biomedical Language that does not appear in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, refer to *Dorland's Medical Dictionary.*

Canadian Spelling

Canadian spelling is a hybrid of American and British spellings in some cases. Table 6 presents some of the more common Canadian spellings.

Table 6: Canadian Spelling Conventions

Canadian Oxford Dictionary	Examples
-ce (not -se)	defence, licence (noun form), practice (noun form)
-e- (not -ae- or -oea-)	pediatrics (not paediatrics), anemia (not anaemia), diarrhea (not diarrhoea)
-ize/-ization (not -ise/-isation)	apologize, organize, organization, recognize, specialize, civilize
-our (not -or)	honour, neighbour, colour, flavour, labour, rigour, tumour
-re (not -er)	centre, fibre, litre, theatre, metre
-ue	analogue, catalogue

Commonly Misspelled Words

Use *health care* not *healthcare* or *health-care*.

Use *keywords* not *key words*.

Use *end point* not *endpoint*.

Use *time point* not *timepoint*.

Use *time frame* not *timeframe*.

Use *timeline* not *time line*.

Use *flow chart* not *flowchart*.

Correct Usage and Commonly Confused Words

Above and Below

Do not use *above* or *below* to refer to the location of text, tables, or figures. In the process of publishing a document, the flow of text can change, making a reference to a location inaccurate. It's best to refer to the specific table number, figure number, or section, but if you must refer to location, use words such as *preceding*, *previously mentioned*, *following,* or *subsequent*.

Affect and Effect

Both *affect* and *effect* can be used as verbs or nouns, but they are not interchangeable. *Affect* when used as a verb means *to influence* or *to have an impact on*; when used as a noun, *affect* refers to an expression of emotion or a psychological state. *Effect* when used as a verb means *to bring about* or *cause*; when used as a noun, *effect* means *a result* or *consequence.*

> The study was affected by several factors.
>
> The patient showed a flat affect.
>
> We must take action to effect change.
>
> No adverse effects were reported.

Alternate and Alternative

Alternate is an adjective, adverb, or verb; *alternative* is usually a noun. *Alternate* means occurring in turn and *alternative* means another possibility.

> Medications that interfere with testing should be stopped only if safe alternatives can be substituted.
>
> The drugs should be taken on alternate days.

Comprises and Consists of

To *comprise* and to *consist of* mean to be *made up of*, *to include*, *to contain*.

> The clinical trial comprises 4 phases.
>
> The clinical trial consists of 4 phases.

Note Never use the passive form of comprised [i.e., is comprised of].

Data

Data should always be used with a plural verb.

> The data are presented in Table 2.

Dose, Dosage, and Dosing

Use *dose* for a specified amount of medication taken at 1 time.

> The dose is 500 mg.

Use *dosage* when referring to a specific amount and frequency of doses over a period of time.

> The dosage is 500 mg twice daily.

Use *dosing* when referring to a method of administering medication or to giving a dose of medicine.

> The dosing schedule was reviewed yesterday.
>
> Dosing occurred twice daily.

Drug and Agent

Use *drug* not *agent* where applicable because they do not always mean the same thing.

Fewer and Less

Fewer is used to describe countable things and means *not as many*.

> There were fewer participants aged 65 or older in the study.

Less is used to describe uncountable nouns (e.g., bias, information), and means *not as much*.

> Less intervention may lead to better health outcomes.

First, Second, Third

Use *first*, *second*, and *third* to enumerate related points (not *firstly*, *secondly*, *thirdly*). The addition of *-ly* is unnecessary. Do not use *lastly*.

The –ics and –icals

Be careful when using the suffixes *-ic* and *-ical* because they do not necessarily mean the same thing. The following terms are not interchangeable:

- *biologic* and *biological*
- *classic* and *classical*
- *economic* and *economical*
- *empiric* and *empirical*
- *historic* and *historical*
- *pathologic* and *pathological*
- *periodic* and *periodical*
- *physiologic* and *physiological*.

Regimen and Regime

Regimen is the term to use when referring to a prescribed schedule for drug dosing, an exercise routine, or the administering of any systematic plan or course of action. *Regime* is the term to use when referring to a military or authoritarian body.

> The drug regimen was followed closely.

The Territories

The article *the* is not used before Yukon (the name was officially changed in 2003), but it is needed before *Northwest Territories.* Note that *the* is not capitalized.

> Yukon is the smallest territory in Canada.
>
> Yellowknife is the capital of the Northwest Territories.

Use and Utilize

The preferred term is *use* instead of *utilize. Health care utilization* is acceptable.

> There are many factors that affect health care utilization.
>
> You do not need to use *utilize* as often as you think you do.

Where, When, As, and Since

Do not use *where*, *as*, *when*, or *since* if you mean *if* or *because.* Use *where* only when you are describing a place and *when, as*, or *since* when you are describing a time.

> We searched for English-language articles when possible. (Not: We searched for English-language articles where possible.)
>
> Patients were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. (Not: Patients were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria.)

Which and That

Use *that* when the information that follows is essential to the meaning of the sentence. Use *which* when the information could be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence (this text should be set off with commas, parentheses, or dashes).

> The study that was published yesterday was peer reviewed.
>
> The study, which was based in the US, was peer reviewed.

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful
Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Who and Whom

Who is used as a subject; *whom* is used as an object. Use *who* if you can restate the sentence using *she, he*, or *they* or answer the question with *she, he*, or *they*.

> Who is the researcher I will be working with? (She is the researcher I will be working with.)

Use *whom* if you can restate the sentence using *him, her*, or *them* or answer the question with *him, her*, or *them*.

> To whom do I owe the money? (I owe the money to them.)

This rule also applies to *whoever* and *whomever*.

Numbers and Statistics

Numbers, Units, and Operators

Usage

Use digits to express numbers representing anything that can be counted or measured.

> There were 3 tests delivered over 5 days.
>
> The 4-member committee approved the new guidelines.

This includes mathematical expressions and numbers with units, scores, scales, and statistics, including confidence intervals, P values, and percentages.

> The patient lost 1 kg.
>
> a mean of 1
>
> a score of 2 on the SF-36 scale
>
> (95% CI, 1 to 3)

When to Spell Out Numbers

Spell out numbers that occur at the beginning of a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading.

> Thirty-five of 40 patients were included in the multicentre study.

Spell out single-digit ordinal numbers less than 10 (e.g., first, second, third), and use digits for 10 and higher. Don't superscript suffixes.

> first, ninth, 10th, 31st, 100th

Spell out fractions.

> In the cohort, one-third were patients with Alzheimer disease.

Spell out numbers if they are spelled out in a direct quote or a cited title.

"Benefits of Meditating Three Times a Day"

Spell out the first number in adjacent numbers to avoid confusion, unless listed in a series.

They received two 4-week rounds of treatment.

The mean ages in groups 1, 2, and 3 were 30, 40, and 50 years, respectively.

Spell out numbers for generally accepted usage, such as when used idiomatically or as a figure of speech. Also spell out *one* when used as a pronoun.

on the one hand

they are independent of one another

if one looks at the total group

Locations in Text

When referring to locations in a document, use lower case for the location descriptor and follow it with a number.

The study indicates that on page 36, paragraph 3, section 7, there are conflicting conclusions.

Capitalize *Table, Figure,* and *Appendix* when used as specific designations.

The technologies used are described in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Refer to Appendix 1 for details.

Time

When writing out the time of day, use the hour, followed by a colon and the minutes, with periods in the time-of-day designation. Use *ET* (meaning Eastern Time) instead of *EST* (Eastern Standard Time) or *EDT* (Eastern Daylight Time).

6:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m. ET

Include the time zone when necessary. Note that 12:00 p.m. is noon.

Do not abbreviate time units in text and tables: hour, day, month (not: h, d, mo).

There were 50 sleep incidents per hour.

Use numbers for time points in a study. Use lower case letters for the time descriptor, such as *day* or *week*.

Measurements were taken on day 2, in week 1, and at the end of month 24.

Dates

Use numbers when referencing dates. Also note our format: Day of the week, Month date, year. Note there is a comma after the year in running text.

Friday, September 5, 2025, was chosen as the launch date.

Do not use a comma when referring to the month and year only.

The study is expected to be completed in September 2025.

Use all 4 digits for years, even in a range.

The organization showed strong growth in the 1990s (not: the 90s, 90's, or '90s).

The trials took place from 2020 to 2024. (Not: The trials took place from 2020 to 24.)

Age

When referring to age, use *aged* instead of *years old* or *years of age*. *Older* or *younger* is preferred when referring to age instead of *more than*, *greater than*, or *less than*.

> The trials focused on women aged 30 years or older. (Not: The trials focused on women 30 years old and older.)

Large and Compound Numbers

Use commas in numbers with 4 or more digits except when referring to years or house, phone, or page numbers.

> There were 2,500 tests in 2024.
>
> Refer to page 1000.

For rounded numbers in the millions or higher, use a combination of numerals and words, without abbreviations. However, use numerals when referring to rates, ranges, or exact numbers.

> 2.7 million
>
> 300,000 (Not: 300K or 300 K)
>
> 60.7 per 1,000,000 population
>
> $2,753,732

Include a hyphen when writing out compound numbers.

> Thirty-five control group participants were included in the study.

Ratios and Decimals

Ratios

Present ratios with a colon between the numbers, with no spaces around the colon.

> The study participants were randomized in a 3:2 ratio.

Decimals

A decimal is a real number with a base of 10. Place a 0 before numerical values that are less than 1, including P values.

2.71 mm

0.5 g

P = 0.03

If the author uses a 0 at the end of the measurement, do not delete it.

49.0 kg (Not: 49 kg)

Currency

Denote currencies by adding the appropriate abbreviation before the amount. Assume Canadian funds unless otherwise specified. CA$ can be used in comparisons with different currencies.

US$250 for American dollars

AU$250 for Australian dollars

£250 for British pounds

€250 for Euros

Ranges and Confidence Intervals

Any range of numbers presented in parentheses should begin with the measure (e.g., range, IQR, 95% CI) followed by a comma and then the 2 values.

To connect numbers in a range, use the word *to* instead of an en dash or hyphen (this avoids confusion when 1 of the numbers is negative), even in tables and figures. Include units for both ends of a range.

(range, 2 mg to 4 mg)

Exception Use an en dash to indicate a fiscal year range. Use all 4 digits for the years.

> The 2025–2026 fiscal period showed strong growth.

Consecutive Statistical Expressions

When multiple statistical expressions occur together, use semicolons to separate each expression. P values should always be presented last.

> (HR = 42; 95% CI, 10 to 100; P = 0.04)

Roman and Arabic Numerals

In general, use Arabic numerals. Use Roman numerals when they are part of a proper reference or to denote an accepted medical designation.

Note the following classification systems' use of Arabic and Roman numerals:

- *BAK1* (genes)
- Class II device
- factor IV (clotting factors)
- grade 3 adverse events
- grade 1 cancer
- Grade 4 diabetic foot ulcer
- level IV trauma centre
- Levels I to IV (Notice of Compliance)
- nerve III (cranial nerves)
- phase III study
- schedule II drug
- stage III cancer
- type 2 diabetes
- type II error.

Units and Operators

SI Units

The International System of Units (SI) is an internationally accepted system of measurement made up of 7 base units:

- metre (m) for length
- second (s) for time
- kilogram (kg) for mass
- mole (mol) for an amount of substance
- ampere (A) for electric current
- kelvin (K) for temperature
- candela (cd) for luminous intensity.

SI units and derived units (e.g., kg/m^2) always take their abbreviated form without being spelled out.

Micrograms

The SI unit for microgram, 1 millionth of a gram, is µg. However, use the abbreviation *mcg* for microgram (not µg). This is more user-friendly and avoids confusion with mg (milligram).

Numbers and Units of Measurement

Units do not have to be defined on first use. Leave a space after the number and before the unit. With numbers, always use abbreviations for units, but use the full word if it does not have a number.

Note that some units contain capital letters.

> 2 L, 5 mL
>
> 6 kPa
>
> The distance was measured in centimetres.

Always repeat units of measurement when denoting a range or making comparisons.

> 5 mg and 8 mg
>
> 400 copies/mL to 1,200 copies/mL

Table 7: Abbreviations for Common Units of Measurement

Measurement	Imperial abbreviation	Metric or SI abbreviation
calorie	—	cal
centimetre	—	cm
fluid ounce	fl oz	—
foot	ft	—
gram	—	g
inch	in	—
international unit	IU	—
joule	—	J
kilopascal	—	kPa
kilowatt	—	kW
litre	—	L
metre	—	m

Measurement	Imperial abbreviation	Metric or SI abbreviation
microgram	—	mcg
microlitre	—	µL
micrometre	—	µm
micromole	—	µmol
millilitres	—	mL
millimetres of mercury	—	mm Hg
millimole	—	mmol
molarity	—	M (mol/L)
mole	—	mol
ounce	oz	—
pound	lb	—
revolutions per minute	rpm	—
second	—	s (do not use sec)
square foot	sq ft	—
square inch	sq in	—
volt	—	V
watt	—	W

Symbols and Operators

Spaces Before and After Operators

Always include a space before and after a mathematical operator (e.g., ×, =, ≤, ≥).

> P = 0.005
>
> > 25 mg

However, do not add a space after a minus sign denoting a negative number, before a percent sign, or on either side of a degree symbol.

> The study results showed 85% of people dislike −30ºC weather.

Plus or Minus Symbol

Do not separate the plus or minus symbol; use the ± symbol, which you can find by clicking on the Insert tab on the toolbar, then clicking the Symbol icon for the drop-down menu.

> ± (Not: +- or +/−)

Approximate Symbol

Do not use the ~ symbol in text. It can be used in tables and figures if absolutely necessary (preference is to be precise when presenting data).

> There were approximately 1,000 people at the conference.

Greater Than and Less Than

In text, write out the words *greater than*, *less than*, *greater than or equal to*, or *less than or equal to*. It is acceptable to use the symbols in parentheses.

Always use symbols in tables and figures for mathematical equations, P values, scores, and percentages.

The ≥ or ≤ symbols can be found by clicking on the Insert tab on the toolbar, then clicking the Symbol icon for the drop-down menu.

Statistics

Probability

Use a capital P (not italicized) to denote P values. Insert spaces around mathematical operators. Include a leading 0 before the decimal.

> P = 0.005, P > 0.005

Intervals and Ranges

In both tables and text, write ranges — such as confidence intervals (CIs) and credible intervals (CrIs) — by using the word *to* instead of a hyphen or comma between the numbers.

> 95% CI, 0.85 to 1.24; IQR, 0.25 to 2.24 (Not: 95% CI, 0.85–1.24; IQR, 0.25, 2.24)
>
> 95% CrI, −0.85 to −1.24

Never add a space before a percent sign, and always use a comma after a CI, CrI, range, or IQR.

Note In text, spell out the terms confidence interval (CI) and credible interval (CrI) on first reference and abbreviate thereafter. Define these terms in table and figure footers.

Statistical Terms, Tests, and Abbreviations

In text, define all abbreviations on first use; in tables and figures, define them in the abbreviations list in the table footer. Refer to Tables and Figures in the Formatting section for more information.

Table 8 shows our preferred abbreviations and symbols for statistical tests and terms.

Table 8: Statistical Tests and Terms

Test or term	Abbreviation or symbol
alpha	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
analysis of covariance	ANCOVA
analysis of variance	ANOVA
area under the curve	AUC
beta	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
chi-square distribution	x^2 (include degrees of freedom)
confidence interval	CI
cost-effective analysis	CEA
cost-utility analysis	CUA
Cox-Mantel test	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
credible interval	CrI
degrees of freedom	df
delta (lower case)	δ
Delta (upper case)	Δ
Difference	D
Gamma	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
hazard ratio	HR
intention to treat	ITT
Kaplan-Meier	KM
least squares, least squares mean	LS, LSM
number needed to treat, number needed to harm	NNT, NNH
odds ratio	OR
probability value	P
quality-adjusted life-year	QALY
receiver operating characteristic	ROC
relative risk	RR
relative risk reduction	RRR
standard deviation	SD

standard error	SE
standard error of the mean	SEM
Student t test, paired t test	t test
total population or sample size	N
total sample or subsample size	n
t score, z score	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
type I, type II error	(no abbreviation or symbol used)
Wilcoxon rank sum test, signed rank test	(no abbreviation or symbol used)

Digital and Web

Common Language

The following presents a list of some commonly used technology terms. Note spelling and capitalization.

- app, application
- artificial intelligence (AI)
- dataset
- e-alert
- e-book
- e-commerce
- e-consultation
- e-health
- email
- e-learning
- e-reader
- emoji
- end user
- gigabyte (GB)
- hashtag
- home page
- hyperlink, hypertext
- inbox
- instant message (IM)
- internet
- intranet
- JPEG
- live stream
- login (noun), log in (verb), log on (verb)
- megabyte (MB)
- multimedia
- online
- smartphone
- upload
- URL
- USB
- username
- web, web browser, web page, web server
- website, webcam, webcast, webinar
- Wi-Fi

Technical Instructions

When guiding a reader to perform a technical action, capitalize the button or folder.

> Press the Back button, then click Go to proceed to the next page.
>
> You'll find it located in the History folder.

Place the names of website pages within quotations.

> These directions will take you to the "Subscribe" page.

Web Addresses

Do not spell out web addresses (URLs) unless they appear in a document meant for print. Instead, hyperlink them to an identifying word or phrase.

> For more information, visit our website.

Do not link terms such as *click here* or *learn more* because they're difficult to interpret from an accessibility standpoint. Instead, link to words or phrases that are more descriptive in nature.

> Refer to Methods and Guidelines to learn more.

When web addresses are spelled out for printing purposes, delete *http://* and *www.* (this makes them shorter and easier to remember).

> cda-amc.ca

Do not include punctuation that immediately follows the hyperlinked text (e.g., periods or commas) in the hyperlink.

> You can find our latest news and updates on our LinkedIn page.

Letter and Symbol Shortcuts

A number keypad appears on the right of some computer keyboards (generally only on desktop keyboards). Table 9 lists shortcuts for letters and symbols that can be created using a number keypad. (Note that the Number Lock key on your keyboard must be clicked on for these shortcuts to work.)

When using a keyboard without a number keypad (e.g., a laptop), the following letter or symbols can be inserted into a document by clicking Symbol under the Insert tab and then choosing the symbol or letter needed.

Table 9: Letter and Symbol Shortcuts

Letter or symbol	Shortcut
– (en dash and minus)	Alt + 0150
— (em dash)	Alt + 0151
± (plus or minus)	Alt + 0177
× (multiplication)	Alt + 0215
≤ (less than or equal to)	Alt + 8804
≥ (greater than or equal to)	Alt + 8805
μ (micro)	Alt + 0181
° (degree)	Alt + 0176
… (ellipsis)	Alt + Ctrl + . (period)
£ (British pound)	Alt + 0163
€ (Euro)	Alt + 0128
À	Alt + 0192
Á	Alt + 0193
à	Alt + 133
á	Alt + 0225
È	Alt + 0200
É	Alt + 0201
è	Alt + 138
é	Alt + 130
ê	Alt + 136

Formatting

To ensure consistency with our brand, employees can check the Branding Resource Centre on the Hub for PowerPoint and Word templates, *Canada's Drug Agency* logos, and information on our images library and other assets.

Text

Italicizing

Italicize the titles of the following and their abbreviations:

- journal names (*BMJ, CMAJ, Canadian Family Physician*)
- books (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM*)
- newspapers (*Ottawa Citizen, The Globe and Mail*)
- newsletters (*Canadian Realty News, Hospital News*)
- report titles (*Guidelines for the Economic Evaluation of Health Technologies: Canada*).

Capitalize newspaper and magazine articles, essays, lectures, dissertations, theses, and specific web pages and place them in quotation marks but do not italicize them. Capitalize general website names without quotation marks and do not italicize them.

> Refer to the "FAQ" page on the Dorland's Medical Dictionary website.
>
> The article from *Hospital News* entitled "Docusate for Constipation: Money Down the Toilet?" has garnered media attention.

Note Check whether *the* is part of the proper name of a publication. If it is, then it is also capitalized and italicized; if it is not, it is left in lower case and is not italicized.

> *The Lancet,* the *New England Journal of Medicine*

Italics can be used sparingly to indicate emphasis in certain cases:

- To highlight an unexpected word: What differences might we expect in human behaviour if honesty were shown to be the *worst* policy?
- When 2 words are contrasted: I did not say we *would* go, I said we *might* go.
- To stress a word that would not normally be stressed in the sentence: Why were *they* chosen to chair the committee?

Preferred Usage

Inclusive and Respectful Language

Accessibility

Punctuation

Capitalization

Abbreviations

Spelling

Numbers and Statistics

Digital and Web

Formatting

Italicize words emphasized as words and letters emphasized as letters.

> The box labelled *empty* was full!
>
> There is only 1 *s* in *disappoint*.

Italicize genus and species names (refer to the Abbreviations section for more information).

Italicize gene names but do not italicize protein names.

Do not format punctuation that follows formatted text unless the formatting applies to the entire sentence.

Foreign Words

Do not italicize any foreign terms but do retain their accents.

> The patient had a certain joie de vivre.
>
> His CV indicated that he had been an attaché with the embassy.

Do not italicize Latin terms, such as the following:

- a priori
- de novo
- et al.
- in vivo
- post hoc.

Bolding

Use bolded text for emphasis sparingly in our documents.

Underlining

Use underlining only for web links.

> cda-amc.ca

Footnotes in Text

Do not use in-text or end-of-page footnotes.

Lists

In Running Text

Use a colon before a list in running text.

> The daily newspaper includes 6 sections: news, city, business, entertainment, sports, and classifieds.

Bulleted Lists

In bulleted lists, use parallel constructions so each bullet is logically and grammatically similar (e.g., all start with a noun, all start with a verb).

As Part of a Complete Sentence

When a bulleted list follows an introductory clause and each bullet is not a complete sentence, start each bullet with a lower case letter and place a period after the last bullet. Do not use punctuation or the word *and* at the end of the other bullets.

> Our publishing services include:
> - editing
> - proofreading
> - quality checking
> - formatting
> - translation.

With an Introductory Phrase

When a bulleted list is introduced by an introductory phrase and not a clause, begin each bullet with a capital letter, but do not place a period at the end of the list.

> Favourite foods:
> - Ice cream, but only chocolate
> - Pasta, which makes the best comfort food
> - Chocolates, all of the time
> - Any type of fish, except sardines

With Full Sentences

When the bulleted items in a list are each a complete sentence, capitalize the first letter of each bullet and add a period at the end of each sentence.

> Things to consider:
>
> • Editing a Reimbursement Review report is more work than it may look.
>
> • The documents must be edited for consistency with our house style.
>
> • Spelling must be Canadian spelling.
>
> • Tables and figures must be accessible.
>
> • Headings need to be in headline case and in hierarchical order.

Alphabetizing of Categorical List Items

Alphabetize lists of countries, states, races, sexes, genders, nationalities, and adverse events. If there is an "Other" category, place it at the end of the list.

Listing of Canadian Provinces and Territories

Per the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2021, list provinces and territories in the following order:

• Newfoundland and Labrador

• Prince Edward Island

• Nova Scotia

• New Brunswick

• Quebec

• Ontario

• Manitoba

• Saskatchewan

• Alberta

• British Columbia

• Yukon

• Northwest Territories

• Nunavut.

When there is a total for Canada, it should be placed at the end of the list.

Numbered Lists

Use a numbered list only when the list contains steps that must be followed in a specific order or when the numbered item is referred to elsewhere in the document.

Tables and Figures

Titles and Headers

All tables and figures must have a number and title even if there is only 1 table or figure in the document. Place a colon after the table number and do not add a period at the end of the title.

Use consecutive numbering throughout the document for tables and figures.

Use title case in table or figure titles. Capitalize all major words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Do not capitalize a coordinating conjunction, a preposition shorter than 4 letters (do capitalize *With* and *From*), or an article unless they begin a title or are part of the name of an organization.

Table 3: Results From the EU Opioid Study

Use sentence case for text in table, column, and row headers. (Capitalize the first letter of the first word, then use lower case for the remaining words in the column or row heading, except for proper nouns.)

Abbreviations are allowed within figure and table headers if they have been defined in the abbreviations list in the table or figure footer.

Present row subheaders in a logical order (e.g., consecutive, alphabetical, descending, or ascending). For inclusivity, present all groups (e.g., sex, race, ethnicity) in alphabetical order.

Punctuation

En Dash

Use an en dash (−) to indicate a minus sign (not a hyphen).

Do not use an en dash or a hyphen with ranges. Instead, use the word *to* between the 2 values.

Slashes

Do not use slashes in tables and figures unless describing units of measure (e.g., mg/L) or to separate numerators and denominators (use *n* of *d*).

132 of 138 (Not: 132/138)

Measurements

In column and row headers, use commas before units of measure (e.g., mean, odds ratio). Use parentheses for variability of the measurement, if reported.

> Age (years), mean (SD)

Bulleted Lists

When possible, use bullet points in tables and figures rather than complete sentences.

Do Not Abbreviate

Do not abbreviate the words *month*, *week*, *year*, *tablet*, *caplet,* or *reference* (not: mo, mos, wk, wks, y, yr, yrs, tab, cap, or ref.).

Style for Tables and Figures

Tables and figures are more effective and easier to read if text is kept to a minimum.

When designing tables:

- try to stick to simple point form (if a lot of text is required, consider putting the data into the body of the report rather than in a table)
- include enough information (e.g., definitions of abbreviations) so that a table can stand on its own
- define all abbreviations
- include a heading for every column and row
- do not leave data cells empty (cells adjacent to row heads that do not require data can be left empty)
- break up complex tables into smaller, simpler tables
- keep the meaning of the columns consistent.

Note All figures require alternative text, which is a brief description of the contents of the figure (refer to the section on Accessibility). A screenshot or picture of a table is considered a figure and requires alternative text.

Figure 4: Features of a Well-Designed Table

Table and Figure Footers

The elements beneath tables and figures should appear in this order:

- abbreviations list
- note(s)
- footnotes
- source(s).

Abbreviations List

Directly beneath each table and figure, include a list that defines each abbreviation used in the table or figure (except those provided in Table 3).

Format the list as follows:

- Present the abbreviations in alphabetical order with abbreviations that start with numerals first.
- List abbreviations inline, not stacked (i.e., each term follows one another horizontally).
- Use an = sign to separate each abbreviation from its definition.
- Add a space before and after the = sign.
- Separate each item with a semicolon.
- Add a period after the final item.
- Only capitalize terms that are proper nouns.
- List the singular form of the abbreviation in the table or figure legend, even if the plural form is used in the table or figure (e.g., use *AE = adverse event*, not *AEs = adverse events*).

Notes

Use *Note:* or *Notes:* (when presenting more than 1 note) for general information that applies to the full table or figure.

Notes should directly follow the list of abbreviations. Each note can be presented on a separate line. The word *Note* does not need to be repeated for each note; use *Notes* if there is more than 1 note.

Footnotes

Footnotes directly follow the *Note:* section (if there is one) beneath tables and figures. Place footnote citations in lower case superscript letters (not numbers) listed in alphabetical order. In the table, present footnote citations in chronological order from left to right, top to bottom.

Cross-reference each footnote with the matching letter. Place these citations on separate lines.

> [a]ROCKET-AF data taken from the intention-to-treat group.
>
> [b]Reported 100% long-term vitamin K therapy.

Source

Include a source note if the table or figure has been reproduced (with permission) or contains data from outside *Canada's Drug Agency*. Use *Source* if there is more than 1 source.

Appendices

Numbering

Label appendices in chronological, numerical order throughout the document. Do not use letters.

> Appendix 1: Data From Health Technology Assessment Agencies in the UK

Abbreviations

Do not redefine abbreviations in the appendices that have already been introduced and used previously in the document.

Tables and Figures in Appendices

Make sure every table and figure in the appendices has a title, and ensure that each is numbered, even if the entire content of the appendix is only 1 table or figure. Numbers of tables and figures within appendices continue from the body of the report (i.e., do not restart the numbering in the appendices).