

RTI Press publications first adhere to the rules in this style guide. For any matters not covered here, refer to our primary style guide reference, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (2017); where they contradict, follow RTI Press style. Follow APA, 7th ed., or ICMJE styles for references (see References entry for more information).

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

Use abbreviations sparingly in text. If the abbreviation is used only a few times, consider just keeping it spelled out.

Spell out an unfamiliar term on first reference, followed by its acronym in parentheses. Some terms are so familiar that they do not need to be spelled out (e.g., AIDS, HIV).

Do not use periods with UK and US.

Spell out names of US states.

Active Voice and Passive Voice

Use active voice as much as possible. A good resource for active and passive voice is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/01/>.

In some cases, passive voice is preferred: to stress the subject as a receiver of an action, or when the subject is unknown or irrelevant.

If another organization performed part of the work described, use active voice to clarify who did which parts of the work being described.

Capitalization in Headings

Capitalize major words, including two-letter verbs and prepositions of four letters or more.

Footnotes

Avoid use of footnotes for explanatory material. Instead, incorporate the explanation in the body text, inserting a parenthetical reference as needed. If the parenthetical note would be too long, then use a footnote.

Inclusive Language

When describing people, avoid using biased language. Following are guidelines on proper language use.

Disability

Disability refers to a condition that limits a person's ability to carry out a function. Avoid using *handicap*, which is a judgmental term. When comparing persons with disabilities to others, use the term *person without disabilities* rather than *normal person*, because *normal* is associated with *abnormal*. Put people first, not their disability, and avoid depersonalizing terms such as *epileptic*.

Age

Avoid vague terms such as *school-aged children*, *teenagers*, and *older women* without first defining them (e.g., infants aged 5 months to 1 year, children aged 6 to 12 years, adolescents aged 13 to 17 years, women older than 65 years).

Race or Ethnicity

When discussing scientific data, use the term that was used in the source data or survey, unless that term is offensive (e.g., do not use *oriental*). If none are specified, RTI Press prefers the following terms: *Alaska Native*; *American Indian* or *Native American* (specify nation or people if possible); *Asian*, *Black* (capitalized); *Hispanic* or *Latino/Latin@/Latinx* (the latter two being more gender inclusive); *Hawaiian Native*, *Pacific Islander*, or *Indigenous Peoples of the Hawaiian Islands*; white (lowercase).

Gender, Sex

gender, sex: *Gender* refers to an individual's concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither. The latter two options fall under the umbrella term *nonbinary*. Unlike gender, sex refers to biological characteristics. Note that although gender and sex are frequently correlated, a person's gender may be the same as or different from their biological sex.

lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight: These terms are adjectives that describe an individual's sexual orientation. There are many other sexual orientations in addition to these, but these are the most common. These terms should be used as adjectives

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(e.g., a lesbian woman, a bisexual man), particularly in formal writing. Note that a person's sexual orientation is not the same as their gender identity.

LGBTQ+: This acronym is used as an adjective (e.g., LGBTQ+ community, LGBTQ+ culture) to refer to people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities as a group. The + reflects the fact that the acronym has grown to include additional gender identities and sexual orientations and that it continues to evolve. You may encounter many other acronyms to describe this community. If the client has not provided guidance specifying a preferred acronym, you may consider suggesting this version.

transgender, cisgender: These terms are adjectives used to describe whether an individual's gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth or their biological sex. Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisgender describes people who are not transgender. When describing or referring to an individual, use the descriptive term and pronouns that individual prefers. It is incorrect to use either transgender or cisgender as a noun. Additionally, neither of these adjectives should end in -ed—the use of this suffix can lead to verb tense confusion and grammatical errors.

men, women; male, female: When distinguishing the gender of adults on the gender binary, use the nouns men and women; for children, use boys and girls; for adolescents, use (as appropriate) boys and girls or young men and young women. When referring to humans, avoid using male and female as nouns whenever possible. Nonbinary and intersex should be used as adjectives for people not on the gender binary.

Numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine in text. Use numerals for 10 and above. If you have a combination of numbers less than and greater than 10, use Arabic numerals when one or more of the numbers being compared is 10 or above. Zero is usually spelled out so it is not confused with the letter O.

In scientific text, express units of measure (e.g., age, time, money, units) and forms of numbers (e.g., decimals, percents) in numerals, even if they are below 10.

Do not mix types of numbers, fractions, or decimals. Use percentages or fractions or decimals consistently when comparing like numbers.

References

Prepare references in one of the following styles according to what is commonly used in your field of expertise:

- [APA citation style](#) (author-date style; link is to guidance from the Purdue OWL)
- [ICMJE style](#) (numbered style, with superscript numbers)

References must follow a consistent format within the manuscript. General points:

- Include complete references for any supporting materials cited in text, including citations in tables/figures/exhibits.
- If footnotes have references, handle them in the same style as you are using for the main text.
- Avoid using abstracts as references.
- A URL is not sufficient for a reference.
- Except for literature reviews, cite the most important reference on a topic, instead of several related sources.

Policy Briefs and Research Briefs have limited space. To conserve space, include only essential references and use the numerical style (ICMJE style).

References to Unpublished Materials

Citations to manuscripts “in press” are legitimate references. However, check again before your final submission (or even in the galley stage) to determine whether the publication has been published; if so, provide the final full citation.

Citations to works that are “in preparation,” “submitted,” or “under review” should be handled in text using a parenthetical entry. Authors should keep checking whether any such citations have moved to an “in press” status and thus should be added to the References.

Personal communications should be handled in text in a parenthetical entry specifying, for example, the following: “(personal communication with [initials and last name], [affiliation (e.g., university, agency, company)], [date]).”

Quoted Material

Double-check to be sure you have reproduced quotations exactly: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, etc. Use brackets to add anything to quoted material.

Spelling

The preferred source for spelling is *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.). (2003). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster (abbreviated as MW11). Also <http://www.merriam-webster.com>

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Exception: Lowercase these terms: web, website, web page, internet

Symbols

%: Spell out *percent*, but % is appropriate to use in tables
In Research Briefs and Policy Briefs, use the symbol % to save space.

In mathematical operations or equations, insert a space before and after most symbols (e.g., +, =, /, ; \geq); the exception to this is for greater than or less than symbols—close them up when they are used with just one number (e.g., >3 mg).

Tables and Figures

Title: Use sentence case for the table/figure title; capitalize just the first word and any other proper nouns.

For the submittal and review process, embed figures and tables in the text. If your manuscript is accepted, you will

need to provide high-resolution original artwork for figures, illustrations, and other graphic materials (such as maps and photographs). RTI Press cannot publish low-resolution images.

Avoid repeating in text what is on the face of the table or figure or easily deduced from it. Text should elaborate on the information presented in tables and figures, not simply repeat it.

Tables and figures should be understandable on their own without reference back to the text. Explain abbreviations used in the table or figure in table/figure footnotes.

Provide complete source information for tables and figures.

Verb Tense

Use past tense to describe work done in the past but present tense to discuss the meaning of the results.