

1. *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

This chapter presents the general principles governing the use of abbreviations and acronyms. In addition, see sections 5.18–5.20 and 5.24 on units of measure and Chapter 11 on symbols.

1.1 An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase:

Inc. g e.g.

An acronym is a word formed from the first letters of the words in a compound term. Although acronyms often consist of all capital letters, they may consist of all lowercase letters or a combination:

AFS ppm mRNA

A list of abbreviations and acronyms that are used frequently in fisheries writing appears in Appendix B.

SPELLING OUT

1.2 As a rule, do not introduce an abbreviation or acronym unless it is used at least three times, and spell it out at first use:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). . . .

Exceptions to the rule about spelling out at first use are abbreviations and acronyms that

- are listed as standard abbreviations and acronyms in an AFS journal or book (see Appendix B)
- have entries in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (e.g., DNA)
- have entries in the *Merck Index* (Merck & Co., Rahway, New Jersey)
- are noted in sections 1.4–1.7

1.3 Once an abbreviation or acronym has been introduced, it should be used in lieu of the full term except when the term occurs at the beginning of a sentence:

Food and Drug Administration regulations require that. . . .

not FDA regulations require that. . . .

If necessary, rewrite the sentence to avoid beginning it with an acronym:

Analysis of the specimens' DNA showed that. . . .

not DNA analysis showed that. . . .

1.4 Certain stylistic abbreviations may be used:

e.g. i.e. etc. et al.

Note that commas must follow the first two.

The following abbreviations pertaining to business entities are also permissible:

Co. Corp. Inc. Ltd.

1.5 An author may be referred to by his or her initials in the acknowledgments, footnotes, or text:

a grant to J.P.D. (J.T.S., unpublished data)

Place Names and Addresses

1.6 The following abbreviations may be used in place names and addresses:

St. [Saint] Ste. [Sainte] Mt. [Mount]

D.C. U.S. [as adjective] USA [as noun] UK [as noun or adjective]

1.7 The abbreviations NE, NW, SE, and SW (indicating sections of cities) and those denoting ordinal numerals (“-st,” “-nd,” “-rd,” and “-th”) may be used in addresses:

1234 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20007

719 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10123

Note that “East,” “West,” “North,” and “South” must be spelled out.

1.8 Other elements of addresses must be spelled out:

Post Office Box 95
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

Note that except in authors' addresses it is not necessary to include the country name after U.S. and Mexican states and Canadian provinces.

USE WITH ARTICLES

- 1.9** When an acronym is read as a word, it is generally used without an article (“the,” “a,” or “an”):

In this regard, ANOVA revealed that. . . .

When it is read as a series of letters, however, it is generally used with an article:

by means of a DBA [dot blot analysis] the CTM [critical thermal maximum]

PLURALS

- 1.10** Abbreviations and acronyms should be considered singular and add an *s* to form the plural unless they are units of measure or inherently plural:

environmental impact statements (EISs) means and SDs

but National Institutes of Health (NIH) geographical information systems (GIS)