

Abbreviations

The action *to abbreviate* means to reduce in length or duration; similarly, the noun *abbreviation* is a shortened version of a word. An abbreviation restates a longer word with a shorter variation of the word. For example, when writing addresses, we often replace “Street” and “Avenue” with “St. and “Ave.,” respectively, and we usually substitute “Mister” with “Mr.”

When are abbreviations used?

- Abbreviations allow writers to present detailed information in a small amount of space. They are mostly found in *informal* writing, such as letters, notes, signs, maps, and instructions.
- There are instances when abbreviations can be used in *formal* writing. For example, we almost never write out numbers or dates on any form of document.
 - In MLA format, the document heading requires that we write the date, listing the day, month and year.
 - Instead of writing “Ninth of April Two Thousand and Twelve,” we can simply write “9 April 2012.”

Are abbreviations useful?

- Abbreviations save time. They are much easier to write than whole words or phrases.
- Abbreviations also save space. They are brief, unlike whole words and phrases.
 - Instead of writing **Mister and Misses** Gellar, we can write **Mr. and Mrs.** Gellar.
 - Instead of writing **two dollars and thirty-four cents**, we can write **\$2.34**.

When should I use abbreviated words?

- If you are writing an *academic* paper, you want to avoid abbreviated words because they are considered informal. Consider the following guidelines.
 - Unless you are referring to a specific *character name*, eliminate the abbreviated title (Ms. Frank) and write the whole name (Anne Frank).
 - If you are writing a specific state (CA), you could eliminate the abbreviation and write out the word (California).
 - Ordinal numbers should always be abbreviated except for numbers **one** through **ten**.
 - Latin terms are acceptable to include in your writing: *e.g.*, *i.e.*, and *et al.*
- Generally, all abbreviations may be used and are accepted in non-academic documents.
 - On envelopes, we do not bother to write out ordinal numbers in word form.
 - While taking notes in class, we can abbreviate any word, as the writing is informal.

What kinds of words and numbers are abbreviated?

- Titles: formally addressing a person
 - Before a proper name:
 - **Mr.** and **Mrs.** Mitchell (Mister and Misses)
 - **Dr.** Green (Doctor)

- **Prof.** Miller (Professor)
 - Other titles: **Ms.** (miss); **Rev.** (reverend); **Gen.** (general); **Pres.** (president)
 - After a proper name:
 - George Bush **Jr.** (Junior)
 - George Bush **Sr.** (Senior)
 - King Henry **III** (the Third)
 - David Simon, **Ph.D.** (Doctor of Philosophy)
 - William Chow, **M.D.** (Doctor of Medicine)
- Dates and times
 - **3/2/2012** or **March 2, 2012** (March second, two thousand and twelve)
 - **9:34 AM** (Nine thirty-four Ante Meridiem)
 - **12:01 PM** (Twelve o'clock and one minute Post Meridiem)
 - **849 BC** (the year eight-hundred and forty-nine before Christ)
- Addresses and locations
 - **992 Fifth Ave.** (Nine-Hundred and Ninety-Two Fifth Avenue)
 - **Mt. Herman** (Mount Herman)
 - **St. Louis** (Saint Louis)
 - Other locations: **Bldv.** (boulevard), **Rd.** (road), **St.** (street), **Ln.** (lane), **Xing.** (crossing), **Expwy.** (expressway), and **Hwy.** (highway)
- Decimals and fractions
 - **73.23** (seventy-three point two three)
 - **8 ½** (eight and one-half)
- Percentages
 - **10.5%** (ten point five percent)
 - **50%** (fifty percent)
- Exact amounts of money
 - **\$68.23** (sixty-eight dollars and twenty-three cents)
 - **10¢** (ten cents)
- Statistics
 - **4:1** (four to one ratio)
 - **10/13** (ten out of thirteen)
- Chapters and pages
 - **Ch. 7** (chapter seven)
 - **p. 64** (page sixty-four)
- Months
 - **Jan., Feb., Mar., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.** (January, February, March, August, September, October, November, December)
 - Note: **April, May, June,** and **July** are too short to abbreviate.
- States and nations
 - San Jose, **CA** (California)
 - New York, **NY** (New York)
 - Washington, **D.C.** (District of Columbia)
 - Every state in the **US** (United States) has an abbreviation.

- Other countries: the **UK** (United Kingdom), **AU** (Australia), **HK** (Hong Kong), **VN** (Vietnam), etc.
- Companies
 - IBM, **Inc.** (International Business Machines, Incorporated)
 - Disney, **Co.** (The Walt Disney Company)
 - Microsoft **Corp.** (Microsoft Corporation)
- Units of measurement
 - **in** (inch), **ft** (foot), **mi** (mile), **cm** (centimeter), **m** (meter)
 - **g** (gram), **kg** (kilogram), **lb** (pound)
 - **mph** (miles per hour)
- Temperatures
 - **38°C** (thirty-eight degrees Celsius)
 - **98°F** (ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit)
- Latin terms
 - **etc.** (et cetera—and so forth)
 - **et al.** (et alii—and others)
 - **i.e.** (id est—that is)
 - **e.g.** (exempli gratia—for example)

What is the difference between an abbreviation and an acronym?

- There is a difference between **acronyms** and **abbreviations**:
 - **Abbreviations** replace a longer word with a shorter variation of the word.
 - **Acronyms** are words formed from the initial letters in a group; **abbreviations** are not combined to form new words.
- Here are some examples of **acronyms**:
 - **NASA** (National Aeronautics Space Administration)
 - **SCUBA** (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus)
 - **PETA** (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)
 - **NASDAQ** (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations)

Activity

Shorten the bolded items by replacing words and phrases with abbreviations and/or acronyms.

1. **San José State University**, One Washington **Square**, San José, **California**.
2. It is going to be **seventy-five degrees** tomorrow!
3. Employees at the **National Aeronautics Space Administration** can be paid more than **one hundred thousand dollars** a year.
4. **Doctor** Martin's office hours are from **one o'clock** until **three-thirty in the afternoon**.
5. Some say George Bush **Junior** was one of the best presidents the **United States of America** ever had.

6. My teacher **Professor** Smith said that only **fifty percent** of students in the class passed the exam.
7. On April **thirtieth, two thousand twelve**, I have to visit my grandmother, who lives at **sixty-five seventy-three Meadow Street**.

Answer Key for Activity

1. SJSU, 1 Washington Sq., San José, CA
2. 75°
3. NASA, \$100,000
4. Dr., 1:00-3:30 PM
5. Jr., USA
6. Prof., 50%
7. April 30, 2012, 6573 Meadow St.