

# POP Online Graduate Program: Style Guide for Writing Assignments

## Introduction

The Department of Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy (POP) online graduate program uses this style guide to enhance programmatic consistency and best practices in writing assignments. Most companies have style guides or brand guidelines that must be followed when preparing written materials. Similarly, journals and publications have style guides that must be adhered to by authors. We hope that using this style guide in our curriculum will help familiarize you with writing per prescribed standards.

Where applicable, our POP style guide is based on the [American Medical Association \(AMA\) Manual of Style](#), which is widely accepted as a standard for medical research writing. If you are not familiar with a term or concept that we use in this document, please use the search function in the AMA Manual of Style to learn about the topic.

Instructors in the POP program may customize this style guide or add additional requirements for any given writing assignment. Please be sure to read the instructions for each writing assignment closely.

## Formatting

1. Every writing assignment in POP should include a cover page with the title of the assignment, student name, course name/number, and date submitted.
2. The Word file for the writing assignment should be saved with the student's first-last name and the assignment (eg, Jane-Smith\_Foundations-II-Final Paper-2021)
3. Use Calibri 11-point font. Calibri is a font that is widely used and regarded as easy to read.
4. Use 1-inch margins all around.
5. Align text to the left (also called left-justified). Do not use justified text (also called fully justified).
6. Use 1.5 line spacing under the paragraph function in Microsoft Word.
7. Use page numbers at the bottom of the page for any paper over 2 pages long.
8. Other than the page number, do not use any additional headers or footers.
9. The instructor will dictate the page length for any given assignment. The cover page and the references are not counted towards the total number of pages.

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## Writing Mechanics

1. Use the American spelling instead of British spelling (eg, payer, **not** payor; orthopedic, **not** orthopaedic).
2. Abbreviations that are used multiple times should be spelled out at first use. Do not use abbreviations when the abbreviation is not used again. Exceptions can be made for terms better known by their acronym (HIPPA, HEDIS).
3. Omit periods in abbreviations of academic degrees (eg, PharmD, MS, and PhD).
4. Form plurals of abbreviations and years by adding “s” without an apostrophe (eg, OTCs, **not** OTC’s; 1990s, **not** 1990’s).
5. Use a serial (ie, Oxford) comma in a series of items to improve clarity (eg, red, yellow, and blue).
6. Numerals should be used in most circumstances (eg, 5, **not** five), except when used to start a sentence.
7. Place a zero before the decimal for numbers less than 1 (eg, 0.5 mg).
8. Sample sizes: Use capital N to refer to the total sample size and lowercase n to refer to a subsample size.
9. When reporting *P* values, the *P* is italicized and capitalized. *P* value is not hyphenated.

## Inclusive Language

1. Capitalize racial and ethnic terms, including Black and White. Do not use racial and ethnic terms in the noun form (eg, Black patients, not Blacks). Refer to section [11.12.3](#) of the AMA Style Guide for additional information.
2. Sex refers to the biological characteristics of males and females. Gender includes more than sex and serves as a cultural indicator of a person’s personal and social identity. In research articles, sex and gender should be defined and reported. Use sex-neutral terms that avoid bias (eg, people, **not** mankind).

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3. Avoid labeling (thus equating) people with their disabilities or diseases (eg, schizophrenics, epileptics). Instead, put the person first. Refer to [Section 11.12.6](#) of the AMA Style Guide for additional information.
  - a. People with addiction, **not** addict, user, or alcoholic
  - b. Child with a disability, **not** disabled child
  - c. People with cancer, **not** cancer patients
4. Do not use words that connote a stereotype based on age, such as elderly, seniors, or the aged. The term “older adults” is preferred. Use “older than age x” and “younger than age x” instead of “over age x” and “under age x.” Refer to [Section 11.12.4](#) of the AMA Style Guide for additional information.

## Professional and Scientific Style

1. Professional and scientific writing must include a clear statement of purpose or objective.
2. Professional and scientific papers that are more than 1-2 pages should use subheadings to help the reader navigate the paper.
3. Do not use contractions such as can't, didn't, and won't. Seriously, “don't” use them.
4. Avoid idioms, colloquialisms, slang, euphemisms, emotionally-laden modifiers, absolutes, and clichés. These should be avoided “like the plague.”
  - a. Examples: first and foremost, anyways, time will tell, sheds light, paradigm shift, exceedingly clear, devastating symptoms, tragic outcomes, doubtlessly, without a doubt, obviously
5. Avoid expendable and filler words and phrases that can be omitted without affecting meaning.
  - a. Examples: in order to, it goes without saying, despite the fact that, due to the fact that, a lot, very totally, really, clearly
6. Science prose overwhelmingly employs the third person (he/she/they/it). First person is used sparingly, and often not at all. Second person (you/your/you're) is not allowed.
  - a. *Third Person:* The purpose of this paper is to describe the relationship between COVID-19 and mental health.
  - b. *First Person:* We investigated the relationship between COVID-19 and mental health.

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7. Sentence fragments and run-on sentences are not acceptable in scientific writing.
8. Avoid bulleted lists in scientific writing.

## References

1. References are listed in numerical order at the end of the paper, on a new page with the header "References."
2. References cited more than once in the article text should be identified using the same (repeated) number.
3. In text, the reference number appears as a superscript after the period at the end of the sentence. Ranges are represented by hyphens (eg, <sup>42-46</sup>). There are no spaces after commas (eg, <sup>22,23,26</sup>).
4. Lectures by professors are not considered citable references.
5. Use the following table to format your references correctly. Please refer to the AMA Manual of Style for additional detail or other reference types. The following website can help formatting references as well; just be sure to check the generated citation: <https://cite.mickschroeder.com/>.

Reference type	
Journal articles	<b>Print</b>  Author(s). Article title. <i>Abbreviated Journal Name</i> . Year;vol(issue no.):inclusive pages. DOI, if provided  <b>Example:</b> Yi E, Dong D, Piao OW, Zheng JZ, Park Y. Health care utilization and costs associated with switching biologics within the first year of biologic treatment initiation among patients with ankylosing spondylitis. <i>J Manag Care Spec Pharm</i> . 2021;27(1):27-36. doi: 10.18553/jmcp.2020.19433
	<b>Online (may be an online journal or ahead of print)</b>

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	<p>Author(s). Article title. <i>Abbreviated Journal Name</i>. Publication date. DOI, if provided</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Tamburini S, Shen N, Chih Wu H, Clemente JC. The microbiome in early life: implications for health outcomes. <i>Nat Med</i>. Published online July 7, 2016. doi:10.1038/nm4142</p>
<b>Books</b>	<p><b>Print</b></p> <p>Author(s). <i>Book Title</i>. Edition number (if it is the second edition or later). Publisher's name; copyright year.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Rascati KL. <i>Essentials of Pharmacoeconomics</i>. 2nd ed. Wolters Kluwer Health; 2009.</p>
	<p><b>Online</b></p> <p>Author(s). <i>Book Title</i>. Edition number (if it is the second edition or later). Publisher's name; copyright year. Accessed [date]. URL (or DOI, if provided; see note below)</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Guyatt G, Rennie D, Meade MO, Cook DJ. <i>Users' Guides to the Medical Literature: A Manual for Evidence-Based Clinical Practice</i>. 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill Education; 2015. Accessed August 15, 2016. <a href="https://jamaevidence.mhmedical.com/book.aspx?bookID=847">https://jamaevidence.mhmedical.com/book.aspx?bookID=847</a></p>
<b>Websites</b>	<p>Author (or, if no author is available, the name of the organization responsible for the site). Title (or, if no title is available, the name of the organization responsible for the site). Name of the website. Published [date]. Updated [date]. Accessed [date]. URL</p> <p><b>Example:</b> International Society for Infectious Diseases. ProMED-mail. Accessed February 10, 2016. <a href="http://www.promedmail.org">http://www.promedmail.org</a></p>

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	<p><b>Example:</b> Charlton G. Internal linking for SEO: examples and best practices. SearchEngineWatch. Accessed February 10, 2016. <a href="https://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2428041/internal-linking-for-seo-examples-and-best-practices">https://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2428041/internal-linking-for-seo-examples-and-best-practices</a></p>
<b>Prescribing information</b>	<p>Drug name. Prescribing information. Manufacturer; copyright year. Accessed [date]. URL</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The POP faculty recommend including the Brand (generic) name, although AMA does not specify this. Additionally, we recommend consulting <a href="#">Daily Med</a>, the official provider of FDA prescribing information, to identify current prescribing information.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Humira (adalimumab). Prescribing information. AbbVie Inc; 2021. Accessed March 23, 2021. <a href="https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=608d4f0d-b19f-46d3-749a-7159aa5f933d">https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=608d4f0d-b19f-46d3-749a-7159aa5f933d</a></p>
<b>Meeting presentations</b>	<p>Author(s). Title. [Presentation type] presented at: Name of the meeting; presentation date; meeting location.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Pasternak B. Carvedilol vs metoprolol succinate and risk of mortality in patients with heart failure: national cohort study. Paper presented at: European Society of Cardiology Congress; August 31, 2014; Barcelona, Spain.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> Nevidomskyte D, Meissner MH, Tran N, Murray S, Farrokhi E. Influence of gender on abdominal aortic aneurysm repair in the community. Poster presented at: Vascular Annual Meeting; June 5-7, 2014; Boston, MA.</p>