

## 1. *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

This chapter presents the general principles governing the use of abbreviations and acronyms. In addition, see sections 5.18–20 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, spell out abbreviations and acronyms at first use:

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was used to. . . .

However, it is not necessary to spell out an abbreviation or acronym if

- it is one of the standard abbreviations and acronyms listed in an AFS journal or book<sup>1</sup>
- it is well known and has an entry in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (e.g., DNA)
- it has an entry in the *Merck Index* (Merck & Co., Rahway, New Jersey)
- it is an exception 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. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Each journal has its own list of standard abbreviations and acronyms located in the back of every issue. The lists for books are usually located in the front. For *Fisheries*, use the list given in *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*.

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 the first three of these abbreviations may only be used in parenthetical expressions and that commas must follow the first two.

The following abbreviations 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a grant to J.P.D. (R.E.N., unpublished data)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** In many cases, acronyms may be used without a definite or indefinite article:

Studies by USDA. . . . In this regard, ANOVA revealed that. . . .

In some cases, however, sense or euphony may require the use of 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)