FROM THE LEGAL WRITING CLINIC
WRITING TIP OF THE WEEK

ABBREVIATIONS IN LEGAL WRITING

This tip covers some of the abbreviations you might use in the text of a legal document. For abbreviations in citations and case names, follow the rules in The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation.

**Time:** Abbreviate ante meridiem (morning) and post meridiem (afternoon) as follows:
- 8:15 a.m.
- 6:00 p.m.
- 

**Dates:** Do not abbreviate dates in text: October 8, 1995, *not* Oct. 8, ‘95

**Weights and Measures:** If you spell out the number, spell out the unit as well. If not, abbreviate the unit. (Bluebook R. 6.2(a) generally requires spelling out numbers up to 100.)
- Fifty-five pounds
- 200 lbs.

**Degrees and Titles:** Academic degrees are usually abbreviated; titles are not usually abbreviated (except for Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr. and Messrs.)
- Professor John Jones
- Jack Granger, M.D. or Dr. Jack Granger

**Acronyms:** Acronyms, such as LSAT or ERISA, are usually abbreviated in all capitals, without periods.

**Specialized abbreviations:** In memoranda, briefs, and other documents, legal writers often create their own specialized abbreviations, known as “defined terms.” To create a defined term, give the complete term and immediately follow it with an abbreviation in parentheses.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (the “ADA”) applies here. OR
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies here.
