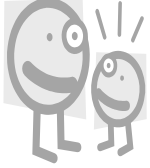


FROM THE LEGAL WRITING CLINIC
WRITING TIP OF THE WEEK

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.

Laurel Currie Oates & Anne Enquist, The Legal Writing Handbook 707-11 (5th ed. 2010); The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 19th ed. 2010).

