

## 4. Abbreviations and acronyms

Only use familiar abbreviations and acronyms (please do not invent any) and keep them to an absolute minimum in the body of your text. Spell out an acronym or abbreviation in full the first time you use it – in each chapter, article or web page – putting the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses after it. Thereafter, use the short form:

😊 **The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ordered this action. The commission’s decision was unexpected. The FCC also sued other parties.**

An acronym is a series of letters or syllables pronounced as a complete “new” word. NATO and UNESCO are acronyms, but FCC and BBC are not. Some abbreviations are determined by international agreement (ISO codes, units of measure), others by usage (names, courtesy titles, compass points, awards and distinctions, etc.).

**NOTES** › Use **“the”** before abbreviations: **“... experts at the OECD...”** but not in the case of acronyms: **“... experts at UNESCO...”**

› One should omit **“the”** if the abbreviation is being used as an adjective: **“Experts at the OECD agree...”** but: **“OECD experts agree...”**

**See also:** *International organisations*, p. 83; *Units of measure*, pp. 54-55.

Technical texts in which many abbreviations and acronyms occur should include a full list of abbreviations and acronyms, with their explanations, directly following the table of contents.

As a general rule, please minimise punctuation (**“IMF”** rather than “I.M.F.”) and only punctuate to avoid confusion (**“a.m.”** rather than “am”) and where generally customary (**“i.e.”** rather than “ie”).

### ▼ Examples :

<b>The first letter(s) of a word or series of words</b>	<b>F</b> = Fahrenheit, <b>t</b> = tonne, <b>p.m.</b> = post meridian (after noon), <b>i.e.</b> = <i>id est</i> (that is to say)
<b>More than one letter from a word or series of words</b>	<b>etc.</b> = <i>et cetera</i> , <b>Mr</b> = Mister, <b>kWh</b> = kilowatt hour
<b>A combination of truncated words</b>	<b>Benelux</b> = Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg
<b>A country or organisation, but only when used as an adjective</b>	<b>US gas markets</b> , <b>EU policy decisions</b>

**NOTES** > Country names should be fully spelled out when used in the noun form: so, **the United States**, **the United Kingdom** and **the United Arab Emirates**, but **US companies**, **UK delegates** and **UAE ministries**. Corporate articles, blogs, social media and the like may use the abbreviated form.

> ISO country codes should only be used to abbreviate countries in figures.

**See also:** *Country names, codes and currencies*, pp. 69-74; *Punctuation*, pp. 90-97.

## Other common abbreviations

Common abbreviations such as the following should be in roman type and not in italics:

<b>cf.</b>	Compare or refer to	This is not a synonym for “see”.
<b>e.g.</b>	for example	
<b>etc.</b>	<i>et cetera</i>	Do not use “etc.” to end a series beginning with “such as”, “for example”, “including”.
<b>et al.</b>	and others	
<b>ibid.</b>	<i>ibidem</i>	
<b>i.e.</b>	that is to say	
<b>NB</b>	<i>nota bene</i>	
<b>No.</b>	Number	
<b>p.</b>	page	
<b>pp.</b>	pages	
<b>Vol.</b>	Volume	
<b>vs.</b>	versus	

**NOTE** > The use of full stops can be omitted in social media.

**See also:** *Bibliographical referencing: Sources and citations*, pp. 56-64; *Italic and roman type*, p. 84.

## Units of measure

Common abbreviations such as the following should be in roman type and not in italics:

%	per cent	In a title or when indicating the unit in a table, use the expression "as a percentage of" (not "per cent").
thsd	thousand	"k" (kilo) or "000" can also be used in conjunction with other abbreviations if needed.
mln	million	"M" (mega) can also be used in conjunction with other abbreviations if needed.
bln	billion	"G" (giga) can also be used in conjunction with other abbreviations if needed.
trn	trillion	"T" (tera) can also be used in conjunction with other abbreviations if needed.
m	metre	
km	kilometre	
km <sup>2</sup>	square kilometre	The SI ( <i>Système international d'unités</i> ) suggests the use of "km <sup>2</sup> " rather than "hectare" (ha).
km/h	kilometres per hour	
mph	miles per hour	
µg	microgramme	
g	gramme	This is the spelling preferred by the SI.
kg	kilogramme	
t	tonne	Use "Mt" to indicate million tonnes or megatonnes when it is used frequently in the text; otherwise, it should be spelled out. Remember to spell out "Mt" on first use.
oz	ounce	
lb	pound	
dL	decilitre	
L	litre	This is an SI-approved alternative to the more official lower-case "l", too easily misread as the numeral 1.
daL	decalitre	
hL	hectolitre	
min	minute	
°C	degree Celsius	
°F	degree Fahrenheit	

W	watt	
kWh	kilowatt hour	
Bq	becquerel	(unit of radioactivity)

**NOTE** > Units of measure should always be preceded by a hard (protected) space, except in the case of degrees (e.g. 2°C) and percentages (e.g. 5%). Webpages and social media may forego the hard space.

**See also:** *Breaks and hard spaces*, p. 65; *Numbers*, pp. 86-88.

## Abbreviations used in statistical tables

..	Missing value or not available
x	Not applicable
0	Nil or negligible
-	Absolute zero
	Break in series
c	Confidential data
e	Estimated value
f	Forecast value
p	Provisional data



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