

# ACORN Style guide for authors

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This guide explains the editorial style used in the *Journal of Perioperative Nursing* and other ACORN publications. Different journals follow different conventions for punctuation, spelling and other style-related matters so it will minimise time spent editing if you read this guide carefully before you begin to write and check your manuscript against it before you send it in.

Please use plain English and Australian spelling when writing for ACORN publications.

If you have submitted an article for peer review, two reviewers will read it and recommend whether the article should be accepted, rejected or changed. We'll let you know how it goes and help you make any final changes necessary before the article is copyedited and published.

The guide covers:

- Plain English (p. 2)
- Australian spelling (p. 2)
- Capitals (p. 2)
- Formatting (p. 3)
- Italics (p. 3)
- Names and titles (p. 3)
- Numbers and dates (p. 4)
- Photos and graphics (p. 4)
- Postnominals (p. 4)
- Punctuation (p. 5)
- Referencing style (p. 6)
- Shortened forms (p. 8).

If you have questions that have not been covered by the guide, email ACORN's Publications Officer at [eleanor.tan@acorn.org.au](mailto:eleanor.tan@acorn.org.au).

## Plain English

Use Plain English as much as possible. Academic writing, and articles for a professional audience such as perioperative nurses, is more sophisticated than writing for the general public but we still aim to communicate effectively. Plain English enables effective communication using five principles, which are:

1. brevity (use a minimum of words)
2. simplicity (use simple rather than complex words, where possible)
3. clarity (make sure your meaning is clear)
4. directness (use active rather than passive sentence structure)
5. humanity (use personal pronouns and positive, inclusive language, where appropriate).

## Australian spelling

Use:

–*our* not –*or* (colour, humour)

s not z (organise, analyse)

// not / (labelled, travelling)

–*re* not –*er* (theatre, metre, centre)

s/t not ss/tt (focused/benefited).

(Retain US spellings for proper nouns e.g. Pearl Harbor, World Health Organization.)

ACORN uses the *Macquarie Dictionary* as a reference for spelling. Where a word has variable spellings use the spelling listed first in the Macquarie Dictionary.

## Capitals

Capitalisation can be maximal or minimal. With maximal capitalisation all words other than articles, prepositions and conjunctions start with a capital letter (e.g. Fatigue in the Perioperative Environment). With minimal capitalisation only the first word and proper nouns start with a capital letter (e.g. Fatigue in the perioperative environment).

ACORN publications use minimal capitalisation except for

- titles of books, journals, films, works of art and legislation (government bills and laws)
- names of committees and titles of office bearers e.g. Standards Faculty, Standards Editor
- names of government departments and other official entities, organisations and companies.

**Please note:**

Use minimal capitalisation for the titles of ACORN standards but enclose the title in single quote marks when referring to it in text. (E.g. Please refer to ACORN standard 'Fire safety'.)

Capitalise the word 'board' when it is part of an official title but not when used in a generic sense. (The Board of Directors was elected at the AGM. The new board will meet next week.)

Capitalise specific tertiary qualifications but not when referring generically to a level of qualification. (The university offers a range of master's degrees, the most popular is the Master of Nursing.)

Use minimal capitalisation for article titles, precedes, headings and subheadings.

Medical disorders are not considered to be proper nouns so are not usually capitalised. Some disorders, like Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease and Ross River fever, include capitals because they include names of a person or region, which are proper nouns. Disorders that do not include proper nouns, like diabetes and perioperative inadvertent hypothermia, are not capitalised.

## Formatting

Your writing will be formatted by ACORN staff but please:

- use only one space at the end of a sentence
- use only a single return after each paragraph.

## Italics

Titles of books and journals should appear in italics in the body of your article but are not italicised in the reference list.

**Please note:**

Use italics for the full title of the ACORN Standards (*Standards for Perioperative Nursing in Australia*). Use Roman type for the shortened form of the title (the Standards).

Chapters of books, journal articles and names of individual NSQHS and ACORN standards are not in italics.

## Names and titles

Titles such as president and chair only take a capital when they are part of a person's title.

Do not use full stops with initials in personal names (Chris F Jones, not Chris F. Jones). Where there are two initials, place them together without a space (CF Jones not C F Jones).

## Numbers and dates

In prose, spell out numbers up to and including ten, except for numbers relating to measurement, times of the day and in street addresses (5 °C, 5 kg, 5.00 pm, 5 Smith St). Use numerals for 11 and above, unless the sentence begins with a number. Spell out a number if it is the start of a sentence.

ACORN uses the following format for times of the day and dates: 3.00 pm 24 October 2014.

Use numerals for decades and centuries (1970s, 21<sup>st</sup> century).

**Please note:** Decades do not have an apostrophe – 2010s (not 2010's).

Use a space in numerals of more than four digits rather than a comma (43 780). Numerals of four digits or less do not have a space (4378).

Use numerals with the appropriate symbol for currency in prose (A\$350, NZ\$400, €200) except for approximations (about 350 dollars).

**Please note:** In general prose, 'per cent' should be spelled out (per cent) rather than expressed as a symbol (%). Note that it is two words (not 'percent'). The symbol is used when reporting research findings (e.g. 23 participants (45%) reported ...).

## Photos and graphics

Good images are very important. Make sure images have good composition, definition and contrast.

Photos should be:

- in jpeg, tif or eps formats
- high resolution (at least 300 ppi).

Provide both captions and credits (where applicable) with each image but be aware that captions may be changed.

## Postnominals

Include your name and qualifications/postnominals with your article.

Postnominal letters go after a person's name to indicate honours and awards, academic qualifications, licensure status and membership of professional associations. They do not use full stops but commas are used to separate groups of postnominal letters, and to separate the postnominals from the name.

ACORN publications place postnominals in the following order:

- honours and awards e.g. AO, OBE
- academic qualifications e.g. PhD, BN (in order with highest qualification listed first)
- licensure status e.g. RN, EN

- memberships and fellowships e.g. MACN, FACORN (in order with most recent last).

ACORN aims for a minimalist approach to postnominals so ACORN publications only include:

- postnominal letters of credentials required for the job
- postnominal letters of tertiary qualifications (i.e. bachelor, masters and doctoral degrees and post-graduate certificates and diplomas)
- the highest award for each field of study or specialisation (i.e. if someone has a master of nursing as well as a bachelor of nursing only MN will be included\*)
- 'Hons' (honours) and 'Dtn' (distinction) if they are part of the official degree title.

\* If you also have a graduate certificate in perioperative nursing, GradCert (Periop Nursing) will be included.

## Punctuation

### Quote marks

Use single quote marks ('...') not double ("...") except for quotes within quotes.

### Dashes

In prose, write 'to' rather than use a dash to indicate spans of time or distance, e.g. March to August (not March–August) and Melbourne to Sydney (not Melbourne–Sydney).

Use an unspaced en-dash (–) to link words that retain separate identities (e.g. nurse–patient relationship) and for compound adjectives that have more than one word (or element) before or after the hyphen (e.g. health care–associated infection, hepatitis C–positive person).

Use a spaced en-dash ( – ) to introduce an amplification or explanation (She arrived late – her usual train had been cancelled) and set apart parenthetical elements (She should be here – she's normally very punctual – but her train may have been cancelled).

Do not use a hyphen (-) when a dash (–) is needed.

### Hyphens

Use a hyphen to make certain compound words and to attach prefixes (and occasionally, suffixes) to words. E.g. city-state, cold-call, government-owned, three-year-old, post-war.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* is a useful guide to whether a word should be hyphenated but does not cover all situations.

### Lists

Bulleted and numbered lists should be preceded by a sentence or sentence fragment with a colon.

Do not use semicolons or commas after each point.

Items on a list will either be full sentences or sentence fragments. Full sentences should start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop. Sentence fragments do not start with a capital letter and only the last point in the list has a full stop.

List items that are sentence fragments must be grammatically consistent with the introductory sentence or sentence fragment.

## Referencing

The *Journal of Perioperative Nursing* and other ACORN publications use a citing and referencing style based on the Vancouver system of referencing.

For details, please refer to our [referencing guide](#).

## Shortened forms

Contractions, abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms are all shortened forms.

Shortened form	Full stop	Use in prose
<b>Contractions</b> are the first and last letter of a word, and sometimes other letters in between (e.g. Dr, Mr, St, Qld).	no	Except for titles (e.g. Dr, Mr, Ms), do not use a contraction in prose (e.g. write Queensland, not Qld, and street, not st).
<b>Abbreviations</b> are the first and other letters of a word, but not the last letter (e.g. Co. and Vic.).	yes	Do not use abbreviations in prose (e.g. write company not co.).
<b>Acronyms</b> are initials (and sometimes other letters) pronounced as a word (e.g. TAFE, Anzac, ACORN).	no	Acronyms should be spelled out the first time they appear in an article.
<b>Initialisms</b> are initials (and sometimes other letters) not pronounced as a word (e.g. PC, SBS).	no	Initialisms should be spelled out the first time they appear in an article.

## Questions

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