

AJTCVM Style and Grammar Rules

(* = common mistakes)

- The *AMA Manual of Style 10th Edition* is the primary reference used for style and grammar in most cases.
- Please use American English for spelling and word choice, not British or Australian style.
- Begin the paper with a statement that can be supported by a reference.
 - **Example:** Do not write “Anhidrosis is frequently diagnosed in equine practice”. Instead, write something like “Anhidrosis has been reported to be a debilitating problem in the equine industry”.¹
 - The superscript number refers to the reference supporting the statement.
- Do not state your opinions unless you are writing a Pearls from Practice manuscript, and then write, “In the author’s experience...”.
- Data can be rationally interpreted and theories provided for results of data, as this is different from an opinion.
- Paraphrase the findings of others and reference their work with a superscript number at the end of the sentence after the period, but do not cut and paste information from any published abstract or article, as this is illegal plagiarism.
- Keep references to personal communications with individuals at a minimum. The Editor-in-Chief may delete these.
- Do not quote from proceedings articles that cannot be accessed by others. Instead give a website URL for reader access.
- Do not quote what others said in a lecture that cannot be documented with proceedings notes that all readers have access to, as that is only hearsay.
- Just because an individual is affiliated with a university or other institution does not mean their opinion is valid unless substantiated by publications.
- ***Write** primarily in the **past tense**. Use the past tense to report results or findings, but may use the present tense occasionally to discuss results or findings if appropriate.
- ***Do not use first-person** phrasing such as I, me, my, we, our, you, your, etc. Instead, revise so such words are unnecessary.
- Do not use the ending “ing” on a word, when the word “to” can precede it. (Example: Do not write, “the author needs assistance in finding the right word.” Instead, use “the author needs assistance to find the right word.”)

- ***Avoid long sentences**, as comprehension falls rapidly, when sentences exceed about 16 words. One thought per sentence is enough.
- In most instances use a period and not a semi-colon between sentences.
- ***Avoid long lists** of effects in 1 sentence, comprehension falls rapidly after 3 to 4 things, (i.e. Turmeric is beneficial with anticancer, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, boosts memory, decreased pain, boosts immunity and lowers heart disease risk effects.).
- Keep punctuation such as excess periods, commas, semicolons and colons to a minimum.
- Never use capitals, bold or underlining for emphasis within the text.
- Break up noun clusters and stacked modifiers.
 - **Example:** do not write “Cellulose acetate electrophoresis procedure” instead write “Electrophoresis on cellulose acetate”
- Long quotes are best indented (2 tabs) and preceded by a colon and reference and surrounded by quotation marks. Maciocia states this concept as follows:¹

“There is a very close relationship between *Qi* and Blood. Blood is a form of *Qi* albeit a very dense one. *Qi* is *Yang* compared to Blood...”
- If only a few words are used, keep these in the body of the text and use single quotation marks.
 - **Example:** According to Maciocia, ‘Blood is a form of *Qi*...’.¹
- Use brackets [] for material inserted into a quotation and ellipsis (three dots) for material omitted.
 - **Example:** According to Jones, “few such [controlled] studies were done... before 1989.”¹
- Do not include long paragraphs of other author’s quotes, but instead paraphrase and reference them.
- Use punctuation instead of parentheses or brackets, whenever possible.
- Capitalize royal and other titles when used as a title, but not in general.
 - **Example:** King Harry is on the throne versus a feast fit for a king.
- Numbers within the text are not spelled out but the actual number is used.
 - **Example:** The herbs were administered for 3 months.
- Numbers beginning a sentence must be spelled out.
- Do not put periods in acronyms or apostrophes in their plurals
 - **Example:** use CBC or CBCs, but not C.B.C. or CBC’s
- The use of “and/or” instead of “or” is acceptable to emphasize either or both.

- *Our use of “e.g.” and “i.e.” are a bit different than the AMA Style guidelines and more in line with the spell check function of MS Word. Use the following Latin abbreviations as follows and only within parentheses:
 - i.e. meaning “that is to say”
 - e.g. meaning “for example”
- Do not generalize unnecessarily
 - **Example:** do not say “some” if there is “only one” known instance
- “This” on its own is known as an ambiguous antecedent. Use instead “this test”, “this problem” or whatever.
- *Do **not** use “etc.” in scientific writing. If something is not important enough to list, don’t replace it by using “etc.”; just don’t include it.
- *Do **not** begin a sentence with “however”. “However” is a postpositive conjunction and is always improper at the start of a sentence.
- Do not use “however” or its synonyms twice in one paragraph, because changing the direction of an argument twice in one paragraph may annoy readers.
- Do not use “however” or “moreover” more than once every 10 paragraphs. Try a thesaurus for synonyms if needed.
- Avoid the so-called non-human agent and grammatically questionable formal clichés.
 - **Example:** do not say “The CBC showed leukocytosis” but instead say “A leukocytosis was found on the CBC”
- Use “while” and “since” to refer to time. Do not use them when the meaning is “whereas”, “although” or “because”.
- *Do **not** start sentences with “because”, “since” or “as”.
- Using “because” is often clearer than “since”.
- Avoid writing “may or may not” and “whether or not”; simply write “may” or “whether”, as they both imply not.
- Put a comma before the word “which”, but not before the word “that”. The use of “which” means the phrase associated with it can be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence.
 - **Example:** The current project, which cost \$15,000, was a success.
 - **Example:** The current project that cost \$10,000 was a success.
- If changing “which” to “that” does not alter the meaning, then using “that” is probably more correct.

- The use of “owing to” or “due to” have the same meaning, but when using “owing to”, precede with a comma and when using “due to” no comma is needed.
 - **Example:** The data were lost, owing to computer malfunction.
 - **Example:** The data were lost due to computer malfunction.
- A split infinitive occurs when the adverb is placed before the verb and should usually be avoided in scientific writing.
 - **Example:** avoid “quickly go” and instead use “go quickly”.
- Use “significant” in a statistical context only. The opposite of “significant” is “not significant”.
- ***Avoid superlatives** such as very, extremely, quite, rather, somewhat and similar words.
- Avoid the use of “same” and “exact” together.
 - **Example:** Do not use “the same, exact formula” instead simply say “the exact formula” or “the same formula”.
- ***Paragraphs** should include at least three sentences.
- Do not use conjunctions such as “don’t or can’t”; instead use “do not or cannot”.
- *Do **not** start a sentence with an **abbreviation**, use the words instead.
 - **Example:** “Traditional Chinese medicine is based on the Five Element Theory.”
Do **not** write “TCM is based on the Five Element Theory.”
- Do not list 2 abbreviations sequentially. Write out 1 of the abbreviations.
 - **Example:** Do **not** write “TCM EAP modality is frequently used.”