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APTA Style Quick Reference

References

- The official style guide of the American Physical Therapy Association is the *AMA Manual of Style*.
- *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* is APTA’s preferred dictionary for style and spelling.
 - If two spellings are acceptable choose the preferred spelling, usually listed first with the definition.

Quick Reference

Words

- health care (two words)
- e-mail (with hyphen)
- Web site (two words, “Web” capitalized)

Writing Style

To ensure that the writing helps instead of hinders students, practice the **KISS** formula. **Keep It Simple and Straightforward**.

- **Keep it simple.** Avoid run-on sentences. When your sentence starts to get long and confusing, consider creating a new sentence.
- **Avoid dense paragraphs.** Use bulleted lists, charts, tables, and illustrations where appropriate.
- **Keep text short** for training presentations.
 - Use short sentences
 - Keep content relative to the topic
- **Use the present tense** – it keeps things shorter
- **Address the user.** Use personal pronouns – for example, “you”

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APTA Basics: APTA, PT, PTA, and “the association”

Do	Don't	Example
Use “the American Physical Therapy Association” or “APTA”	Use “the APTA”	
Always spell out physical therapy		<i>The physical therapist (PT) conducted an examination/evaluation.</i>
PT refers only to physical therapist		<i>After determining the patient’s diagnosis, the PT considered the best evidence-based interventions for treatment.</i>
Use physical therapist assistant	Use physical therapy assistant	
	Capitalize “association” when referring to APTA unless you spell out the entire name	<i>American Physical Therapy Association</i> <i>The association for physical therapists.</i>

Abbreviations – General: Titles, Suffixes, Initials

Do	Don't	Example
Use periods for initials within people’s names.	Use periods or spell out titles/suffixes related to people’s names <i>Military title styles differ among the branches of the military; check AMA or verify with the person being referenced</i>	<u>Do</u> <i>Jules M. Rothstein</i> <u>Don't</u> <i>Dr, Ms, Sen/Sens, Gov/Govs, Jr, Esq</i>
	Use periods after <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) scientific terms, b) acronyms, c) legislative bill numbers, d) company names, e) other abbreviations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>E coli</i> b) <i>APTA, AMA</i> c) <i>HR 633</i> d) <i>Inc, Corp</i> e) <i>am/pm, St Louis</i>
Place a comma after <i>Jr</i> or <i>Sr</i> only when another abbreviation, such as a credential.	Place a comma before <i>Jr</i> or <i>Sr</i> in a person’s name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Martin Luther King Jr</i> • <i>Martin Smith Jr, PT, DPT, dreams of a cure for cerebral palsy.</i>

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Abbreviations – Physical Therapy Credentials

Do	Don't	Example
	Use periods after credentials/honorifics.	<i>PT, PhD, MD, Esq</i>
Follow each credential with a comma if the sentence continues.		<i>Florence Kendall, PT, FAPTA, signed the letter to the editor.</i>
For a list of names that includes designations only, separate the names by commas.		<i>Florence Kendall, PT, FAPTA, and Eugene Michels, PT, FAPTA, signed the letter to the editor.</i>
When names also include other information separate them by semicolons.		<i>The letter to the editor was signed by Florence Kendall, PT, FAPTA, Maryland; Eugene Michels, PT, FAPTA, Virginia; and Jules Rothstein, PT, PhD, FAPTA, Illinois.</i>
Physical therapy credentials should be listed first with all other designations following.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>PT or PTA (this refers to a person's licensure/certification as a PT or PTA, not the level of education—see next).</i> 2) <i>Highest earned physical therapy–related degree (DPT, MPT).</i> 3) <i>Other earned academic degree(s) (PhD, MBA).</i> 4) <i>Specialist certification credentials in alphabetical order, specific to ABPTS (OCS, PCS).</i> 5) <i>Other credentials external to APTA (ATC, CWS).</i> 6) <i>Other certification or professional honors (FAPTA).</i>
Include a specialized degree (such as <i>BPharm</i>). List after the highest academic degree.	Include degree at master level if individual has a doctorate, unless it is a specialized degree.	<i>Karen Jones, PT, DPT, BPharm</i>
Include an individual's baccalaureate degree if they request.		
	Add <i>SPT</i> as a “credential” after the names of student physical therapists or <i>SPTA</i> after the names of student physical therapist assistants.	

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Personal Titles

Do	Don't	Example
Only capitalize when the title directly precedes the person's name without a comma, otherwise it is lowercase.		a) <i>Director of Publications Lois Douthitt cares about the correct use of language.</i> b) <i>Lois Douthitt, director of publications, cares about the correct use of language.</i>
Use <i>chair</i>	Use <i>chairman, chairwoman</i> or <i>chairperson</i>	

General Punctuation: Acronyms, Commas, Dashes

Do	Don't	Example
Limit the use of acronyms. Only use familiar acronyms, don't make up your own or use jargon.		
Use a comma before the conjunction that precedes the last term in a series.		<i>The five elements of patient/client management are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.</i>
Use em-dashes (—) with no space on either side to indicate a break in thought.		<i>He saw—really saw—a UFO.</i>
Use an en-dash (–), which is slightly shorter than an em-dash and slightly longer than a hyphen, to show a relational distinction in a hyphenated or compound modifier or when the word being modified is a compound.		a) <i>health care–related, non–self-governing</i> b) <i>post–physical therapy, non–physical therapy personnel</i>

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General Punctuation: Dates, Phone Numbers, Addresses

Do	Don't	Example
	Use ordinal numbers for dates	<i>Correct: The meeting will be held October 31</i>
Use a slash between area code and phone number.	use a 1 before area codes in phone numbers (even 800 numbers)	<i>412/555-1212, 800/999-2782</i>
Write out a full address (street, city, state, zip) using the 2-letter postal abbreviations in all caps.		
When writing a city and state, or just a state, spell out the state name.		<i>Our offices are in Alexandria, Virginia, along the banks of the Potomac River.</i>
Use commas before and after the state when combined with the city.		<i>Send your comments to APTA, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.</i>