The Research Faculty

Acronym analysis of document authored by Kathryn Buttriss

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About the source document

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This document lists your acronyms and abbreviations (hereafter referred to as just *acronyms*). The lists make it easier for you to correct errors and improve your acronym use.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

STEP 1

Treat your abstract and your main body text as separate documents. How so? You might, for example, use an acronym only in the body text, while using only the full form in the abstract. Another example: even if you define an acronym in your abstract (and you should), you should define it again in your body text.

STEP 2

Second, you can take four easy steps to optimising your acronym use. Check that:

1. The first use of the acronym has a definition.
2. That after the first use, you do not use the full form with a definition.
3. The acronym is used at least three times.
4. The acronym is not defined in a subhead.

To check for the above in your body text, see the acronym-use reports presented in this document under these subheadings:

FIRST BRACKETED OCCURRENCE, WITH DEFINITION
OCCURRENCES OF THE FULL FORM WITHOUT DEFINITION
FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE, THREE-, FOUR-, AND FIVE-LETTER ACRONYMS
FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE, TWO-LETTER ACRONYMS
ACRONYM USE IN SUBHEADS
ALL OCCURRENCES, WITH DEFINITIONS

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STEP 3

After you have done the above, it gets more difficult. Brace yourself to make some difficult judgement calls. To get you going on this more difficult part of your journey:

1. One common recommendation is to repeat your acronym definitions in your discussion and conclusion sections.
2. Consider repeating an acronym definition throughout the document, if you think that the definition is so far back in the text that the reader may have forgotten the definition.
3. According to at least one authority, the APA, acronyms in tables should be defined independently of definitions in the body text. Definitions should be in table footnotes.
4. You may need to decide on some acronyms that are more recognised than their full forms. Will it help the reader if you refer to *International Business Machines* rather than to *IBM*?
5. Some of these discretionary aspects can be addressed with the list presented below under the subhead 'All occurrences, with definitions'.

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND ADVICE

The American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines:

> Standard abbreviations like units of measurement and states do not need to be written out. The APA also allows abbreviations that appear as words in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary to be used without explanation (IQ, HIV, RNA, CIA, UNESCO).

You do not need to define singular and plural acronyms separately, according to the APA. An example is service level agreement, abbreviated to SLA or SLAs.
Avoid using an acronym in the title of your document, unless it is highly recognisable.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Note: the lists below are based on your body text only (this excludes title pages, tables of contents, tables of acronyms, references, and appendices). The lists **are not** conclusive and page numbers are approximations.

YOUR ACRONYM USE

FIRST BRACKETED OCCURRENCE, WITH DEFINITION

What this is

The first occurrence of each acronym with its definition.

How the list was compiled

For each acronym, the first occurrence in brackets is included here, plus the words occurring before the brackets. Hyphens have been replaced with spaces.

How to use this

First, this list makes it easy to check whether your first use of the acronym within brackets has a definition or not. Each acronym in this list should be preceded by a definition.
Example, using the acronym *GDP*, you want to see this in the list below:

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GDP **gross domestic product**

And not something like this:

GDP **the growth in** [that is, any text other than "gross domestic product"]

Second, this list makes it easy to pick up errors such as slight variations in acronym definition. For example, this writer has omitted the S from one of his definitions:

EMS **Emergency Medical Services**
EMS **Emergency Medical Service**

Your list, first bracketed occurrence with "definition"

Acronym	"Definition"	Page
SME	medium sized enterprise	3
ERM	enterprise risk management	4
COSO	Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission	4
IRM	Institute of Risk Management	4
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	19
OCC	of the Comptroller of the Currenc	35
USA	Risk Management Association	39
FSB	Financial Stability Board	41
CISO	Chief Information Security Officer	51
SEI	Software Engineering Institute	60
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology	68
CIA	integrity and availability	68
ISC	which is granted by	69
ISO	International Standard Organisation	86
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	120
CAQDAS	computer assisted qualitative data analysis software	124
IPA	Interpretive Phenomologic Analysis	128
CCTA	Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	151

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OCCURRENCES OF THE FULL FORM WITHOUT DEFINITION

What this is

A list of the acronyms for which the *full form without definition* occurs before or after the *full form with definition*. For example, the following is a case of poor acronym use:

> … *some text* …
> that the gross domestic product was
> … *more text* …
> the gross domestic product (GDP) was …

How to use this

In general, you should define an acronym with the first occurrence of the full form and thereafter use only the acronym. This list makes it easier to check that you have avoided repeated use of the full form after the first use of the acronym.

Your list, occurrences of full form without acronym definition

medium sized enterprise (p. 12) — after “aspects of small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 87) — after “appetite of Small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 88) — after “Security of Small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 90) — after “Culture of Small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 90) — after “) surveyed small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 91) — after “and of small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 92) — after “capture the small and ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
medium sized enterprise (p. 151) — after “as a small, ” — is after the first definition on p. 3
enterprise risk management (p. 37) — after “the implementation of an ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
enterprise risk management (p. 38) — after “gap in the overall ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
enterprise risk management (p. 59) — after “management program, or ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 4) — after “ERM) (The ” — is before the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 4) — after “, 2020; The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 30) — after “is defined by the ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 32) — after “, 2020; The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 37) — after “risk appetite (The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 38) — after “and the IRM (” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 39) — after “including the IRM (” — is after the first definition on p. 4

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institute of risk management (p. 41) — after “the culture (The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 59) — after “and the IRM (” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 59) — after “is perceived (The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 88) — after “relies on (The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 166) — after “, 2020; The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
institute of risk management (p. 205) — after “and growth (The ” — is after the first definition on p. 4
of the comptroller of the currenc (p. 35) — after “Board, The Office ” — is after the first definition on p. 35
of the comptroller of the currenc (p. 39) — after “such as The Office ” — is after the first definition on p. 35
of the comptroller of the currenc (p. 39) — after “excerpt from the Office ” — is after the first definition on p. 35
of the comptroller of the currenc (p. 40) — after “Appetite Statement (Office ” — is after the first definition on p. 35
risk management association (p. 42) — after “, and governance”(” — is after the first definition on p. 39
financial stability board (p. 35) — after “such as The ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 35) — after “risk appetite framework (” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 35) — after “appetite statement. The ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 36) — after “Wyman, 2015; ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 36) — after “organisations such as the ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 39) — after “the statement. The ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 41) — after “Ezingeard’s research and The ” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 41) — after “risk appetite framework (” — is before the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 41) — after “organisation to organisation (” — is after the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 41) — after “Willis, 2015; ” — is after the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 42) — after “is noted by the ” — is after the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 42) — after “by all stakeholders (” — is after the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 88) — after “Nottingham, 2009; ” — is after the first definition on p. 41
financial stability board (p. 205) — after “Nottingham, 2009; ” — is after the first definition on p. 41
integrity and availability (p. 5) — after “security, confidentiality, ” — is before the first definition on p. 68
integrity and availability (p. 47) — after “the terms confidentiality, ” — is before the first definition on p. 68
integrity and availability (p. 50) — after “, namely confidentiality, ” — is before the first definition on p. 68
integrity and availability (p. 74) — after “the organisation’s confidentiality, ” — is after the first definition on p. 68
integrity and availability (p. 88) — after “ensure its confidentiality, ” — is after the first definition on p. 68
which is granted by (p. 69) — after “Information Security Auditor) ” — is after the first definition on p. 69
committee of sponsoring organizations (p. 4) — after “advocated by both the ” — is before the first definition on p. 86
committee of sponsoring organizations (p. 34) — after “and used by the ” — is before the first definition on p. 86
chief executive officer (p. 143) — after “was recently appointed to ” — is after the first definition on p. 120

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FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE, THREE-, FOUR-, AND FIVE-LETTER ACRONYMS

What this is

A list of your acronyms, with occurrence irrespective of brackets, and the number of times they appear. This list includes only three-, four-, and five-letter acronyms.

How to use this

Use this list to detect unnecessary acronym use. The problem items are at the bottom of the list. Steps to take:

1. Any acronym occurring only once very likely should be removed. Perhaps retain common acronyms for which the full form is less recognisable than the abbreviated form (such as, IBM and SPSS). All other single cases are candidates for conversion into the full form.
2. Acronyms that occur seldom and are not highly recognised in their full forms are also candidates for conversion. These are the ones occurring two, three, or four times, perhaps more (there is no hard-and-fast rule for this). The American Psychological Association suggests a minimum of three instances to justify the use of an acronym.

Your list, number of occurrences of three-, four-, and five-letter acronyms:

Acronym	Frequency
ISO	134
SME	40
COSO	21
CEO	13
IRM	12
OECD	12
SEI	8
CMM	7
ISACA	7
COBIT	6
GDPR	5
IEC	4
IIA	4
IPA	3
NVIVO	3
CCTA	2
CIA	2
ERM	2
IAA	2
ICT	2
MOD	2
RMA	2
ACM	1
ADISA	1
ALARM	1
BMS	1
CISA	1
CISO	1
CISSP	1
FSB	1
IEEE	1
ISA	1
ISC	1
ISE	1
IST	1
ITSM	1
NIST	1
OCC	1

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OHS	1
OHSAS	1
USA	1

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE, TWO-LETTER ACRONYMS

What this is

A list of your acronyms, with occurrence irrespective of brackets, and the number of times they appear. This list includes only two-letter acronyms.

How to use this

The use is the same as for the list of three-, four-, and five-letter acronyms (see above).

Your list, number of occurrences of two-letter acronyms:

Acronym	Frequency
ID	29
UK	17
OR	16
IT	11
HR	8
BS	5
PC	3
AB	2
EY	1
QM	1
SL	1
TI	1
US	1

ACRONYM USE IN SUBHEADS

What this is

A list of your acronyms in subheads.

How to use this

An item in this list here because the acronym has been defined in a subheading. Check for this. If so, convert the occurrence into either the full form only or the abbreviated form only. The APA advocates avoiding acronyms in subheads.

Furthermore, look for another type of error: defining the acronym in the subhead only and not in the body text. This is because you should treat your headings and subheadings as signposts on a road. A signpost is not the road itself; it is a marker that makes the road easier to use. Define your acronyms in the body text (the road) and not just in your subheads (the signposts).

Are there exceptions? Yes. In the view of one author (Edward J Huth), writing for the hard sciences:[i]

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Abbreviations should not, in general, be used in titles. But there are exceptions likely to be acceptable.

- *Widely and frequently used abbreviations will probably be acceptable: DNA, AIDS, NIH, and others of this kind.*
- *Some scientific symbols such as pH (the symbol for the negative logarithm of the hydrogen iron concentration; it can be considered to be an abbreviated form of the term "hydrogen potential"), °C for "degrees Celsius", and others of this kind.*
- *Abbreviations that replace a long multi-term name, for example, MOPP, the abbreviation for the four-drug regimen consisting of mechlorethamine, oncovin, procabrazine, and prednisone.*

With this third kind of use, the author is expected to define the abbreviation as early in the paper as possible (unless the abbreviation is well established and widely used by the paper's audience).

Your list, occurrences in subheads:

Acronym	Heading style
No bracketed acronyms found in subheads.	

ALL OCCURRENCES, WITH DEFINITIONS

What this is

All occurrences of your acronyms, with their definitions.

> **About this list**
> For the sake of simplicity, this list has been removed from this sample document.

REFERENCES

[i] Huth, Edward J, Writing and Publishing in Medicine, 3rd Ed. Williams & Wilkins, USA, 1999, p. 133

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