Abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms

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General usage

In this manual, the term 'abbreviation' is used to cover abbreviations, acronym and initialisms.

Use abbreviations sparingly. Only use abbreviations if they are widely known across the broad readership of Cochrane Reviews, are used frequently in a section or throughout the review, or enhance readability. Consider using an abbreviation only if the term has three or more words. All abbreviations used in the 'Abstract', 'Plain language summary', 'Main text', and 'Authors' conclusions' should be redefined at the beginning of these sections. In figures and tables, all abbreviations should be listed at the end with their definitions. If the review or document is long, it may be sensible to explain each abbreviation in each section of the text.

To use an abbreviation, write the full name in the first instance and follow it immediately by the abbreviated version in brackets. When something is better known by its abbreviation, it may be helpful to include the abbreviation even if the name occurs only once (e.g. World Health Organization (WHO)).

Abbreviations should follow formatting conventions. Some terms, particularly statistical terms, are commonly abbreviated in Cochrane documents (see Common abbreviations), while others should be avoided (see Abbreviations to avoid). See also Frequently used names for names commonly used and abbreviated in Cochrane documents.

In titles or headings

Only the common abbreviations that do not need to be defined may be used in review titles and headings without the full name needing to be written first. When a term used in a title may be more commonly known under its abbreviated form, its abbreviation may be added in parentheses after the fully written term (e.g. 'A study of the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations for hygiene'). Abbreviations are acceptable in headings if they have been defined previously, though it may be preferable to rearrange the wording of headings to avoid starting with abbreviations.

At the beginning of a sentence

While it is acceptable to use abbreviations at the beginning of a sentence, authors may find it preferable to rephrase sentences to avoid starting with abbreviations.

In tables and figures

It is convenient to abbreviate some words, such as number (no.) and versus (vs), in tables and figures, but it is preferable to write them in full in the review text.

Common abbreviations

In this section: Commonly used abbreviations | Common abbreviations that do not need to be defined | Acronyms used within Cochrane | e.g., etc., and i.e. | Currency abbreviations

Commonly used abbreviations

This table lists some abbreviations commonly used in Cochrane Reviews. See also Common abbreviations that do not need to be defined and Frequently used names.

Term	Abbreviation
absolute risk reduction	ARR
	CGR

control group risk (avoid control event rate)	
controlled clinical trial	CCT
confidence interval	CI
degrees of freedom	df
inverse variance or intravascular Note: if both terms are abbreviated in a review, use lower case 'iv' for intravascular.	IV
Mantel-Haenszel	M-H
mean difference (avoid weighted mean difference)	MD
number needed to treat for an additional harmful outcome (avoid number needed to harm)	NNTH
number needed to treat for an additional beneficial outcome (avoid number needed to treat)	NNTB
odds ratio	OR
Peto odds ratio	Peto OR
randomized controlled trial	RCT
risk difference	RD
risk ratio (formerly called relative risk in Review Manager 4)	RR
standard deviation	SD
standard error	SE
standardized mean difference	SMD

Common abbreviations that do not need to be defined

Also note that it is not necessary to define the full unit name of standard SI units (see General guidance on SI units in the section on Units and systems of measurement).

Term	Abbreviation
United States of America	USA
United Kingdom	UK
Deoxyribonucleic acid	DNA
Human immunodeficiency virus	HIV
Acquired immune deficiency syndrome	AIDS
Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation	GRADE
Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses	PRISMA
Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials	CONSORT
Medical Subject Headings	MeSH (not MESH or Mesh)

Acronyms used within Cochrane

A list of acronyms used within Cochrane is available in the Glossary of terms.

e.g., etc., and i.e.

e.g.: an abbreviation for 'for example' (from the Latin '*exempli gratia*') that can be used in lists within the text, when examples are given in brackets, and in tables (for brevity). Use the form 'e.g.' with no following comma.

etc.: always write 'etc.' (followed by a full stop) in Cochrane Reviews. Use a comma before 'etc.' if it follows more than one item in a list. If 'etc.' is used at the end of a sentence, do not use two full-stops.

i.e.: an abbreviation for 'that is' (from the Latin '*id est*') that can be used for lists within the text, when information is given in brackets, and in tables (for brevity). Use the form 'i.e.' with no following comma.

Correct	Incorrect
e.g. (e.g. men, women, children)	e.g., eg, eg
i.e. (i.e. men, women, children)	i.e., ie, ie
etc. (Canada, USA, Germany, etc.)	etc e.t.c.

Currency abbreviations

Currencies should be expressed using standard three-letter codes defined by ISO-4217, but as with other abbreviations it is generally helpful to expand on first use.

Common codes include USD (US dollar), EUR (euro), and GBP (pounds sterling)**.** Full list: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_4217#Active_codes

See also: Units and systems of measurement: currencies

Formatting of abbreviations

This table provides some guidance on how to format and punctuate abbreviations.

Guidance	Correct	Incorrect
Use upper-case letters to explain the abbreviation or acronym only if required by the abbreviated term.	World Health Organization (WHO) angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE)	world health organization (WHO) Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE)
No full stops between letters of abbreviation or acronym, or at end of abbreviation or acronym unless at end of a sentence	The Medical Research Council (MRC) funded the research.	The MRC. funded the research. The M.R.C. funded the research.
Form plurals by adding 's'; no apostrophe ('s) needed unless used to indicate possession.	The Managing Editors (MEs) met early in the morning. The Cochrane Review Group's (CRG's) decision was helpful.	The Managing Editors (ME's) met early in the morning. The CRG's were asked to provide information.

| Bold may occasionally be used to indicate letters used to form an acronym or abbreviation. | CRASH trial (**c**orticosteroid **r**andomisation **a**fter **s**ignificant **h**ead injury) | — |
| Avoid abbreviating terms that could be unclear to the general readership. | the level of glycosylated haemoglobin | the level of Hb A1 |

Abbreviations to avoid

Latin abbreviations for dosing (e.g. qd, bd, bid, bds, qds, qid, tds, tid) should not be used. Doses should always be written in full and in English throughout the text and tables.

Some other abbreviations should be avoided, although they may be appropriate for tables if footnoted.

Term	Abbreviation
chemical elements or compounds	KCl for potassium chloride, Hg for mercury (although may be used as part of a unit, for example, 'mmHg')
week	wk
weight	wt