

## Abstract Guidelines for Inquiry

*Inquiry* has established the following stylistic guidelines based on *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The guidance given here is meant to address the most frequent issues. For questions not covered here, please refer to [\*The Chicago Manual of Style\*](#).

### GENERAL TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ABSTRACT

- Make sure your abstract is as polished as possible: it should be free of misspellings, overly long sentences, or obscure, technical language.
- Make your abstract as easy to understand as possible for a mixed audience: eschew jargon where you can, while still including enough of the language required of your discipline to get your point across.
  - Pro Tip: Have a friend who majors in something completely different read your abstract. If they have no idea what you're talking about, you should revise your abstract until they do!
- Make sure you address the significance of your project in your field, the impact it had on your lab, or what your results were and why they matter.

### LENGTH AND FORMATTING

- Length: Abstracts should be between 150–250 words. Abstracts over 300 words will not be accepted and will have to be revised for length.
- Formatting: The text field in our application system allows for minimal formatting. For example, you will not be able to use **bold**, *italics*, subscript, or superscript. Using symbols should also be avoided.
  - For titles of works or for words you would otherwise italicize, please use double quotation marks (e.g., “*D. melanogaster*” instead of *D. melanogaster*, or “*The Little Prince*” instead of *The Little Prince*).

### ABBREVIATIONS

Spell out terms or phrases the first time you use them and provide the abbreviation in parentheses. Subsequent appearances may use the abbreviation by itself:

- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)
- Adipose-derived stem cells (ADSCs)
- Common abbreviations, e.g., DNA, HIV, need not be given in full at any point.

## PUNCTUATION

### QUOTATIONS

Quotations should be put in “double quotation marks.” Use ‘single quotation marks’ for quotes within another quotation.

### PUNCTUATION IN RELATION TO CLOSING QUOTATION MARKS

Punctuation precedes closing quotation marks:

- Growing up, we always preferred to “bear those ills we have.”
- “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,” she replied.

### SERIAL COMMAS

Separate items in a series with commas. Do not separate the final two elements in such a series with a comma:

- Before leaving the apartment, he made sure he had his books, phone, wallet and keys.

### DASHES

There are two types of dashes: the **em dash (—)** and the **en dash (–)**:

- Use the **em dash (—)** to mark an abrupt change, for emphasis or with explanatory words or phrases: e.g.,
  - Richard’s favorite bands—Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden—are all from Seattle, Washington.
- Use the **en dash (–)** between dates, times and reference numbers: e.g.,
  - Phil was active on the cat show circuit from 1995–2001.

## CITATIONS

### AUTHOR-DATE CITATION

Please use in-text Author-Date citation. This consists of the author’s last (i.e., family) name followed by the year of publication. “Author” may refer to editors, translators etc. However, omit abbreviations (e.g. “trans.,” “ed.”). Do not include page, volume numbers and the like.

### SINGLE AUTHOR

Citations for single author texts should come at the end of the sentence or, if the author’s name appears in the text, immediately following the author’s name:

- According to Roman historians, Cassius Dio held the praetorship in 194CE and was co-consul with Alexander Severus in 229 CE (Millar, 1964).
- Millar (1964) has discussed the political career of Cassius Dio at length.
  - **Reference List Entry:** Millar, Fergus 1964. *A Study of Cassius Dio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 5-27.

## **MULTIPLE AUTHORS**

**Two Authors:** Citations for works with up to two authors should include all authors' names: e.g.,

- (Fu and Seeman, 1993)
  - **Reference List Entry:** Fu, T-J., and N.C. Seeman. 1993. "DNA Double-Crossover Molecules." *Biochemistry* 32: 3211

**More than Two Authors:** Citations for works with more than two authors should give the first two authors' names followed by "et al." and the date: e.g.,

- (Liu, Wang et al., 2004)
  - **Reference List Entry:** Liu, D., W. Wang, Z. Deng, R. Walulu and C. Mao. 2004. "Tensegrity: Construction of Rigid DNA Triangles with Flexible Four-Arm DNA Junctions." *Journal of the American Chemical Society* 126 (8): 2324- 2325.

## **TWO OR MORE REFERENCES IN ONE SENTENCE**

Separate two or more references using semicolons. The order of the references may be based on the order of information referenced in the text or the relative importance of the works. In the absence of those criteria, order references chronologically (order references with the same date alphabetically): e.g.,

- (Pickett, White et al. 1985; Armstrong and Malacinski 1989; Beigl 1989)

## **BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE**

### **GENDER BIAS**

Avoid the use of a gender-specific pronoun "he" or "she" (when not referring to a specific individual) as well as nontraditional usages such as "he/she" or "s/he."

Consider the following options to avoid such bias.

- Use a plural antecedent.
- Omit the pronoun.
- Repeat the noun.
- Use an article instead of a personal pronoun.
- Use the pronoun "one" instead.
- Revise and rephrase.