

AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean
© 2015, Karen Shashok

If you follow format details in the references carefully, you will improve the chances that your manuscript will make a good impression.

References take time to prepare correctly unless you know how to use automatic reference management software. But to make a good impression on the editors and to facilitate publication of your article if it is accepted, it's important to pay attention to the details of the format and punctuation in the list of references at the end of your manuscript.

Editors notice the differences in format between journals. If your reference list does not follow the Instructions for Authors or Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation accurately, the editor may be suspicious that your manuscript was rejected by a competing journal. The editor may then assume the research is of poor quality and wonder why the journal should consider a paper that a competing journal has already rejected. If there are errors in the reference format (even very small errors) the editor may feel insulted because you didn't take the time to follow the instructions, and may also be biased against your manuscript.

Punctuation signs

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|---|
| period (stop) | . | colon | : | | |
| comma | , | semicolon | ; | | |
| hyphen | - | dash | — | long dash | — |
| parentheses | () | brackets | [] | | |
| quotation marks | “ ” | | | | |

MEDLINE formats

Many medical journals use the MEDLINE formats developed by the National Library of Medicine and recommended by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors in their Uniform Requirements (www.icjme.org). These formats (essentially the same as the Vancouver style formats) are the easiest to use because they have a minimum of punctuation and do not use *italics* or **boldface** for any part of the reference.

The reference formats for different types of sources are described below.

Journal article

Authors. Article title. Journal title. Year;volume:first–last page number.

Freedman SB, Adler M, Seshadri R, Powell EC. Oral ondansetron for gastroenteritis in a pediatric emergency department. *N Engl J Med*. 2006;354:1698-705.

Names of authors

For each name the family name is given first, then the initials of the first name or names. There can be 1 or 2 initials; sometimes there are 3 or even 4. Sometimes a family name is hyphenated (García-Pérez, for example), sometimes the initials of the first name are hyphenated (A-Y, for example). The name should be copied exactly as it appears in the original source, even if you know the author sometimes uses different initials or a different spelling for his or her family name.

It is important to spell all the authors' names correctly. An error means that computerized search systems cannot locate the reference. If one of the authors of one of your references is a peer reviewer for your manuscript, the reviewer may be offended if his or her name is spelled wrong.

Please always check the spelling of your own name on the title page of your own manuscripts. Sometimes even journals make mistakes in the authors' names.

If your name is not spelled correctly in a published article, computerized search systems cannot find it. As a result your work may have less impact. Also, research authorities who are counting your publications and citations may find fewer than the real number of your publications or citations to your work. So a spelling error in your name may mean that you lose credit for your publication.

When you get the proofs of your article just before it is published, remember to always check that the journal has spelled your name correctly.

If possible, always spell your name the same way in all your manuscripts and publications. If your name is published with a spelling error, it is very difficult to correct later, and the correction process takes a long time. Meanwhile computerized searches may overlook your published article so it may not get all the attention or citations it deserves.

Some journals use extra punctuation in the names. This is not technically necessary and is a question of preference.

Freedman SB, Adler M, Seshadri R, Powell EC.
Freedman, S.B.; Adler, M.; Seshadri, R.; Powell, E.C.

Usually there is no "and" or "&" before the last author in the list. But if the journal's rules require this, you should use it.

| | |
|---|--|
| Freedman SB, Seshadri R, and Powell EC. | Comma after the penultimate name |
| Freedman SB, Seshadri R and Powell EC. | No comma after the penultimate name |
| Freedman SB, Seshadri R & Powell EC. | "And" symbol instead of the word "and" |

et al.

“et al.” is an abbreviation for a bibliographic term in Latin that means “and others.” When there are seven authors or more, you should give the names of the first six authors, followed by “et al.”.

When there are six authors or fewer, you should give the names of all the authors in the reference.

“et” never has a period, but “al.” always has a period.

Some journals require you to list three names (instead of six names) and then add et al. when there are seven authors or more. If the journal’s Instructions or Guidelines do not provide a clear rule, it’s better to list six names followed by et al. But even if the journal’s instructions are to use the first three authors followed by et al., you should do this only when there are seven authors or more. When there are four, five or six authors you should list all the names.

If you use six names with et al. in some references but only three names and et al. in other references in the same manuscript, this will make extra work for the copyeditor or technical editor. Always try to be consistent in the format. It is better to make a small mistake consistently than to make different mistakes in the format in different references. It is technically easier and much faster to correct a small mistake that appears consistently than to check each reference one by one to see if there is a mistake or not, and correct each mistake individually.

Title of the article

The title should be copied exactly as it appears in the original source, even if there is a spelling error or editing error in the title.

Only the first word in the title and the proper nouns (the names of specific persons, places or things) should begin with a capital letter. Commercial (trade) names also begin with a capital letter.

Generic drug names (for example, benzodiazepine), chemical elements (for example, carbon, zinc, gold) and compounds (for example, hydroxyapatite, sodium acetate) are not proper nouns in English so they are not capitalized. Capitalization can be checked in an English-language dictionary. The dictionary will show if a word is a proper noun and should be capitalized.

The names of departments, hospitals and institutions should be capitalized only when the complete name of the specific center is given (for example, Hematology Research Center, School of Medicine, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences). When the words “service,” “department,” “school,” “university,” “hospital,” “institution,” “center” and “office” are used as common nouns (when they appear alone and not as part of the name of a specific center) they not capitalized.

Incorrect: Oral Ondansetron for Gastroenteritis in a Pediatric Emergency Department
Correct: Oral ondansetron for gastroenteritis in a pediatric emergency department

Incorrect: Oesophageal Cancer and Kaposi's Sarcoma in Malawi: A Comparative Analysis

Correct: Oesophageal cancer and Kaposi's sarcoma in Malawi: a comparative analysis

Title of the journal

If the journal uses MEDLINE formats, the titles of the journals should be abbreviated according to the MEDLINE database.

N Engl J Med. 2006 Apr 20;354(16):1698-705.

The list of journals indexed in MEDLINE and their abbreviated titles is here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/journals> .

If your reference is published in a journal that is not included in MEDLINE, you can check the correct abbreviation of each word here

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/bookshelf/br.fcgi?book=citmed&part=appa> .

If the journal title consists of only one word, it is never abbreviated.

Diabetologia.

Neuropsychopharmacology.

Some words in journal titles are not abbreviated because they are short or because no standard abbreviation is available.

There is a period after the last word in the title, but not after the previous words (whether abbreviated or not). If the title consists of only one word, there is a period after it. A period after the last word of the journal title is not necessary but some reference management and database software inserts a period in that place. MEDLINE now uses a period.

Journal title: Archives of Iranian Medicine

Abbreviation: Arch Iran Med.

Journal title: Saudi Journal of Kidney Diseases and Transplantation

Abbreviation: Saudi J Kidney Dis Transpl.

Journal title: The Kuwait Medical Journal

Abbreviation: Kuwait Med J.

Journal titles in character-based languages (Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.) are never abbreviated. You should write out the full title of the journal transliterated into English, and indicate the language of publication at the end of the reference.

Gan To Kagaku Ryoho. 2010;37:285-90. Japanese.

There is always a space between the end of the journal title and the year of publication.

Year of publication

2006;354:1698-705.

The year is given in 4 digits and is followed by a semicolon (;). After the year different journals use different rules for spacing. Some journals use spaces between the year, volume number and page numbers, but other journals give all this information together with no spaces. You should check the Instructions or Guidelines for each journal, or the Reference list in an article published very recently in the journal you are planning to submit the manuscript to.

Volume of publication

2006;**354**:1698-705.

For most journals one volume corresponds to one calendar year according to the western calendar (from 1 January to 31 December). Some journals publish two or more volumes each year. The first page number of each volume is usually 1. For this reason it is usually not necessary to include the issue date or issue number.

Issue of publication

Sometimes the issue date or issue number appears in the reference, but usually it is not necessary to include this information.

N Engl J Med 2006 **Apr 20**;354(**16**):1698-705
N Engl J Med 2006;354:1698-705

Arch Iran Med. 2010 **Jan**;13(**1**):38-44
Arch Iran Med. 2010;13:38-44

If each issue within a volume starts with page 1, then it is necessary to indicate the issue number together with the volume number. In contrast, if there is a single continuous sequence of page numbers through all issues of a given volume, then it is not necessary to indicate the issue number. For example, if issue 1 begins with page 1, issue 2 begins with page 105, issue 3 begins with page 221, etc., the page numbers identify the article as belonging to a specific issue so it is not necessary to give the issue number.

If you obtained the references with reference management software and the month and date or issue number are included, it's usually okay to leave them in the reference.

Page numbers

2006;354:**1698-705**.

The first and last page numbers must both be given. It is not enough to give just the first page number, unless the article you are citing is only 1 page long.

The last page number is given with only the digits that are different from the digits in the first page number. It is not necessary to repeat the digits that are the same in the first and last page numbers. However, some journals require all the digits to be repeated so you should check the Instructions or Guidelines for each journal.

For example, 1698-705 is correct and 1698-1705 is also correct but some journals do not repeat the 1 in the last page number.

Between the first and last page number most journals use a hyphen (-) but some journals use a dash (also called n-dash or 1-n dash) (–). It is not a mistake to use one instead of the other, but it helps the journal’s staff if you can check which sign the journal prefers and use it consistently in all references. If you aren’t sure which is correct, it’s better to use the same sign consistently in all references.

Journal articles obtained from the internet

Many journals are published both in print and online, or only online. In the reference list you should cite the version you used. If you used only the print version you should give the page numbers. If you used only the online version it is not necessary to give the page numbers if you provide the DOI (digital object identifier) or URL (uniform resource locator). If you use the DOI, you do not have to provide the URL of the website where you obtained the article.

Zhang M, Holman CD, Price SD, Sanfilippo FM, Preen DB, Bulsara MK. Comorbidity and repeat admission to hospital for adverse drug reactions in older adults: retrospective cohort study. *BMJ*. 2009;338:a2752. **doi: 10.1136/bmj.a2752.**

Reference management software can capture and add the DOI automatically.

If you cannot find the DOI then you need to give readers an alternative way to find the same reference online. In this case you should add the URL and the date you obtained the material online. You should always make sure the URL still works before you submit the manuscript.

Aboud S. Quality improvement initiative in nursing homes: the ANA acts in an advisory role. *Am J Nurs*. 2002 [cited 2002 Aug 12];102(6). Available from: <http://www.nursingworld.org/AJN/2002/june/Wawatch.htmArticle> .

Some journals use a different format to indicate the date you accessed the article. For example, “Accessed” or “Accessed on” followed by the date may appear after the page numbers of the article.

Aboud S. Quality improvement initiative in nursing homes: the ANA acts in an advisory role. *Am J Nurs*. 2002;102(6). Available from: <http://www.nursingworld.org/AJN/2002/june/Wawatch.htmArticle> . Accessed 12 Aug 2002.

Final period

Many journals use a final period (stop) at the end of each reference. A period is not necessary in this place, but it is better to check the journal’s instructions and follow them.

Articles published in other languages

If the article you cite is not published in English, the title, translated into English in Medline, should appear between brackets. The language of publication should be indicated at the end of the reference.

Miyazaki M, Noda Y, Tanaka S, Kondo M, Horio M, Hasegawa Y, et al. [Preparation of standard protocol for cancer pain control and evaluation of its clinical effectiveness.]

Gan To Kagaku Ryoho. 2010;37:285-90. Japanese.

Book (the whole book as the reference)

Authors or editors of the book. Title of book. edition number if it is not the first edition (for example, 3rd edition.). City of publication: Name of publisher; year of publication. Total number of pages in the book.

Jenkins PF. Making sense of the chest x-ray: a hands-on guide. New York: Oxford University Press; 2005. 194 p.

If the book was translated and the translator is named on the title page or copyright page, the translator's name should be included. If the editor is named, the editor should also be mentioned.

Luzikov VN. Mitochondrial biogenesis and breakdown. Galkin AV, translator; Roodyn DB, editor. New York: Consultants Bureau; 1985. 362 p.

Book chapter (a certain chapter or specific pages as the reference)

Authors of the chapter. Chapter title. In: Editors. Book title. edition number. City of publication: Name of publisher; year of publication. First and last pages of the chapter or section cited.

Rojko JL, Hardy WD Jr. Feline leukemia virus and other retroviruses. In: Sherding RG, editor. The cat: diseases and clinical management. New York: Churchill Livingstone; 1989. p. 229-332.

Doctoral thesis

Author. Title of the thesis [dissertation]. City where the university is located: Name of the university; Year. Total number of pages.

Zhao C. Development of nanoelectrospray and application to protein research and drug discovery [dissertation]. Buffalo (NY): State University of New York at Buffalo; 2005. 276 p.

Master's thesis

Roguskie JM. The role of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 1244 pilin glycan in virulence [master's thesis]. Pittsburgh (PA): Duquesne University; 2005. 111 p.

Online material

References to material found only online should be prepared the same as for print material, or as similar as possible. Different journals use slightly different rules, although the elements of information and basic order of elements are similar.

Because online material can change or even disappear, it is important to include the date you accessed the site. This is similar to indicating the number of the edition of a book, because later versions of a website, like later editions of a book, can contain additions and other changes.

*Author (The author can be a person or an organization. Sometimes no author is given on the website.) Title of the specific item cited. (If no title is given, you should give the name of the organization responsible for the website.) Name of the main website. URL. (http://...).
Published 12 March 2009. Updated 20 December 2009. Accessed 15 April 2010. (These dates are only given as examples.)*

Chlamy Center: an Online Informatics Resource for Chlamydomonas. Durham (NC): Duke University, Department of Biology. [modified 2007 Mar 8]. Core collections; [modified 25 Jan 2006; cited 27 Mar 2007]. Available from: <http://jupiter.biology.duke.edu/strains.html>.

Cartwright J. Big stars have weather too. IOP Publishing PhysicsWeb. [cited 26 June 2007]. Available from: <http://physicsweb.org/articles/news/11/6/16/1>.

These examples are adapted from http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html . Accessed 23 May 2015.

Website home page

Cancer-Pain.org. New York: Association of Cancer Online Resources, Inc.; 2000-01 [updated 16 May 2002; cited 9 Jul 2002]. Available from: <http://www.cancer-pain.org/>.

Website section

American Medical Association. Chicago: The Association; 1995-2002 [updated 23 Aug 2001; cited 12 Aug 2002]. AMA Office of Group Practice Liaison. Available from: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1736.html> .

Blog

Holt M. The Health Care Blog. San Francisco: Matthew Holt. 2003 Oct [cited 13 Feb 2009]. Available from: http://www.thehealthcareblog.com/the_health_care_blog/.

KidneyNotes.com. New York: KidneyNotes. 2006 [cited 13 Feb 2009]. Available from: <http://www.kidneynotes.com/>.

Wall Street Journal. HEALTH BLOG: WSJ's blog on health and the business of health. Hensley S, editor. New York: Dow Jones & Company, Inc. 2007 [cited 13 Feb 2009]. Available from: <http://blogs.wsj.com/health/>.

Contribution to or comment in a blog

Mantone J. Head trauma haunts many, researchers say. 29 Jan 2008 [cited 13 Feb 2009]. In: Wall Street Journal. HEALTH BLOG. New York: Dow Jones & Company, Inc. 2008. Available from: <http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2008/01/29/head-trauma-haunts-many-researchers-say/>.

Campbell A. Diabetes and alcohol: do the two mix? (Part 2). 28 Jan 2008 [cited 13 Feb 2009]. In: Diabetes Self-Management Blog. New York: Diabetes Self-Management. [14 Aug 2006]. 2 p. Available from: http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/blog/Amy_Campbell/Diabetes_and_Alcohol_Do_the_Two_Mix_Part_2

If you want complete details about the Medline reference format rules you can find them in Citing Medicine, here <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/bookshelf/br.fcgi?book=citmed> . You can find out there how to prepare the reference correctly for many other types of information sources.

Other formats

Journal article

Journals in disciplines not related to medicine and health sciences often use reference formats not based on MEDLINE formats. For example, the year of publication can appear in parentheses after the authors' names but before the title.

1. Gamelin FX, Baquet G, Berthoin S, Thevenet D, Nourry C, Nottin S, Bosquet L (2009) Effect of high intensity intermittent training on heart rate variability in prepubescent children. *Eur J Appl Physiol* 105:731-738.

Often the journals that use other formats also use more punctuation and *italics* or **boldface** for some elements. You should check the Instructions or Guidelines carefully and follow the examples accurately.

Observation exercise:

How many differences can you find between reference **1** above and the same reference in a more complicated format below?

2. Gamelin, F.X., Baquet, G., Berthoin, S., Thevenet, D., Nourry, C., Nottin, S., Bosquet, L. (2009). Effect of high intensity intermittent training on heart rate variability in prepubescent children. *Eur J Appl Physiol* **105**, 731-738.

(There are 20 differences.)

Observation exercise:

How many differences can you find between reference **2** above and the same reference in Medline format below?

3. Gamelin FX, Baquet G, Berthoin S, Thevenet D, Nourry C, Nottin S, et al. Effect of high intensity intermittent training on heart rate variability in prepubescent children. *Eur J Appl Physiol*. 2009;105:731-8.

(There are 22 differences.)

Exercises

Correct this reference to the PubMed format for journal articles.

A,R, Soroush; F. Flahati; M. Zargar; M.R. Soroush; S, Khateri; A. Khaji: Women Pose Innocent Victims of Landmines in Postwar Iran. *Iranian Journal of Public Health* 2010; 39: 32-35.

Convert these references to the alternative format in example number 1 above.

Ebrahimi H, Soleimani M, Kazemi Arababadi M, Ahmadbeigi N, Hassanshahi G, Farjadfar A, Kennedy D. An in vitro assay to evaluate the immunomodulatory effects of unrestricted somatic stem cells. *Iran J Immunol.* 2010 Mar;7(1):30-8.

Zaker F, Mohammadzadeh M, Mohammadi M. Detection of KIT and FLT3 mutations in acute myeloid leukemia with different subtypes. *Arch Iran Med.* 2010 Jan;13(1):21-5.

Convert these references to the PubMed format in example number 3 above.

Abediankenari, S.; Shaker, D., Abedian, F.; Mirabi, A. (2009). The effect of beta interferon on dendritic cells and cytokine synthesis by CD4+ T cells. *Iran J Immunology* Jun;6(2):61-66.

Merat S; Khadem-Sameni F; Nouraie M.; Derakhshan, MH.; Tavangar, SM; Mossaffa S, Malekzadeh R and Sotoudeh, M. 2010. A Modification Of The Brunt System For Scoring Liver Histology Of Patients With Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. *Arch Iran Med.* vol Jan;13 (1), pp 38-44.