Campus Academic Resource Program
Latin Terms and Abbreviations

This handout will:
- Explain what Latin abbreviations are and where they should be used
- Give definitions and examples of Latin terms and abbreviations
- List Latin terms and abbreviations used in citations and bibliographies
- Provide examples of other helpful Latin terms and abbreviations
- Supply exercises to practice your knowledge and usage of Latin terms and abbreviations

Latin Terms and Abbreviations Used with Examples

The following is a list of Latin terms and abbreviations you may find in your academic career. We use abbreviations in order to save space and to signal particular things to the reader. Knowing these abbreviations will not only help you when you want to add citations to your own work, but will also enable you to identify them in other authors' papers and citations. The "big three" listed below are considered the most commonly used Latin abbreviations ("Latin Terms and Abbreviations," UNC Writing Center).

Here are some common Latin abbreviations (the "big three") defined and used in examples:

e.g.
In general, use e.g. for one or few of many potential examples where the examples themselves would not be able to replace the word in the sentence.
- *Definition:*
  - Latin abbreviation for *exempli gratia,* meaning "for the sake of example" or "for example."
- *Example:*
  - *Correct:* Do you have any jewelry I can have (e.g. rings, necklaces) for the dance?
  - *Incorrect:* Do you have any jewelry I can have (e.g. rings, necklaces, earrings, or anklets) for the dance?
    - This example is incorrect because we listed all the potential pieces of jewelry that you could possibly want for the dance. When using e.g., we only want to give one or two examples.

i.e.
In general, use i.e. if you can replace a word of a phrase in a sentence with examples.
- *Definition:*
  - Latin abbrevation for *id est* meaning "that is" or "equal to" (=).
- *Example:*
  - *Correct:* They sell many animals (i.e. birds, mice, cats, and snakes) at the pet store. *Same sentence without i.e.:* They sell birds, mice, cats, and snakes at the pet store.
  - *Incorrect:* They sell many animals (i.e. birds) at the pet store.
    - This example is incorrect because "birds" is not equivalent to "many animals." Birds are just one of the many animals at the pet store. Therefore, e.g. would be more appropriate because "bird" is one example.

etc.
In general, use etc. when making a non-exhaustive list of related concepts.
- *Definition:*

- ○ Latin for *et cetera* meaning "and others" or "and the rest."
- *Example:*
  - ○ *Correct:* I'm writing a paper on the planets in our solar system (Mercury, Venus, Earth, etc.) for my astronomy class.
  - ○ *Incorrect:* I'm writing a paper on the planets in our solar system (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto, etc.) for my astronomy class.
    - ■ This example is incorrect because you have named all possible things to be included in the list. No other planets need to be listed and therefore using etc. is unnecessary.

Latin Terms and Abbreviations in Citations and Bibliographies

The following is a list of Latin terms and abbreviations that are used to save space in citations and bibliographies.

All major style guides (MLA, APA, and Chicago) agree that these Latin abbreviations should not be used within the body of a paper and should be limited to footnotes, endnotes, figures, and other places outside the main body of the text ("Latin Terms and Abbreviations," UNC Writing Center).

passim
In general, use passim only if the idea reoccurs in the text and there is no way to pin the idea to a single page in the text.
- *Definition:*
  - ○ Latin for "here," "there," or "throughout." In a bibliography, it is used to show that the specific piece of information occurs throughout a text.
- *Example:*
  - ○ Verne, Jules. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.* Chicago: Rand McNally, 1928. Print. Passim.

et al.
In general, use et al. when there are multiple authors contributing to a text.
- *Definition:*
  - ○ Latin abbreviation for *et alii* meaning "and other people." Common in APA papers, et al. is used for citations that are published by:
    - ■ Three, four, or five authors: If you have a text written by three, four, or five authors, you may write the first author's last name and place et al. after. However, the first time you introduce the text, you will need to name all of the authors.
    - ■ Six or more authors: You will not need to name all of the authors the first time you introduce the text. You may use et al. the first time you introduce the text and every time you refer to the text afterword.
- *Example:* (Cornell, James, Sun, Kerry, & Harlow, 1993) the first time cited and (Cornell et al., 1993) when cited subsequently.

ibid.
In general, use ibid when you are listing the exact same citation in succession.
- *Definition:*

○ Latin abbreviation for *ibidem* meaning "in the same place." It is used to cite the same source and the same page number, and may be used in text or in end notes or footnotes.
- *Example:*
  ○ In footnotes:
    > 1. James, 47.
    > 2. Ibid.
    > 3. Ibid.

id.

In general, use id in a footnote (similarly to ibid) when you're using the same citation source, but with a different page number.
- *Definition:*
  ○ Latin abbreviation for *idem* meaning "the same person." It is similar to ibid, but used to denote the same author with a different page number.
- *Example:*
  ○ In footnotes:
    > 1. James, 22.
    > 2. Ibid.
    > 3. Id, 37.
    - ■ In this example, ibid tells us that the second citation is from the same author and the same page number. The third citation, id, tells us that the information is coming from the same author but a different page number.

Other Helpful Latin Terms and Abbreviations

The following is a list of other Latin terms and abbreviations that you might find when reading citations or use in your own bibliographies, footnotes, and endnotes.

N.B.

In general, use N.B. for important supplemental information in a paper.
- *Definition:*
  ○ Latin abbreviation for *nota bene* meaning "note well" or "pay attention." **N.B. is the only abbreviation on this worksheet that must be capitalized.** Used in footnotes and endnotes, N.B. denotes a piece of information that is important to a particular idea in the text, yet not vital enough to include in the paper itself.
- *Example:*
  ○ N.B.: Data was collected by multiple researchers with potential varying viewpoints.

sic

In general, sic is used when an original quote has an error made by the author.
- *Definition:*
  ○ Latin abbreviation for *sic erat scriptum* meaning "thus it was written." Sic denotes that the word/sentence appears in your paper the same way as it appears in the original quotation/text, regardless of any error in the original quotation/text.
- *Example:*
  ○ "I didn't know there [sic] family was from Kentucky."

■ In this case, the author used the wrong "there." Grammatically, you would want to use "their," but since it is part of the original quotation, and you cannot correct it for the author, you can use [sic] to denote the error.

vs.

In general, use vs. when talking about a match or fight.

- *Definition:*
  - ◎ Latin abbreviation for *versus,* meaning "against."
- *Example:*
  - ◎ Tyson vs. Holyfield

viz.

In general, use viz. when you want to give a more precise example.

- *Definition:*
  - ◎ Latin abbreviation for *videlicet* meaning "it is permitted to see" or "namely" or "that is to say." It is similar to i.e., but more precise.
- *Example:*
  - ◎ This novel is dedicated to my family, viz. my mother, father, sister, and brother.

sc.

In general, use sc. when you want to give a more precise example.

- *Definition:*
  - ◎ Latin abbreviation for *scilicet* meaning "as if to say." Similar to i.e. Like viz., it is used to give a more specific example than i.e.
- *Example:*
  - ◎ This novel is dedicated to my friends, sc. Johnny and Jane.

circa

In general, use circa when talking about a general period of time., not a specific date.

- *Definition:*
  - ◎ Latin for "around or approximately."
- *Example:*
  - ◎ This album was released circa 1990.

cf.

In general, use cf. to give an alternative or counter argument(s) to the reader.

- *Definition:*
  - ◎ Latin abbreviation for *confere* meaning "compare." It is used in endnotes or footnotes to foster a comparison between two texts or sources.
- *Example:*
  - ◎ Jones 2011, Dawns 2008; cf. on fingerprinting Lannister 1983.
    - ■ Here, cf. denotes that the reader could read Lannister for an alternative or counter argument to Jones and Dawns.

Exercises

Exercise 1

In the following sentences, fill in the blank with the appropriate Latin term or abbreviation.

1. I don't remember the exact year, but my favorite book was published _____ 2003.
2. I went to the nursery and bought many flowers (_____tulips, daisies) for my garden.

3. The baseball game we attended was the Cubs _____ the Giants.
4. Mary wrote in her paper, "I enjoyed they're [___] interpretation of the novel's theme."
5. Jason enjoys many different styles of cuisine: Italian, Thai, Mexican, _____.

Exercise 2
Answer the following questions about Latin terms and abbreviations based on the examples and definitions discussed earlier in this handout.

1. Which Latin term or abbreviation must ALWAYS be capitalized?
2. When an author has made a mistake, which Latin term or abbreviation do you include when quoting their work?
3. Which two terms can be used when you want to give a more precise example?
4. Which Latin term or abbreviation is short for *confere*?
5. Which Latin term or abbreviation do you use when you are listing the exact same citation in succession?

Exercise Answer Key
Exercise 1

1. circa
2. e.g.
3. vs.
4. sic
5. etc.

Exercise 2

1. N.B.
2. sic
3. viz. and sc.
4. cf.
5. ibid

Works Cited

The Writing Center "Latin Terms and Abbreviations," University of North Carolina, http://writing-center.unc.edu/handouts/latin-terms-and-abbreviations (Accessed September 21, 2015)