



Uni-edit 写作技巧 015

何时需要定义缩略词？

难度：中级

如今，读学术论文不会遇到缩略词几乎是不可能的。使用缩略词的目的是使论文更容易阅读、为新概念创造新的术语。然而，随着时间的推移，越来越多的学者担心缩略词会阻碍沟通，而不是帮助沟通。定义缩略词即写出全称并在括号中给出缩写，那什么时候应该给定义缩略词，什么时候不应该呢？

使用不含全称的缩略词

例子 # 1：“众所周知”的缩略语

你能立即明白“light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation”（光受激辐射放大）所描述的技术吗？那么“self-contained underwater breathing apparatus”（自给式水下呼吸器）呢？

有些术语已被广泛使用，没有必要使用全称：事实上，使用全称反而会令人困惑！哪一个更容易理解呢，是上面的说法还是日常用语“Laser 激光”和“Scuba 水肺”？

经验法则是，如果你在工作场合、实验室或教室以外，听到某缩略词被频繁使用，那么你可以使用缩写而非全称。例如，不是只有分子生物学家知道 DNA，也不是只有数学家知道 3D、国际关系专家知道 UN，事实是众所周知。

例子 # 2：标准缩略词

然而，关于什么是“众所周知”的缩写并没有绝对的共识。例如，有机化学家立马知道 DMSO（低毒性溶剂二甲亚砜）是什么，机械工程师也知道什么是 EMF（电动势）。但前者很少需要测量 EMF，而后者也很少接触 DMSO：所以在普遍意义上说这两个词是“众所周知的”，似乎是不合理的。

查看一下目标期刊是否提供了“标准缩略词列表”、例如，如果你希望在有机化学期刊上发表论文，可以查看他们的[“标准缩略词列表”](#)，看看“DMSO”是否可以不使用缩写形式。

也可以看看在你的相关领域的其他作者是如何做的。如果你可以找到超过五个使用缩写、没有使用全称的术语，那么这样做应该是没有问题的。要记住的是，这些作者也是你的主要观众：如果你们在会议上见面，使用某些词时，只用缩略词，便可以完全相互理解。

使用缩写词并添加全称

例子 # 1: 不常见的或可能不熟悉的概念 (对读者来说)

这是学术写作中最常见的情况：由于太普遍，一些作者（错误地）把它认为这是绝对的规则。如果首字母缩略词不在标准列表中，那么在论文中第一次使用时应该加上全称，特别在缩略词是句子的主语时。

- **The Profile of Mood States (POMS) is a commonly used measure of psychological distress.**
情绪状态量表 (POMS) 是检查情绪状态的常用评量表。
- **In an earlier paper, an acoustic wave propagator (AWP) was proposed to describe the time-domain evolution of mechanical waves in various media.**
声波传播器 (AWP) 作为一种用来描述机械波在各种介质中的时域演化在较早的论文中被提出。

即使你认为读者会认识这个词，使用缩写也是有用的，原因如下：

- 为了避免混淆，如果缩略词的含义不是句子的重点，尤其如此。
- 为了节省空间，缩略词是一个单词，另外，在空间有限的图表中很实用。
- 吸引知识广博的读者，有时，研究人员在搜索数据库使用的是缩写而不是术语全称，使用缩略词会确保你的研究会在搜索结果中排名靠前。

例子 # 2: 创建自己的缩略词

在论文中使用某一重要概念或提出某一新概念时，有时你可能会想创建自己的缩略词。

在比较不同分组时，在“结果”部分中也很常见（例如 A 组，C 组）。在空间有限的图表及数据中很适用。

- **Leukemia recurrence rates in patients treated with imatinib+steroid therapy (I+S) were compared with those of patients treated with imatinib monotherapy (IM), and with the conventional treatment (CT).**
将用伊马替尼+类固醇治疗 (I + S) 治疗与用伊马替尼单一治疗 (IM) 治疗和常规 (CT) 治疗的白血病患者复发率进行比较。

在白血病化疗文献中你不会找到这些缩略词。然而，由于“结果”部分着重比较这三组，所以如果你创建标签来标记比较对象，会更方便读者了解你的数据。

仅使用全称

例子 # 1: 仅在论文中出现一次

即便某个词存在缩略词形式，但如果这个词在论文中只需使用一次，那么就不一定必须使用缩略词。

- **This paper proposes a novel finite-difference time-domain (FDTD) technique to solve Multiphysics problems. In the past, researchers have developed the finite-element time-domain (FETD) and boundary-element time-domain (BETD) numerical methods to find solutions to these equations, but these will not be discussed here.**

本文提出了一种新的时域有限差分法（FDTD）来解决多物理场问题。过去，研究人员已经提出了时域有限元（FETD）和时域边界元法（BETD）来找到解决方法，但在这里不会讨论。

在这种情况下，缩略词“FETD”和“BETD”在论文中不会再出现，所以不需要定义缩略词。

END OF TIP

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Uni-edit English Writing Tip 015

When do I have to define my acronyms?

Difficulty: Intermediate

These days, it's almost impossible to read an academic paper without encountering acronyms. The intention is to make papers easier to read, and to create new lingo for new concepts. However, as time goes by, more scholars are worrying that acronyms are impeding communication, rather than helping it.

So, when should you introduce acronyms to define a full term, when shouldn't you?

Use the Acronym without the Full Term

Case #1: "Well-known" Acronyms

Do you immediately understand the technology described by "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation"? What about "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus"?

Some terms have become so widespread, that it is unnecessary to define them: in fact, defining them might be confusing! Which was easier to understand: the language above, or the everyday words "laser" and "scuba"?

A good rule of thumb is if you have heard an acronym spoken aloud by people outside your workplace, laboratory, or classroom, you can probably use the acronym without defining it. For example, not only molecular biologists know what DNA is, not only mathematicians know what 3D is, and not only international relations experts know what the UN is.

Case #2: Standard Abbreviations and Acronyms

However, there's no absolute consensus on what constitutes a "well-known" acronym. For example, organic chemists immediately know what DMSO is, while mechanical engineers wouldn't look twice at EMF. But the former rarely need to measure or quantify *electromotive force*, and the latter rarely deal with the low-toxicity solvent *dimethyl sulfoxide*: so, it seems unreasonable to say either is "well known" in a universal sense.

Check if your target journal provides a "List of Standard Abbreviations", "List of Standard Abbreviations and Acronyms", etc. For example, if you were looking to publish in the *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, you could consult their [Standard Abbreviations and Acronyms](#) and find out that "DMSO" can be used without abbreviation.

Within your field, it is also good practice to see what other authors are doing. If you can find more than five that use an acronym without defining the term, then it is probably safe to do so yourself. Remember, they are also your primary audience: if you met at a conference, and just used the acronym, you would understand each other perfectly.

Define the Term and Use the Acronym

Case #1: Uncommon or Perhaps Unfamiliar Concepts (to your Readers)

This is the most common case in academic writing: it is so common, some writers are (mistakenly) taught it as an absolute rule. If an acronym isn't in a standard list, you should probably define it the first time you use it in your paper, especially if the acronym is the grammatical subject of the sentence.

- The Profile of Mood States (POMS) is a commonly used measure of psychological distress.
- In an earlier paper, an acoustic wave propagator (AWP) was proposed to describe the time-domain evolution of mechanical waves in various media.

Even if you expect your readers to know the acronym, it can be useful for several reasons.

- To avoid confusion. This is especially true if the meaning of the acronym is not the main focus of the sentence.
- To save space. An acronym counts as one word for the purpose of word counts. In addition, it is useful in Figures and Tables where space is often limited.
- To attract knowledgeable readers. Sometimes researchers will search databases using the acronym rather than the real term: using the acronym ensures your research will appear and rank highly in their search results.

Case #2: Your Own Acronyms

Sometimes you'll want to create your own acronyms. You might do this for an important concept to your paper, or a new one you are proposing.

It is also common in the Results section, when you want to compare groups. (e.g. A group, C group). This is fine, especially in tables and figures where space is limited.

Example: Leukemia recurrence rates in patients treated with imatinib+steroid therapy (I+S) were compared with those of patients treated with imatinib monotherapy (IM), and with the conventional treatment (CT).

You won't find these acronyms in the literature on chemotherapy for leukemia. However, since the Results section is devoted to comparing these three groups, readers can more easily understand your data if you create labels to mark the objects of comparison.

Use the Full Term Only

Case #1: Only Used Once

Even if an acronym is possible, you don't have to use it. If you use a term for which an acronym is possible only once in a paper, you don't need to provide an acronym.

This paper proposes a novel finite-difference time-domain (FDTD) technique to solve multiphysics problems. In the past, researchers have developed the finite-element time-domain (FETD) and boundary-element time-domain (BETD) numerical methods to find solutions to these equations, but these will not be discussed here.

In this case, the acronyms "FETD" and "BETD" are not used again in the paper, so it is unnecessary to define them.

END OF TIP