



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Though abbreviations and acronyms are generally not used in formal writing with the exception of some scientific or technical writing, it is important to be familiar with some of the more common ones.

These could occur in both spoken and written English. If they are used in formal writing, it is necessary to reference them correctly.

These study notes focus on the more common abbreviations and acronyms, and their forms.

An **abbreviation** is a short form of a phrase or name that is made by using the initial letters of each word.

Abbreviations can be names of:

Countries, Territories, States, Provinces:

ACT – **A**ustralian **C**apital **T**erritory, UK – **U**nited **K**ingdom, PNG – **P**apua **N**ew **G**uinea, USA – United **S**tates of **A**merica, BC – **B**ritish **C**olumbia

Organisations:

EU – **E**uropean **U**nion, UN – **U**nited **N**ations

Corporations:

IBM – **I**nternational **B**usiness **M**achines, GM – **G**eneral **M**otors

Medical Terms:

DNA – **D**eoxyribo**N**ucleic **A**cid, ECG – **E**lectro**c**ardiogram, MRI – **m**agnetic **r**esonance **i**maging

Government Agencies:

ATO – **A**ustralian **T**axation **O**ffice, FBI – **F**ederal **B**ureau of **I**nvestigation

Television Stations:

ABC – **A**ustralian **B**roadcasting **C**orporation, BBC – **B**ritish **B**roadcasting **C**orporation, CBC – **C**anadian **B**roadcasting **C**orporation

Universities:

UTS – **U**niversity of **T**echnology, **S**ydney, RMIT – **R**oyal **M**elbourne **I**nstitute of **T**echnology, UNSW – **U**niversity of **N**ew **S**outh **W**ales, UCLA – **U**niversity of **C**alifornia, **L**os **A**ngeles

Products:

TV – **t**ele**v**ision, ATM – **a**utomatic **t**eller **m**achine, CD – **c**ompact **d**isc, DVD – **d**igital **v**ersatile **d**isc, PC – **p**ersonal **c**omputer

STUDY TIPS

In formal academic writing, acronyms and abbreviations should only be used if they are well known or frequently referred to in your essay.

Remember to give its full form first, followed by the acronym or abbreviation in parentheses.



Degrees:	LLB – Bachelor of Laws, BA – B achelor of A rts, MA – M aster of A rts, PhD – D octor of P hilosophy
Professions, Positions:	CA – c hartered a ccountant, QC – Q ueen's C ounsel, CEO – c hief e xecutive o fficer, DA – D istrict A ttorney

In spoken English, abbreviations are read letter-by-letter. When pronouncing each letter, the last sound (letter) normally carries the primary stress / ' / and is, therefore, pronounced more strongly. The other sounds (letters) carry the secondary stress / , / and are, thus, pronounced more weakly.

For example:

ACT	/ , e , si ' ti /
EU	/ , I ' ju /
DNA	/ , di , n ' e /
ABC	/ , e , bi ' si /
UTS	/ , ju , ti ' s /

When an abbreviation is pronounced as a word, for example IELTS / a ' j lts /, this form of abbreviation is called an **acronym**.

IELTS / a ' j lts / means **I**nternational **E**nglish **L**anguage **T**esting **S**ystem.

Other examples of acronyms include:

VTOL	' vit l /	v ertical t ake o ff and l anding
ASEAN	' æ zi æ n / or ' æ si æ n /	A ssociation of S outh- E ast A sian N ations
*RADAR	' re d a /	R adio D etecting A nd R anging
RAM	' r æ m /	R andom A ccess M emory
*scuba	' skub ə /	self contained underwater breathing apparatus
*QANTAS	' kw æ t ə s /	Q ueensland and N orthern Territory A erial S ervices

*These were originally acronyms, but because their abbreviated form has become well known, one no longer needs to include its full form.

In formal academic writing, you should give the full form of the abbreviation or acronym the first time it appears, followed by its abbreviation in parentheses.

For example:

Recent developments in the region required that members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) meet for top-level discussions. The ASEAN presence was vital to progress the situation.

Abbreviations Of Latin Words

Latin words commonly appear as abbreviations. They are often used in formal writing and academic texts. The most common Latin abbreviations are: eg, ie, NB, etc.

Abbreviation	Latin word	Meaning
eg	exempli gratia	for example
etc	et cetera	and so on, and all others
ie	id est	that is, in other words, this means
NB	Nota bene	note well, make note

While it is important to understand the meaning of abbreviations, especially when reading academic texts, the less common ones would not generally be used in your formal writing.

Other Latin Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Latin word	Meaning
AD (A.D.)	anno Domini	in the year of our Lord – used after the beginning of the Western calendar
BC (B.C.)	before Christ	used before the beginning of the Western calendar
am (AM)	ante meridiem	before midday
c. or ca.	circa	approximately, about
cf.	confer	compare
et al	et alii	and others
ibid.	ibidem	in the same place
loc. cit.	loco citato	in the places already mentioned
op. cit.	opera citato	in the work already mentioned
pm (PM)	post meridiem	after midday
q.v.	quod vide	refer to, see
viz.	videlicet	namely, that is to say
vs.	versus	against, opposing