



# CIHR English Style Guide

HTML: [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/44167.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/44167.html)

The CIHR English Style Guide is intended for everyone who produces documents for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) for publication or distribution. The objective of the guide is to help you produce clear, high-quality written material that is consistent with CIHR style and contemporary English usage.

For recommendations on style and usage in French, consult the [Guide de rédaction française des IRSC](#). For help with terminology and official titles of CIHR programs and initiatives, consult the [CIHR English-French Lexicon](#). For a list of funding-related terms and definitions, consult the [Glossary of Funding-Related Terms](#).

If you have any questions or comments about the guide, or to make suggestions, please contact Marc Gushue at [marc.gushue@cihr-irsc.gc.ca](mailto:marc.gushue@cihr-irsc.gc.ca).

June 2021

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# 1. CIHR and its partners

## 1.1 Referring to CIHR and its Institutes



The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is always spelled out in full on first mention, followed by its abbreviation in parentheses, as in this sentence; it can then be referred to as CIHR. Please note that both in full and as an abbreviation, CIHR is always singular.

Similarly, CIHR Institutes should always be referred to by their full name on first mention, followed by their abbreviation in parentheses; they may subsequently be referred to by their abbreviation only.

Institute names, whether written in full or as an abbreviation, are normally accompanied by CIHR's full name or abbreviation. However, to avoid awkward phrasing or heaviness within a text, the CIHR abbreviation may be omitted *provided the Institute's affiliation with CIHR is clear*.

The word *Institute*, when used alone to refer to a CIHR Institute, is always capitalized (e.g. When an Institute approves a grant, it must ensure compliance with Treasury Board policies.). Similarly, when used in the plural to refer to CIHR Institutes collectively, the word *Institutes* is also capitalized (e.g. CIHR Institutes are required to adhere to Treasury Board policies).

Note, however, that when it is used adjectivally (e.g. institute funding, institute initiative, institute model), the word *institute* is not capitalized except as part of an official title (e.g. Ottawa-Based Institute Staff).

### Examples:

- *First mention of both CIHR and the Institute:*

Dr. Jane Dough, a health researcher funded through the **Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG)**, discovered that this mutated gene is related to cancer.

- *Second and subsequent mention of CIHR, first mention of the Institute:*

Dr. John Smith, a health researcher funded through the **CIHR Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG)**, discovered that this mutated gene is related to cancer.

- *Second and subsequent mention of both CIHR and the Institute:*

Dr. Smith will be present at the event, funded through **CIHR-IG**.

**Note:** Both CIHR and institute abbreviations are used without the article *the*.

### Example:

CIHR-INMHA not The CIHR-INMHA

### CIHR Institutes and abbreviations:



- CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (CIHR-IIPH)
- CIHR Institute of Aging (CIHR-IA)
- CIHR Institute of Cancer Research (CIHR-ICR)
- CIHR Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health (CIHR-ICRH)
- CIHR Institute of Gender and Health (CIHR-IGH)
- CIHR Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG)
- CIHR Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (CIHR-IHSPR)
- CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (CIHR-IHDCYH)
- CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity (CIHR-III)
- CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA)
- CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA)
- CIHR Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (CIHR-INMD)
- CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health (CIHR-IPPH)

## 1.2 CIHR boilerplates

If it is necessary to 'explain' CIHR in a document intended for external audiences, please use the following boilerplate text:

### Corporate CIHR Boilerplate

#### Print version:

At the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), we know that research has the power to change lives. As Canada's health research investment agency, we collaborate with partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health care system. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca)

#### Electronic version (URL hyperlinked to CIHR name):

At the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca) (CIHR) we know that research has the power to change lives. As Canada's health research investment agency, we collaborate with partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health care system.

### Institute Boilerplates

Each Institute has its own boilerplate to apply to their products and communications as required. In all cases, the CIHR boilerplate should precede the institute boilerplate.

#### CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (CIHR-IIPH)

The CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (CIHR-IIPH) invests in research to improve and promote the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. The Institute's pursuit of research excellence is enhanced by respect for community research priorities and Indigenous knowledge, values and cultures. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8668.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8668.html)



### **CIHR Institute of Aging (CIHR-IA)**

The CIHR Institute of Aging (CIHR-IA) mission is to support research, capacity building and knowledge mobilization to maintain and improve the health, resiliency and quality of life of older Canadians. This includes addressing the complex health challenges that can be more prevalent in older individuals. The CIHR-IA promotes the use of a lifecycle approach to support advances in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care delivery, and social determinants of health.

The CIHR-IA is a national leader in addressing health research priorities for older adults. Institute initiatives not only link and support researchers located in universities and hospitals across the country, but also bring together different levels of government, practitioners, voluntary health organizations and older adults themselves. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8671.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8671.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Cancer Research (CIHR-ICR)**

The CIHR Institute of Cancer Research (CIHR-ICR) invests in research in all areas of cancer control. ICR helps reduce the burden of cancer on individuals and families through research on prevention strategies, screening, early diagnosis, effective treatments, psycho-social support systems, and palliation. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/12506.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/12506.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health (CIHR-ICRH)**

The CIHR Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health (CIHR-ICRH) invests in research on conditions associated with the heart, lungs, brain (stroke), critical care, blood, blood vessels, and sleep. By supporting advances in biological sciences, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention, ICRH seeks to protect and improve the health of all Canadians. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8663.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8663.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Gender and Health (CIHR-IGH)**

The CIHR Institute of Gender and Health (CIHR-IGH) invests in research that examines the influence of sex and gender on health. IGH also works to ensure this research evidence supports the development of policies and programs that address pressing health challenges facing men, women, boys, girls, and gender-diverse people. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8673.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8673.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG)**

The CIHR Institute of Genetics (CIHR-IG) invests in research on cell biology, biochemistry, human genetics and genomics, and the impact of related scientific advances on society. Genetic research touches all areas of health, allowing IG to strengthen health care policies and practices, and improve the health of all Canadians. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13147.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13147.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (CIHR-IHSPR)**

The CIHR Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (CIHR-IHSPR) invests in research that will strengthen Canada's health care system. By promoting evidence-based best practices, IHSPR seeks to improve the way health care services are managed and delivered, to maximize benefits for patients. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13733.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13733.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (CIHR-IHDCYH)**

The CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (CIHR-IHDCYH) invests in research that promotes the best health for all Canadians, from the very start of life. By supporting research to improve reproductive, child, and youth health outcomes, IHDCYH helps



young Canadians and families achieve their full potential for ideal growth and development.  
[www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8688.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8688.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity (CIHR-III)**

The CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity (CIHR-III) invests in research on infectious diseases and the body's immune system. Through this research, III addresses a wide range of health concerns related to infection and immunity, including disease prevention and treatment, as well as public health promotion. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13533.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13533.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA)**

The CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA) invests in research related to bones, joints, muscles, skin, and teeth. By supporting advances in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, IMHA seeks to promote active living, preserve mobility, and improve oral health for Canadians. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13217.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13217.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA)**

The CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (CIHR-INMHA) invests in fundamental and clinical research on the brain and spinal cord to enhance the understanding of cognitive, emotional and sensorimotor functions. Advances in these areas will ensure a brighter future for Canadians living with neurological and mental health conditions. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8602.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8602.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (CIHR-INMD)**

The CIHR Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (CIHR-INMD) invests in research on diet, digestion, and metabolism. By addressing the causes, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of a wide range of conditions and problems associated with hormones, the digestive system, kidneys, and liver function, INMD seeks to improve health for all Canadians. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13521.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13521.html)

### **CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health (CIHR-IPPH)**

The CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health (CIHR-IPPH) invests in research to examine how biological, social, and environmental factors and policies affect health. IPPH applies this knowledge to improve health and health equity for all Canadians. [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13777.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/13777.html)

## **1.3 Names of universities and other institutions**

Whenever possible, names of universities, institutions, centres and organizations are to be provided in English in English texts.

- **exception:** École Polytechnique de Montréal

### **Example:**

Dr. François Smith, a CIHR-funded researcher from Laval University, received help from Dr. Jane Leblanc, who works at the University of Montreal.



Names of organizations should be provided in English whenever possible to facilitate understanding and ease of reading. In a formal document, provide the French name first, followed by the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses (if applicable), and then the English translation in square brackets. On subsequent mention, the abbreviation or acronym alone may be used.

**Example:**

The Centre hospitalier de l'Université Laval (CHUL) [Laval University Hospital Centre] is coordinating a number of research initiatives across the province. CHUL is also responsible for liaising with researchers and health care educators.

If the institution or organization has no abbreviation or acronym, use the generic term within the name (with an initial capital) to refer to it on subsequent mention.

**Example:**

The Centre de formation continue [Centre for continuing education] at University of Sherbrooke has established a new program in bioethics. The Centre hopes the program will contribute to patient safety.

## 1.4 Parent institutions and their constituent parts

Many of the institutions whose researchers receive funding from CIHR are part of a larger institution. Both names must be used, with the smaller, constituent part first, then the parent institution, separated by a comma.

**Example:**

Dr. Zhivago received funding at the Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto.

## 2. Referring to people and organizations

### 2.1 Honorifics and abbreviations

CIHR style uses an honorific such as Mr., Ms. or Dr. in front of a person's name. When writing lists or tables of names (e.g. funding recipients), no honorific is needed. When several names are mentioned in succession, all doctors, use Drs. in front of the series of names, rather than repeat Dr. with each one.

Academic degrees and other distinctions come after the name, such as MSc (master of science), MD (medical doctor), PhD (doctor of philosophy), FRSC (Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada), O.C. (Officer of the Order of Canada), C.M. (Member of the Order of Canada), and C.C. (Companion of the Order of Canada). None of these abbreviations have periods with the exception of the Order of Canada distinctions.

Do not combine honorifics with academic degrees. This applies to all types of documents, including correspondence, reports and certificates, as well as to brief references such as bylines and photo credits.



**Example:**

Dr. Roderick McInnes

Roderick McInnes, CM, MD, PhD, FRSC

**NOT:** Dr. Roderick McInnes, CM, MD, PhD, FRSC

## 2.2 Acronyms and initialisms

When using an organization, program or other name that has an acronym or initialism, it should be spelled out in full on the first mention, followed by the acronym or initialism in parentheses. Subsequent mentions should use the acronym or initialism. (See [section 1.1](#) for more information on how to use abbreviations for CIHR and its Institutes.)

**Examples:**

The Strategic Training Initiative in Health Research (STIHR) is intended to develop the researchers of the 21st century. The STIHR program has been widely praised for its multidisciplinary approach.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (HSFC) is one of CIHR's primary partners. HSFC recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

## 3. Spelling

There is often more than one correct way to write words in English. CIHR prefers Canadian spelling to British or American spelling. The recommended spelling authority for CIHR texts is the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (COD). The most important guideline with spelling is consistency; stick with spellings listed in the COD and avoid variant spellings. When the dictionary lists two spellings for a word in the same entry, use the one listed first.

**Note:** In order for your spell-checker to work correctly in Microsoft Word, you must specify which language (or variety of English) you are using. To set your default language in Word to Canadian English (rather than U.S. English), click on Review > Language > Set Proofing Language... then scroll down and select English (Canada), click on Set As Default > Yes and then click OK.

**Tip:** When spell-checking documents received from a third party, it's always a good idea to verify the language of the document and set it to English (Canada) rather than English (U.S.) or English (U.K.). Particular attention should be paid to documents compiled from different sources, since various sections can each be set to a different variety of English, and the spell-checker will therefore not alert you if the same word is spelled differently in different sections of the document.

### 3.1 *our* vs. *or*

Use spellings with *our* rather than *or*.





**Example:**

behaviour NOT behavior  
honour NOT honor  
tumour NOT tumor  
vapour NOT vapor  
vigour NOT vigor

**Note:** Some derived words do not contain the *u*: when *ary*, *ous*, *ize* or *ation* are added to words ending in *our*, the *u* of *our* is dropped, e.g. coloration, honorary, honorific, humorous, vaporize, vigorous.

### 3.2 *re* vs. *er*

Use spellings with *re* rather than *er*.

**Example:**

centre NOT center  
fibre NOT fiber  
meagre NOT meager  
theatre NOT theater

**Note:** When referring to specific organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control in the United States, respect the original spelling.

### 3.3 *ce* vs. *se*

In general, use spellings with *ce* rather than *se*.

**Example:**

defence NOT defense  
offence NOT offense  
pretence NOT pretense

**Note:** For some words, Canadian spelling differentiates between nouns and verbs, preferring *ce* for nouns and *se* for verbs:

1. licence (noun) and license (verb)
2. practice (noun) and practise (verb)

### 3.4 *ize* and *zse* vs. *ise* and *yse*

Use spellings with *ize* and *zse* rather than *ise* and *yse*.

**Example:**

analyze NOT analyse  
catalyze NOT catalyse



dialyze NOT dialyse  
organize NOT organise  
paralyze NOT paralyse

### 3.5 *e* vs. *ae* and *oe*

A number of scientific and medical terms are derived from Greek and Latin. In general, use spellings with *e* rather than the digraphs *ae* or *oe*.

#### **Example:**

anemia, anemic NOT anaemia, anaemic  
anesthesia, anesthetic NOT anaesthesia, anaesthetic  
anesthesiology, anesthesiologist NOT anaesthesiology, anaesthesiologist  
diarrhea NOT diarrhoea  
edema NOT oedema  
encyclopedia NOT encyclopaedia  
esophagus NOT oesophagus  
estrogen NOT oestrogen  
etiology NOT aetiology  
gynecology, gynecologist NOT gynaecology, gynaecologist  
hematology, hematologist NOT haematology, haematologist  
hemophilia, hemophiliac NOT haemophilia, haemophiliac  
hemorrhage NOT haemorrhage  
orthopedic NOT orthopaedic  
pediatric, pediatrics, pediatrician NOT paediatric, paediatrics, paediatrician

#### **But:**

aesthetic NOT esthetic  
amoeba NOT ameba  
Caesarean NOT Cesarean  
manoeuvre NOT maneuver

### 3.6 single vs. double consonant before word endings

In general, in words ending with a short vowel and a single consonant double the consonant when adding a suffix.

#### **Example:**

counsellor, counselled, counselling NOT counselor, counseled, counseling  
formatted, formatting NOT formated, formating  
labelled, labelling NOT labeled, labeling  
modelled, modelling NOT modeled, modeling  
traveller, travelled, travelling NOT traveler, traveled, traveling



**But:**

focused, focuses, focusing NOT focussed, focusses, focussing  
paralleled, paralleling NOT parallelled, parallelling

### 3.7 CIHR spelling of common words and phrases

In the interest of consistency, CIHR has adopted some conventions about what form of several words and phrases to use. Among them:

ageism NOT agism

aging NOT ageing

all right NOT alright

Alzheimer's disease NOT Alzheimer disease

Caesarean section NOT caesarean section, cesarean section, caesarian section

catalogue, catalogued, cataloguing NOT catalog, cataloged, cataloging

daycare NOT day care

Down syndrome NOT Down's syndrome

ebulletin, eBulletin NOT e-bulletin, e-Bulletin, E-bulletin, Ebulletin, etc.

ehealth, eHealth NOT e-health, e-Health, E-health, Ehealth, etc.

email NOT e-mail

focuses NOT foci

forums NOT fora

health care NOT healthcare

home care NOT homecare

home page NOT homepage

Huntington's disease NOT Huntington disease

Métis NOT Metis

modelled, modelling NOT modeled, modeling

Montreal NOT Montréal

offline NOT off-line or off line

online NOT on-line or on line

Parkinson's disease NOT Parkinson disease

preventive NOT preventative

program NOT programme

per cent NOT percent

Quebec NOT Québec

town hall NOT townhall

viruses NOT virii

Web page NOT web page or webpage

website NOT web site

**Note:** The spelling of a number of words changes depending on whether they are used as verbs, nouns or adjectives:

break down (verb), breakdown (noun)

break even (verb), break-even (adjective)



build up (verb), buildup (noun)  
clean up (verb), cleanup (noun, adjective)  
cut off (verb), cut-off (noun)  
dependant (noun), dependent (adjective)  
follow up (verb), follow-up (noun, adjective)  
hand out (verb), handout (noun)  
license (verb), licence (noun)  
practise (verb), practice (noun)  
prophesy (verb), prophecy (noun)  
print out (verb), printout (noun)  
set up (verb), set-up (noun)  
spin off (verb), spinoff (noun)  
start up (verb), start-up (noun)  
tie up (verb), tie-up (noun)

## 4. Hyphenation

Apart from their use in word division, hyphens are often used to join two or more words when they modify a noun: **a single-celled organism, an up-to-date proposal, a well-designed instrument.** Hyphens are also used to join prefixes to proper names (**anti-Parkinson's medications**), single letters to a word (**X-ray** but note: **T cell**), fractions (**two-thirds**) and numbers (**twenty-three**).

Hyphenation requires individual judgment and has few hard and fast rules. In general, do not hyphenate words if the meaning is clear from common usage. However, when there is a possibility of ambiguity, add a hyphen if it will improve clarity.

Consult the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* for the form of frequently used compounds. For detailed instructions on hyphenation, consult a style guide such as [The Canadian Style](#).

**Note:** Do not hyphenate compound expressions in which the adverb ends in *ly*, e.g. a fully employed workforce, a rapidly spreading disease.

### 4.1 Words and expressions commonly hyphenated at CIHR

anti-inflammatory  
clinician-scientist  
co-author, co-authored  
co-founder  
co-infection, co-infected  
co-investigator  
cross-disciplinary  
end-of-life care, end-of-life quality, etc.  
evidence-based medicine, evidence-based policy, etc.  
full-time basis, full-time position, etc.  
high-quality health care, high-quality publication, etc.



large-scale development, large-scale project, large-scale study, etc.  
long-term benefits, long-term study, etc.  
multi-council  
multi-faceted  
multi-institute  
multi-level  
multi-stakeholder  
multi-user  
off-the-record statement, etc. (but: to speak off the record)  
over-the-counter drug, over-the-counter medication, etc.  
part-time employee, part-time researcher, etc.  
patient-oriented primary care, patient-oriented research, etc.  
pay-as-you-go option, pay-as-you-go treatment, etc.  
peer-reviewed article, peer-reviewed journal, peer-reviewed research, etc.  
post-mortem, post-mortem examination, etc.  
problem-based approach, problem-based focus, etc.  
research-based evidence, research-based pharmaceutical company, etc.  
short-term grant, short-term effects, etc.  
spur-of-the-moment decision, etc.  
time-consuming activity, etc.  
under-report, under-reported, etc.  
under-represent, under-represented, etc.  
up-to-date statistics, etc.  
well-being

**Note:** Some compounds that are hyphenated when used adjectivally do not have a hyphen when used alone, e.g. end of life, full time, peer review, short term, long term. Also, most compound adjectives that are hyphenated when preceding the noun do not require hyphens when they appear after the noun.

## 4.2 Words and expressions NOT commonly hyphenated at CIHR

a priori argument, a priori reasoning, etc.  
antibacterial  
anticoagulant  
anticonvulsant  
antidepressant  
antihistamine  
antihypertensive  
antioxidant  
antiretroviral  
antiviral  
baby boom, baby boomer  
bioethics  
biomedical  
capacity building



comorbidity  
cooperate, cooperation  
coordinate, coordination, coordinator  
decision maker, decision making  
electroconvulsive therapy  
email  
ex gratia compensation, ex gratia payment, etc.  
ex officio member, ex officio status, etc.  
groundbreaking  
health care, health care professional, health care system, etc.  
home care, home care assistant, home care worker, etc.  
homemade  
in camera meeting, in camera session, etc.  
interagency  
interdisciplinary  
in vitro fertilization, in vitro diagnostic, etc.  
multicentre  
multicultural  
multidirectional  
multidisciplinary  
multisite  
nationwide  
offline  
ongoing  
online  
overheated  
overqualified  
overrate, overrated  
overreach, overreaching  
overreact, overreaction  
overrepresented  
override, overriding  
overrule, overruled  
overwork, overworked  
peer review committee, peer review process, etc.  
policy maker, policy making  
postdoctoral, postdoctorate, postdoc  
postgraduate  
postnatal  
postsecondary  
predefine, predefined  
predetermine, predetermined  
proactive  
problem solver, problem solving  
reapply, reapplication  
reassess, reassessment



reassign, reassignment  
reinvent, reinvention  
reorganize, reorganization  
subcommittee  
subheading  
subpopulation  
subsection  
subtitle  
underestimate, underestimated  
underfund, underfunded  
undernourished, undernourishment  
worldwide

**Note:** Most foreign expressions are not hyphenated (e.g. per capita consumption, ad hoc committee, in camera meeting, *pure laine* Quebecer), nor should proper nouns or words in quotation marks be hyphenated (e.g. a Privy Council decision, "no fault" insurance). Some compounds that are not hyphenated when used alone have a hyphen when used adjectivally (e.g. decision-making process, problem-solving approach).

## 5. Capitalization

Capital letters serve three basic purposes: to give emphasis, to distinguish proper nouns and adjectives from common ones, and to highlight words in headings and captions. Editorial practice on capitalization varies greatly, however, depending on the intended readership, degree of formality and house style. Consistency is the most important guideline.

In keeping with the modern trend toward lower case, CIHR prefers a "down style" to capitalization for most documents. Many scientific and administrative documents contain numerous acronyms and official titles, and ease of reading is best served with a sparing use of capitals. Proper names are capitalized but words derived from them as well as other significant terms may be written in lower case without loss of respect or clarity.

### 5.1 Titles and headings

CIHR preferred style is to capitalize the first word of titles and headings and use lower case for all other words. Centred titles and headings should capitalize all words except articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions of four letters or less (*in, out, to, from, for, with, etc.*) and conjunctions (*and, but, or*). The first and last word in centred titles or headings should always be capitalized.

#### **Examples:**

Breakthroughs in technology could lead to new vaccine (left-aligned heading)

Breakthroughs in Technology Could Lead to New Vaccine (centred heading)

Creating innovative research for better health and health care (left-aligned heading)

Creating Innovative Research for Better Health and Health Care (centred heading)



## 5.2 Running text

In running text, only official titles and proper nouns and adjectives should be capitalized. Do not use capitals to emphasize words or indicate significant terms such as *grant*, *program*, *project*, *initiative*, *plan* and *priority*. Note that although the names of days and months are capitalized, the names of seasons are not (e.g. spring, fall, winter, summer).

### Examples:

one-year pilot project NOT one-year Pilot Project  
a career transition award NOT a Career Transition Award  
the request for applications (RFA) NOT the Request for Applications (RFA)  
six principal investigators NOT six Principal Investigators  
CIHR-IG's new scientific director NOT CIHR-IG's new Scientific Director

### Government bodies

Capitalize both the legal and applied titles of governments and government departments and agencies, their organizational subdivisions and the names of boards and committees:

- the Government of Canada (the Government)
- the Department of Health (the Department, Health Canada)
- the Governing Council (the Council)
- the Institute of Population and Public Health (the Institute)
- the Stem Cell Oversight Committee (the Committee)

When the short forms shown above in parentheses are used, they should also be capitalized. When used in a generic sense, however, or when preceded by an adjective or used adjectivally, they are normally written in lower case:

- The federal government has created two new departments.
- This institute has issued formal ethics guidelines.
- Canadians have been well served by CIHR's institute model.
- CIHR has formed a committee to study the results.

### Titles of office and professions

Capitalize titles of office when they precede or immediately follow a personal name. It is not necessary to capitalize names of professions such as professor, researcher and manager.

- Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor
- the Scientific Director, Dr. Brian Rowe
- Dr. Michael Strong, President
- Christina Cefaloni, Director General of Communications
- David Hammond, assistant professor

## 6. Punctuation





Punctuation serves to clarify the meaning of a text by indicating the relationships between words and between parts of a sentence. This fundamental purpose of punctuation – to clarify meaning – takes precedence over recommendations governing the use of individual punctuation marks. In the interest of clarity, therefore, punctuation should be as consistent as possible within a given text.

## 6.1 Commas

Commas are used to separate main clauses in a sentence, a series of items in an enumeration, or a series of adjectives before a noun. Commas are also used with numbers in the thousands, except when referring to years and street numbers. Note that the subject of a sentence should not normally be separated from its verb by a comma.

### Examples:

Dr. McInnes acts as acting chief executive officer of CIHR, and the Governing Council acts as the Board of Directors.

In 10 years, we will have a greater understanding of how gender roles, identities, relations and biases affect health behaviours and health outcomes.

CIHR is providing proactive, coordinated, innovative leadership to help researchers study the complex range of issues affecting health.

Over 1,450 grants, renewable until 2015, were awarded to 1,100 people; the grant applications were sent to 1234 Laurier St.

## 6.2 Periods

Periods are used to mark the end of an affirmative sentence or sentence fragment, or of a mild imperative sentence. Periods are also used with honorifics (e.g. Mr., Ms., Dr.), with most lower-case abbreviations such as e.g., a.m., p.m., i.e. and misc., and initials in a person's name (e.g. Lester B. Pearson).

### Examples:

Per capita spending on pharmaceuticals is increasing.

Here's looking at you.

Have a seat.

**Note:** When an entire sentence is enclosed in parentheses, the period belongs inside the closing bracket. When matter in parentheses (even a grammatically complete sentence) is included within another sentence, the period belongs outside.

### Examples:

The director insisted on rewriting the entire paragraph. (He was a control freak.)

The doctor left an urgent message (the patient received it too late).

The doctor was determined to help this man (a recent immigrant).



## 6.3 Semicolons

Semicolons are used to join independent clauses instead of using a conjunction such as *or*, *and* or *but* when the clauses are sufficiently related that they do not merit separate sentences.

### **Example:**

The report was two volumes; the first dealt with the methodology, the second with the results.

Semicolons can also be used to separate items in an enumeration that have internal punctuation or are too long or complex to be separated simply by commas. Unlike with commas (see above), semi-colons are used after each item.

### **Example:**

Research grants were awarded to Alice Springs, top researcher in hydrology; Yvon Lavallée, top researcher in gastroenterology; and Tim Burr, top researcher in forestry.

## 6.4 Colons

Colons are used to introduce quotations longer than a short sentence; to introduce an example, an explanation or a formal question; or to introduce lists. Colons are also used in Question and Answer formats.

### **Examples:**

The speaker said: "The need for additional funding for health research is clear. Too much research is going unfunded because there isn't enough money."

The results of the experiment were inconclusive: some patients improved, while others deteriorated.

The funding requirements are:

- Canadian citizenship
- appointment at a recognized university
- at least 10 years of research experience

**Q:** How long has CIHR been in existence?

**A:** CIHR has existed for more than 10 years.

## 6.5 Dashes

Dashes are used to set off asides or parenthetical information within a sentence. A single dash can be used to introduce an explanation, to indicate an omitted word, or to summarize a list.

Do not overuse dashes, as they are a very strong form of punctuation. For ease of reading and typographical reasons, CIHR style prefers to use a single space before and after the dash.



**Note:** To obtain a dash in Microsoft Word, hold down the CTRL key and press the minus sign in the numerical keypad.

**Examples:**

The same nine risk factors – including tobacco use, cholesterol and high blood pressure – appear to be responsible for 90% of all heart disease.

Prosthetics, crutches, a wheel chair – these are all things a patient may need.

He refused to tell anyone – least of all his boss.

Dashes are also used to indicate an inclusive range of numbers such as years, percentages or page numbers, as well as to join place names or modify open compounds.

**Examples:**

The study concluded that serious errors were made in 8–10% of applications in 2009–10. For details, see pages 33–35.

Most of the doctors in Gatineau–Hull were part of the first wave of post–World War II immigration.

## 6.6 Ellipsis points

Ellipsis points are used to indicate an omission in a quotation, a pause, hesitation or interruption, or the passage of time. Ellipsis points should not be used to imply hidden meanings or to separate groups of words for emphasis.

**Examples:**

Should we ... be shaping all research proposals in a way that makes them responsible, not just for generating new knowledge, but also for the translation of that science into practice?

It has become clear that progress in the life sciences will be largely driven by synergies achieved with the physical sciences, engineering and computer science, and even mathematics ...

**Note:** Recommendations for the presentation of ellipsis points vary widely. For simplicity, CIHR prefers to use three points only (including at the end of a sentence), with no spaces between the points and a single space before and after.

## 6.7 Quotation marks

Quotation marks are used to isolate quotations, to highlight a word or phrase, or to indicate unfamiliar terms or words used ironically. Use double quotation marks except for main titles and quotes within a quote.

Periods and commas go inside the closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside. Question marks and exclamation points go inside the quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material; otherwise, they go outside. When a sentence ends with single and double quotation marks, separate them with a no-break space.



Run-in quotations may be introduced by a comma or a colon; a comma is the usual choice for a short quotation, and a colon is the usual choice for a lengthy quotation or one whose introduction ends in "the following." When introducing a quotation with the word *that*, do not use a comma or a colon.

**Example:**

Dr. Smith said, "We think this is best for CIHR as a whole."

"Over the long term," the Minister added in her report, "the growth in health care spending is not sustainable. This is what makes research so important."

The scientific director said that "the value of health research is indisputable."

**Note:** When there are quotations within quotation marks, alternate between double and single quotation marks.

**Example:**

"I've heard the Minister say, 'I don't agree with this decision'," said Dr. Gagnon.

## 7. Usage tips

### 7.1 Italics

Titles of books or reports, statutes, court cases and words in a foreign language (such as Latin names of bacteria) should be in italics. Do not italicize short forms such as "the Act" or "the Charter."

**Examples:**

Smith, John. *The Book of Important Concepts*. 1982. Random House Publishing, pp. 47–48.

*E-coli* is a common bacterium that infects cows and, as a result, infects humans.

The *Privacy Act* has been in force since 1983. Because it sets out important civil rights, the Act is said to have quasi-constitutional status.

### 7.2 Numbers

Write out the numbers from one to nine in full; use digits for 10 and above. Treat ordinal numbers in the same way as cardinal numbers, e.g. seven and seventh, 10 and 10th. The two exceptions to this rule are:

- Never use a number at the start of a sentence; write out the number in full or recast the sentence.
- Use numbers for percentages, together with the % sign; write out *per cent* only when it is unavoidable (e.g. the number comes at the beginning of the sentence).

**Examples:**

Two grants received funding to promote the collective efforts of 15 researchers.

Twenty-one researchers are working as a team.

The total representation was 5% of all employees.

Fifteen per cent of all employees attended the event.

Numbers in the millions or higher should be written as a combination of words and figures.

**Examples:**

More than 2.6 million people have been affected.

According to the proposal, 1,000 people will receive a collective total of \$1 million.

**Years:** A single year should be written with all four digits. When combining more than one year, use only the last two digits of the second year. If pluralizing the year, do not use an apostrophe. Years from previous centuries must use all four digits. Use an en dash, not a hyphen, when indicating a range of years.

**Example:**

Until the late 1990s, Dr. Smith focused on internal medicine. But in 2000–01, she changed her specialty to cardiology.

When writing a specific day, month and year, use a comma to separate the day and the year.

When writing the month and year only, no comma is necessary.

**Example:**

On March 17, 2002, Dr. Ouellette started work as an assistant professor. In June 2004 he was promoted to full professor.

**Phone numbers:** Phone numbers should include the area code, with each part of the number separated by hyphens.

**Example:**

613-941-2672

### 7.3 Vertical lists

Vertical lists, whether set off with bullets, numbers or dashes, follow the same format:

- The sentence introducing the list finishes with a colon.
- List items in a given list should be syntactically alike (all should be nouns, phrases or full sentences, as appropriate).
- Numbers should not be used to introduce list items unless the order, chronology or importance of list items is relevant.
- List items that are syntactically related to the introductory sentence should not be capitalized.



- List items that constitute full sentences and are not syntactically related to the introductory sentence should be capitalized and end with a period.
- List items such as single words, compound terms or short phrases should not be capitalized and do not require punctuation; if list items are longer, a semi-colon is used at the end of each item, the second-last item has an *and* after the semi-colon, and the last item ends in a period.

**Examples:**

Monday's funding announcement will support research in various fields, including:

- HIV/AIDS at the cellular level
- clinical applications of a cancer vaccine
- sociological implications of spousal abuse on children

Dr. Johnson's discoveries offer remarkable hope in the fight against cancer, because:

- he offers insight into the disease's development at the cellular level;
- his team examines the sociological impact of the disease on family; and
- he has laid the foundation for outstanding training of researchers in the years to come.

## 7.4 Titles and headings

CIHR preferred style is to capitalize the first word of a title or heading and use lower case for all other words.

Should you prefer, however, to capitalize all words in a heading or title, remember that articles (a, an, the), prepositions of four letters or less (in, out, to, from, for, with, etc.) and conjunctions (and, or, but) are not capitalized, except when they are the first or last word in the title.

**Examples:**

Breakthroughs in vaccine technology could help to solve the HIV/AIDS dilemma  
or

Breakthroughs in Vaccine Technology Could Help to Solve the HIV/AIDS Dilemma

## 7.5 CIHR address

CIHR's address should be presented as follows (note that there is no comma after the province name, and that the postal code is preceded by a double space):

**Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

160 Elgin Street, 9th Floor  
Address Locator 4809A  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0W9

## 7.6 Internet addresses



CIHR style prefers not to include the protocol <http://> in the link text of Internet addresses. For example, write [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/) NOT <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/>.

In addition, if a URL is provided for the link text of an Internet address, the URL should match the address provided. For example, do not use [www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/) for the link text if the link address is [www.cihr.gc.ca/cafe\\_scientifique.html](http://www.cihr.gc.ca/cafe_scientifique.html). Otherwise, if users type the address as it is displayed (rather than clicking on it), they may not end up on the correct page.

## 7.7 Superscript

CIHR style prefers not to use superscript when numbers and letters are combined in expressions such as 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 50th.

## 7.8 Preposition at end

Contemporary English usage guides agree that it is both acceptable and idiomatic to end a sentence with a preposition. Ending prepositions are preferable to the awkward phrasing that often results from attempts to avoid them. If a sentence sounds awkward or unclear with a preposition at end, recast the sentence.

### Examples:

What are you waiting for?

I have no idea what he is talking about.

This is the sort of thing I will not put up with.

## 7.9 Split infinitive

A split infinitive is a grammatical construction in which an adverb comes between the word *to* and the verb, as in "to roundly criticize." Although the construction itself has been roundly criticized as ungrammatical or inelegant, it is now generally accepted, especially in preference to awkward phrasing. The *Dictionary of English Usage* goes further, stating that "the objection to the split infinitive has never had a rational basis."

### Examples:

He used to continually refer to his own research, without letting anyone else get a word in.

The government is caught between its promises to simultaneously cut taxes, increase research spending and balance the budget.

# 8. Formatting documents

The most important rule of all: When preparing a document that will ultimately be laid out by a graphic designer, avoid excessive formatting such as the use of text boxes, graphics (if possible) and large numbers of fonts.

## 8.1 Spacing



Always use a single space after any form of punctuation (a period, a colon, a quotation mark, an exclamation point, a question mark, a comma or a semi-colon). A double space is not required after a period or colon.

## 8.2 Heading levels

Headings (titles, subtitles, etc.) should be differentiated by type size, use of bold and italics, etc. to indicate their hierarchy or relative level of importance.

For example, the titles of the main chapters or sections are level-one headings. Subheadings within the chapter or section are level-two headings, and so on.

## 8.3 Layout for President's letterhead

Should you need to submit a letter on behalf of the President, format the document as follows:

**Margins:** Set 1.75" from the top, 1.58" from the left, 1" from the right, 1.5" from the bottom; on subsequent pages, change the margin from 1.75" to 1" at the top.

**Font Style:** Times New Roman

**Font Size:** 12 pt.

**Layout:** The date should appear at the top left of the page, followed by addressee's name and address, the salutation (Dear...), and then the text itself, all flush left. The text should not be indented. "Sincerely," should be used as the sign-off.

**Spacing:** Two carriage returns should follow the date, two carriage returns should follow the addressee's specifics, one carriage return should follow the salutation, and one carriage return should separate paragraphs. Five carriage returns should separate "Sincerely," from Dr. McInnes' title, in order to allow space for his personal signature.

**Signature specifications:** Below his personal signature, Dr. Strong's name should be listed as "Michael J. Strong, MD, FRCPC, FAAN, FCAHS, President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research."

## 8.4 Logos and Federal Identity Program (FIP) requirements

To obtain the CIHR leaf and CIHR FIP visit CIHR's [visual identity page](#).

## 8.5 CIHR internal publications templates

Communications and Public Outreach has prepared templates for use in preparing internal documents such as reports, manuals or PowerPoint presentations. Consult the CIHR Intranet (CIHR employees only).

# 9. Choosing the right word

Many words are very similar in meaning or spelling – but correct or incorrect depending on the context. Here are some of the most common examples:





## 9.1 between vs. among

*Between* expresses the relationship of one thing to one or more other things. *Between* is not limited to comparisons of only two things – it has in fact long been recognized that using *between* to refer to more than two things is perfectly acceptable when these things relate to each other individually rather than collectively. Moreover, when the relationship is reciprocal, not general, *between* is the only acceptable word. *Among* has a similar sense to *between* but indicates a more undefined or collective relationship.

### Examples:

Trade has increased between members of the European Union.

The relationship between grammar, language and social status is unclear.

Among proposed solutions to the pandemic, only the first seemed feasible.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is rarely honour among thieves.

In the following example, note how *between* emphasizes differences between one person and each of a number of others (or the whole of them collectively), while *among* shows an indefinite relationship within the group:

The differences of opinion between the minister and the SDs are likely smaller than the differences among the SDs themselves.

## 9.2 its vs. it's

*Its* is a pronoun indicating possession or ownership, while *it's* is a contraction of *it is*.

### Example:

It's safe to delay interventions after a mild heart attack.

Osteoarthritis is difficult to treat, and its onset is often difficult to detect before damage has been done.

## 9.3 their vs. there

*Their* is a pronoun indicating possession or ownership, while *there* is an adverb indicating placement.

### Example:

The program has helped researchers commercialize the results of their work.

"There are no good reasons to go there," she said.

## 9.4 your vs. you're

*Your* is a pronoun indicating possession or ownership, while *you're* is a contraction of *you are*.



**Example:**

Your intervention was well received.  
"You're responsible, not me," he grumbled.

## 9.5 currently vs. presently

*Currently* and *presently* are synonymous and mean now, at the present time. Although *presently* can also have the meaning *soon*, it is incorrect to restrict the use of *presently* to this sense. Use of *presently* to mean *soon* is more common in formal or literary writing than in scientific documents and is generally clear from the context. If the context is unclear, use *now*, *at present* or *soon* instead of *presently*.

**Example:**

The researchers are presently unemployed. The researchers are currently unemployed.  
There are currently no alternatives. There are presently no alternatives.  
There are presently no known prescription products that contain snake oil.  
The doctor will arrive presently. The doctor will arrive soon.

## 9.6 data vs. datum

Though originally *data* functioned as the plural of *datum*, it is now commonly treated as a mass noun. When *data* means information, or a body/collection of facts, it is used with a singular verb. When *data* means facts or statistics viewed individually, as is common in the sciences, *data* is used with a plural verb. The singular *datum* is seldom used. Do not use a number as a modifier for data as in "five data." Instead, refer to "five pieces of data."

**Example:**

The data is publicly accessible.  
If the data is incomplete or not scientifically sound, it is difficult to draw valid conclusions.  
The data are unadjusted.  
In raw data, the median is defined as the point at which exactly half of the data are above and half below.

## 9.7 media vs. medium

*Media* is the plural of *medium*. Although *media* is plural, its use in informal writing (to refer to mass communications) with either a singular or a plural verb, although criticized, is fairly well established. In scientific contexts and more formal writing, however, use *medium* with a singular verb and *media* with a plural verb.

**Examples:**

"I understand the media," said the MP, "and it apparently understands me."  
"I couldn't care less what the media think," responded the Minister.  
The media have improved their reporting of current issues in health research.  
Some infectious bacteria flourish in almost any type of medium.  
The researchers have experimented with many media but silicone remains the most promising.



## 9.8 more than vs. over / fewer than vs. under

*More than* and *fewer than* refer to numbers, while *over* and *under* refer primarily to a physical position, both figuratively and literally. Although occasionally criticized, it is nevertheless idiomatic to use *over* and *under* to refer to numbers.

### Examples:

More than 75 people attended the meeting; fewer than 20 stayed till the end.  
The discussion was over his head, and his notes lay under the table.  
The clinical trials lasted over 100 days yet cost under \$50,000.  
The policy applies to children under 6 years of age and adults over 21.

## 9.9 fewer vs. less

*Fewer* refers to a number, while *less* generally refers to an amount or quantity. However, *less*, *less than* and *no less than* can be used quite idiomatically in many expressions involving number.

### Examples:

Fewer than 2,000 applications were received.  
There is less money than in previous years.  
The researcher was overworked, having little time and even less patience.  
The lab was underfunded, having few test tubes and fewer Petri dishes.  
The researcher had less than \$1,500 remaining in her budget.  
The scientists were asked to summarize their proposal in 25 words or less.  
No less than 15 Nobel laureates signed the petition.

## 9.10 comprise vs. compose

To comprise means "to be made up of, to include," whereas to compose means "to make up, to form the substance of." The whole comprises the parts, and the parts compose the whole. The phrase *comprised of*, although fairly common, is criticized by many usage guides and is best avoided.

### Examples:

The committee comprises five scientific directors and three employees.  
The committee is composed of both employees and management.  
The scientific method of interpreting reality comprises well-established assumptions and techniques.  
The method is composed of well-established assumptions and techniques.

## 9.11 e.g. vs. i.e.

Whereas *e.g.* provides an example, *i.e.* provides another way of saying something. Both *e.g.* and *i.e.* should be written in roman type and preceded by a comma. Do not start a sentence with *e.g.* or *i.e.*



**Example:**

The funded projects, e.g. the study of new delivery methods for cancer drugs and the project examining the genetic basis of tumours, will fight cancer but do not offer a chance at full remission, i.e. a cure.

## 9.12 that vs. who

Both *that* and *who* are relative pronouns. *That* is used to refer a place or thing, while *who* is used to refer to a person or persons.

**Example:**

The scientist, who currently works at Laval University, is developing a new formula that will revolutionize the way vaccines are used.

## 9.13 that vs. which

**The long story:**

*That* and *which* are relative pronouns used to introduce a subordinate clause. Both *that* and *which* can be used to introduce a restrictive clause (one that defines or identifies an element in the main clause, or restricts its meaning), whereas only *which* can introduce a non-restrictive clause (one that adds descriptive or parenthetical information about an element in the main clause but does not define or restrict its meaning). Restrictive clauses beginning with *that* or *which* cannot be deleted without changing the intended meaning of the sentence. Non-restrictive clauses beginning with *which* are not essential to the sentence and can be deleted without affecting its meaning. Note that whereas restrictive clauses are not set off by commas, non-restrictive clauses should normally be set off by commas.

**The short story:**

*That* is used to introduce information which is essential to the meaning of the sentence as a whole, whereas *which* can be used to introduce the same type of essential information and also to introduce non-essential or parenthetical information. When essential information is introduced by *that* or *which*, it should not be set off by commas. Non-essential information should be set off by commas.

**Examples:**

This is the report that she drafted. NOT This is the report, that she drafted.

This is the report which he was referring to. NOT This is the report, which he was referring to.

The funding will allow researchers to pursue research that will benefit the entire community.

The program will allow researchers to perform research which will lead to new treatments.

The house, which Jack built himself, is made entirely of recycled materials.

The house that Jack built himself is made entirely of recycled materials.

The research, which is concentrated in Alberta, will focus on biomedical elements.

**Note:** The presence or absence of commas can change the meaning of the sentence. Compare:



The committees which had approved the proposal were quick to acknowledge their error.  
The committees, which had approved the proposal, were quick to acknowledge their error.

The first example is restrictive: only some of the committees in question approved the proposal.  
The second example is non-restrictive: all the committees referred to approved the proposal. *That* could be substituted for *which* in the first example but not in the second.

## 10. Sources

The CIHR English Style Guide is principally based on [\*The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing\*](#) (1997), an English style guide produced by the Translation Bureau of Public Works and Government Services Canada for the federal public service.

Any questions not covered in this style guide should first be checked in *The Canadian Style* before other reference works are consulted. For spelling, capitalization or terminology, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and [TERMIUM Plus](#) are excellent references.

In addition, the following may be useful: the [CIHR English-French Lexicon](#), [Writing Tips](#), [Peck's English Pointers](#), *Editing Canadian English* (2000), the *Guide to Canadian English Usage* (2011), *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (1994), *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003), *The Copyeditor's Handbook* (2006), *The Canadian Press Stylebook* (2004), *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* (2012).

For questions of French grammar and style, please consult [Le guide du rédacteur](#) and the [Guide de rédaction française des IRSC](#).