

BYU Statistics Department Style Guide

Common Style Issues

- Use serial commas.
- Periods and commas always go inside closing quotation marks.
- Do not hyphenate words beginning with the prefix “non.” The word should be written as one word. For example, “nonzero.”
- Do not hyphenate adjectives that include an adverb ending in “-ly.” For example, “normally distributed,” not “normally-distributed.”
- Check all hyphenated nouns in Merriam-Webster’s to be certain the compound shouldn’t just be one word or an open compound.
- En dashes should be used between number ranges.
- Be sure that all capitalization of terms is consistent throughout the document.
- Mathematical material should have effective lead-ins and should be punctuated as if it were a sentence.
- Whenever an abbreviation is used, the full term should be used the first time with the abbreviation in parentheses. After that, just the abbreviation can be used.
- Spell out numbers under 10 when they are not part of an equation or an expression containing symbols.
- Use the sign % when giving a specific percentage: for example, 23%, not 23 percent. Otherwise, use the word “percent.”
- Often, passive voice is appropriate. Do not remove most instances of passive voice.
- When active voice is used and the author is writing about an action he or she took, the author should use the pronoun “we” even if there is only one author.
- All variables should be italicized. For example, “The data were generated n times.” This includes Greek letters; for example, “The estimators perform best when σ is less than one.” The Greek character sigma, which appears as σ , is italicized.
- Consider “data” to be plural. “Data set” is singular.
- Do not use contractions for documents written in a formal register, such as theses or projects.
- Use “than” when making a comparison, and use “then” in reference to time or order of events.
- Use present tense when referring to the writings and experiments of others. For example, “Brown (2007) calculates the posterior values,” instead of “Brown (2007) calculated the posterior values.”

Common Terms

Bayesian

bell curve

cdf (Change the term “cdf” to “distribution function.”)

data set

de novo

density function (Change the term “pdf” to “density function.”)

distribution function (Change the term “cdf” to “distribution function.”)

et al. (Latin abbreviation for et alii, and others.)

Gaussian (Commonly used in Gaussian process)

Markov chain Monte Carlo (Abbreviated as MCMC)

nonnegative

nonnormal

nonzero

pdf (Change the term “pdf” to “density function.”)

Poisson (Commonly used in Poisson distribution)

p-values