

The Joint Commission Prohibited Abbreviations List

Official “Do Not Use” List¹

Do Not Use	Potential Problem	Use Instead
U, u (unit)	Mistaken for “0” (zero), the Number “4” (four) or “cc”	Write “unit”
IU (International Unit)	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write “International Unit”
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily)	Mistaken for each other	Write “daily”
Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod (every other day)	Period after the Q mistaken for “I” and the “O” mistaken for “I”	Write “every other day”
Trailing zero (X.0 mg)*	Decimal point is missed	Write X mg
Lack of leading zero (.X mg)		Write 0.X mg
MS	Can mean morphine sulfate or Magnesium sulfate	Write “morphine sulfate”
MSO ₄ and MgSO ₄	Confused for one another	Write “magnesium sulfate”

¹Applies to all orders and all medication-related documentation that is handwritten (including free-text computer entry) or on pre-printed forms.

***Exception:** A “trailing zero” may be used only where required to demonstrate the level of precision of the value being reported, such as for laboratory results, imaging studies that report size of lesions, or catheter/tube sizes. It may not be used in medication orders or other medication-related documentation.

**The *Medical Abbreviations* book by Neil M. Davis
can be purchased at the UTMB Bookstore and used as an abbreviations guide.**

Updated 11/22/2011