



Common Mistakes Made when Writing a Technical Paper

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Here are some of the more common mistakes that even the most seasoned authors often make. You should be aware of them before submitting your paper. Making any of these mistakes will cause your paper to be rejected and returned to you for revision.

Common Mistake #1: Not writing the paper entirely in third person form.

	Subjective Case	Objective Case	Possessive Case
FIRST PERSON			
Singular	I	me	my/mine
Plural	we	us	our/ours
SECOND PERSON			
Singular	you	you	your/yours
Plural	you	you	your/yours
THIRD PERSON			
Singular	he, she, it	him, her, it	his/his, her/hers, its/its
Plural	they	them	their/theirs

Common Mistake #2: Improper capitalization.

Use sentence-style capitalization. That means everything is lowercase except the first word and proper nouns, which include the names of brands, products, and services. A proper noun is individual person, place, or organization, spelled with initial capital letters, e.g., Larry, Mexico, and Boston Red Sox. Common nouns are not to be capitalized.

For example:

The project manager was the owner's representative in dealing with contractor related issues.

Capitalize titles when they precede a name. Do not capitalize them when referring to the position generally.

For example:

The contract was signed by Executive Director Deb Lally.

Deb Lally is the executive director of AAACE.

The Cost Estimating Subcommittee Chair is very knowledgeable.

The subcommittee chairs need to be proactive.

If referring to a specific item in a group, chart, or when referring to a specific publication:

For example:

AACE's cost estimate classification system consists of five classes (1-5). This paper describes a Class 3 estimate.

AACE's recommended practices are widely known and respected. AACE Recommended Practice No. 34R-05, Basis of Estimate, discusses the importance of having a well-defined basis of estimate (BOE).

Although an abbreviation is composed of capital letters, the full words that define the abbreviation are not always capitalized. Theories, methods, tools, and techniques are not capitalized (unless they have a registered trademark). Each case involves considering if the word is an official name or a proper noun.

For example:

This paper will be discussing critical path method (CPM) scheduling.

This paper will be discussing Monte Carlo simulation (MCS).

This paper will be discussing the Last Planner® system

Note that acronyms should only be defined once (they may be used several times but should only be defined one time). Do not define an acronym if it is not used later.

Common Mistake #3: Improper citing and quoting.

When citing or quoting a source, you must include a page number. For instance:

Sample citation: Thomas Edison defined genius as 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration. [1, p.144].

Sample quote: A base estimate is defined as "Estimate excluding escalation, foreign currency exchange, contingency and management reserves." [8, p.12]

The only exception would be if you are providing a general reference to a source, for instance:

For more information on cost estimate classification see [3].