

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS IN SPANISH

Acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations are common in Spanish. Here, we summarize some basic rules and list some common examples.

Acronyms and Initialisms

Acronyms and initialisms are both utilized to shorten a phrase by using the first letter of each word. The difference between an acronym and an initialism is that the former is pronounced as one word, e.g., “*NASA*” and “*LASER*,” whereas the latter is pronounced as separate letters, e.g., “*ATM*” and “*UN*.”

In most cases, we follow the same rules to form acronyms and initialisms in Spanish. For example:

<i>United Nations</i>	UN	O rganización de las N aciones U nidas	ONU
<i>Organization of American States</i>	OAS	O rganización de los E stados A mericanos	OEA
<i>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</i>	NATO	O rganización del T ratado A tlántico N orte	OTAN
<i>International Monetary Fund</i>	IMF	F ondo M onetario I nternacional	FMI
<i>World Health Organization</i>	WHO	O rganización M undial de la S alud	OMS
<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>	NGO	O rganización N o G ubernamental	ONG

Abbreviations

An abbreviation is a shortened version of a word or phrase. It uses the initial part of a word or a combination of the initial and final parts, and is often characterized by a period at the end.

Examples of such abbreviations are titles and professions, such as:

Sr./Sra. (or Sr. ^a)	señor/señora	<i>Mr./Mrs.</i>
Srta.	señorita	<i>Miss</i>
D./Dña. (or D. ^a)	don/doña	<i>Sir/Madam</i>
Dr./Dra. (or Dr. ^a)	doctor/doctora	<i>Dr.</i>
Prof./Prof. ^a	profesor/profesora	<i>Prof.</i>
Ing.	ingeniero/ingeniera	<i>Eng.</i>

The months of the year are abbreviated as follows:

<i>January</i>	enero	<i>July</i>	jul.
<i>February</i>	feb.	<i>August</i>	agosto
<i>March</i>	mar.	<i>September</i>	set./sept.
<i>April</i>	abr.	<i>October</i>	oct.
<i>May</i>	mayo	<i>November</i>	nov.
<i>June</i>	jun.	<i>December</i>	dic.

Notice that the months of “**enero**” (*January*), “**mayo**” (*May*), and “**agosto**” (*August*) are not abbreviated.

The days of the week are often abbreviated using a single letter as follows:

<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tue.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thur.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Sun.</i>
lunes	martes	miércoles	jueves	viernes	sábado	domingo
L	M	X	J	V	S	D

Notice that “**X**” is used for “**miércoles**” (*Wednesday*) to differentiate it from “**martes**” (*Tuesday*).

The units of time are sometimes abbreviated as “**d**” for “**día**” (*day*), “**h**” for “**hora**” (*hour*), “**min**” for “**minuto**” (*minute*), and “**s**” for “**segundo**” (*second*). The “**a.m.**” and “**p.m.**” abbreviations are used in Spanish in a similar manner to that in English.

The *Before Christ* (BC) era is referred to as “**antes de Cristo**” or “**antes de Jesucristo**,” and is abbreviated as “**a.C.**” or “**a.J.C.**” The *Common Era* (CE) is often referred to as “**después de Cristo**” or “**después de Jesucristo**,” and is abbreviated as “**d.C.**” or “**d.J.C.**”

The four cardinal directions are abbreviated as “**N**” for “**norte**” (*North*), “**S**” for “**sur**” (*South*), “**E**” for “**este**” (*East*), and “**O**” for “**oeste**” (*West*). The four ordinal directions are abbreviated as “**NE**” for “**noreste**” (*Northeast*), “**NO**” for “**noroeste**” (*Northwest*), “**SE**” for “**sureste**” (*Southeast*), and “**SO**” for “**suroeste**” (*Southwest*).

The capital of Argentina, “**Buenos Aires**,” is abbreviated as “**Bs. As.**” The common “*e.g.*” abbreviation in English has the equivalent “**ej.**” in Spanish.

Abbreviation of Plural Nouns

One notable exception to abbreviation in Spanish is the doubling of the letters in the abbreviation of plural nouns. Some examples are:

<i>United States of America</i>	<i>USA</i>	Estados Unidos	EE. UU.
<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>HR</i>	Recursos Humanos	RR. HH.
<i>Public Relations</i>	<i>PR</i>	Relaciones Públicas	RR. PP.

* Although “**EE. UU.**” is the correct format according to RAE standards, other variations such as “**EE UU**” and “**EEUU**” are widely accepted.

The doubling of the letters does not usually apply when the abbreviation of a plural word is more than one letter. For example, “**Uds.**” is the

abbreviation for “**ustedes**” (*“you” in plural form*), and “**ejs.**” is the abbreviation for “**ejemplos**” (*examples*).

In addition, the doubling of the letters does not apply when the main noun being described is not in plural form. The most notable example is “**ONU**,” the abbreviation for the “**Organización de las Naciones Unidas**,” which translates to the “*Organization of the United Nations*,” simply referred to in English as the “*United Nations*,” or the “*UN*” for short. Notice that the main noun in the Spanish name is “**organización**,” which is singular. Thus, the doubling of the letters does not apply.