Punctuation and Numbers

Comma (,)
A comma is allowed in an FSN when required for meaning or to add clarity.
For example,
- Computed tomography of head, neck, abdomen and pelvis (procedure)

A comma is not allowed to change sort order for use in the search function.
Unacceptable example,
- Frostbite, acute

Apostrophe (’)
Eponymous descriptions should not include an apostrophe or final s, unless the name normally ends in s. With rare exception, a concept with an eponym should have at least one description that follows this rule.
For example,
- Down syndrome, a synonym for Complete trisomy 21 syndrome (disorder)
- Sjogren syndrome (disorder)
- Meigs syndrome (disorder)

When common usage requires it, there should be at least one description that has the apostrophe s. For descriptions with a possessive apostrophe where the name normally ends in s, the apostrophe should follow the s.
For example,
- Alzheimer's disease (disorder)
- Bowen's disease (disorder)
- Meigs' syndrome (disorder)

Existing eponymous descriptions with the possessive s, but no apostrophe, need not be inactivated, but newly added descriptions should either have no s, or else include the apostrophe.

Special character ( <, >, &, %, $, @, #)
The special characters <, >, &, %, $, @, # are not permitted in FSNs. All instances of FSNs with these characters should be spelled out in full text.
For example,
- FD&C Yellow #2 should be FD and C Yellow Number Two

The characters @ and $ are permitted in preferred terms or synonyms.

The characters @ and $ are not used in any descriptions.

Hyphen and dash (-)
A hyphen is used to join words and to separate syllables. Hyphens may be used in FSNs. There is no space either before or after a hyphen. Hyphens should also follow rules of style for the dialect and language in which the descriptions are used as found in such publications as the Chicago Manual of Style, the American Medical Association’s Manual of Style, a current medical dictionary, etc. Unless used to prevent ambiguity, punctuation is to be used sparingly.
For example,
- Anti-infective agent (product)
- Zollinger-Ellison syndrome (disorder)
- Zellweger’s-like syndrome (disorder)
- Tick-borne hemorrhagic fever (navigational concept)
- Phospho-2-dehydro-3-deoxygluconate aldolase (substance)
- Multidrug-resistant bacteria (organism)
- Pandrug-resistant bacteria (organism)
• Extended spectrum beta-lactamase-producing bacteria (organism)

A dash may be used to separate two phrases, to contrast values, or to show a relationship between two things. A dash should not be used in an FSN, with rare exception, because it may obscure the exact meaning of the description. The dash should be replaced with words that clarify the meaning. A dash is also used to separate an acronym from its expanded form when no other terms are included in a description.

For example,
- 273420000 Disability assessment schedule (assessment scale) has a synonym of DAS - Disability assessment schedule
- 719977005 Communication Activities of Daily Living (assessment scale) has a synonym of CADL - Communication Activities of Daily Living

Exceptions

When there is a need to distinguish categories from more specific subtypes with the same name, a dash followed by the word category, may be used.

For example,
- 416500007 Malignant glioma - category (morphologic abnormality) distinguishes the category of malignant gliomas from those neoplasms that are called 74532006 Glioma, malignant (morphologic abnormality). The neoplasm called malignant glioma is one of several subtypes of 416500007 Malignant glioma - category (morphologic abnormality), and does not have the same meaning as the category itself.

Legacy content may not adhere to current guidelines and will be updated as resources allow.

Colon ( : )

In general, colons should not be used in fully specified names.

Exceptions

Colons are allowed in the FSNs of organisms, substances, or products where the colon is part of the name. They are also allowed in ratios and in tumor stages.

For example,
- Salmonella II 43:g,t:[1,5] (organism)
- Lidocaine hydrochloride 1.5%/epinephrine 1:200,000 injection solution vial (product)
- pT3: tumor invades adventitia (esophagus) (finding)

Colons may be allowed in non-FSN descriptions.

For example, to separate an abbreviation from the rest of a name or a specimen from the finding
- Urine: turbid (finding)

Forward slash ( / )

The forward slash should not be used in FSNs. When the slash is part of the authoritative name (e.g. representation of heterozygosity in hemoglobinopathies), a hyphen (no space before or after) is used in the FSN. The forward slash, without spaces, may be used in a preferred term or synonym.

For example,
- FSN: Sickle cell-hemoglobin C disease (disorder)
- SYN: Hemoglobin S/C disease
- FSN: Per cubic millimeter (qualifier value)
- SYN: /mm³

Exceptions

A forward slash may be used to represent units of measure and laboratory test results. They may also be used in and/or when part of FSNs. There should be no space either before or after the slash.

For example,
- Nitroglycerin 0.3mg/hr disc (product)
• Ibuprofen 5%/Levomenthol 3% gel (product)
• Milligram/deciliter haptoglobin (qualifier value)
• Bone structure of head and/or neck (body structure)

A forward slash may be allowed in non-FSN descriptions in a variety of contexts. Some common examples of use are in acronyms with findings, and as an abbreviation meaning and/or concepts.

Plus sign ( + )

The plus sign is generally discouraged for use in descriptions, and legacy content still contains this symbol. However, some uses are allowed. Plus signs may be found in the product, disposition, and substance hierarchies.

For example,
• [H+/K+-exchanging ATPase inhibitor] is an acceptable synonym for 734582004 Hydrogen/potassium adenosine triphosphatase enzyme system inhibitor (disposition).

Caret symbol ( ^ )

A pair of caret symbols is used to enclose character strings that should display as superscript.

For example,
• Technetium Tc^99m^ labeled carbon (substance)
• Blood group antigen Sd^a^ (substance)

The single caret is used to represent exponents, i.e. powers of, in alignment with the Unified Code for Units of Measure (UCUM) guidance on the use of powers of ten.

For example,
• \(10^3\) for the third power of ten

Pipe character ( | )

A description cannot contain a pipe character, |. Since the | is used to indicate the beginning and end of a description, it may cause confusion.

Umlaut ( ¨ )

An umlaut should only be accepted for terms that do not have equivalences in English. Synonyms without umlauts should be added to facilitate searching in English.

For example,
• 83901003 Sjögren's syndrome (disorder) and one of its synonyms, Sjogrens syndrome

Roman numerals versus Arabic numbers

Use the most common representation found in literature for the fully specified name. Use the alternative representation as a synonym, if it is also represented in the literature. If neither representation is common, use the Arabic representation.

For example, in the *AMA Manual of Style*, cancer stages are expressed with the use of capital Roman numerals: stage I, stage II, stage III, stage IV. The term, “stage 0”, usually indicates carcinoma in situ. Histologic grades are expressed with Arabic numerals, e.g., grade 2.