

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

Editorial Standards

Usage guidelines for the profession and the credential

Because editorial standards reflect the professionalism of an organization, please follow these simple guidelines to solidify the image of the AAMA, the profession, and the credential.

CMA (AAMA) usage

The CMA (AAMA) represents only those medical assistants who have passed the CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination offered by the Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants and who have kept their CMA (AAMA) credential current through recertification.

Generic versus credential

Use “medical assistant” or “medical assisting” when referring to a person working in the field or when referring to the profession. Use “CMA (AAMA)” only when referring to a medical assistant who has been certified by the Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants and has maintained currency.

Singular versus plural

When possible, use the singular sense of CMA (AAMA). Avoid awkward he/she constructions. If the plural form must be used, CMAs (AAMA) is acceptable.

Avoid: The CMA (AAMA) must recertify his or her credential every five years in order to use his or her credential in connection with employment.

Avoid: CMAs (AAMA) must recertify their credential every five years in order to use their credential in connection with employment.

Preferred: The CMA (AAMA) must recertify every five years in order to use the credential in connection with employment.

Note: Possessive forms carry an apostrophe, not plural forms; however avoid cumbersome possessives with the credential whenever possible:

Incorrect: The clinic employs five CMA’s (AAMA).

Correct: The clinic employs five CMAs (AAMA).

Avoid: That is the CMA’s (AAMA) pin.

Preferred: That pin belongs to the CMA (AAMA).

First mention

When the credential is first mentioned in a document, it should be immediately followed by an explanatory statement to clarify what the CMA and AAMA initialisms stand for.

Example: In the specialized world of health care, one versatile professional stands out—the CMA (AAMA). This credential represents a medical assistant who has been certified by the Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA).

Note: Do not spell out CMA followed by “(AAMA),” because readers expect the item in parentheses to spell out the preceding initialism.

Incorrect: Certified Medical Assistant (AAMA) or Certified Medical Assistants (AAMA)

Correct: CMA (AAMA) or CMAs (AAMA)

Note: Because a parenthesized item within a parenthesized item must be bracketed, avoid such awkward constructions.

Avoid: In the specialized world of health care, one versatile professional stands out—the medical assistant who has been certified by the American Association of Medical Assistants (i.e., the CMA [AAMA]).

Preferred: In the specialized world of health care, one versatile professional stands out—the CMA (AAMA). This credential represents a medical assistant who has been certified by the Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA).

Second mention

Once the meaning of CMA (AAMA) has been established, the credential may be used; however remember to use “medical assistant” when the context is in the generic sense:

Example—*generic sense, specific to noncertified medical assistants*: Medical assistants have a great amount of variety in their jobs.

Example—*specific to medical assistants certified by the AAMA*: Many health care employers insist that their medical assistants have achieved the CMA (AAMA) credential.

Multiple mentions

In some cases the CMA (AAMA) professional or credential is mentioned multiple times in one paragraph, so variations can be used to avoid redundancies.

Example: The CMA (AAMA) enjoys increased respect and recognition. Employers recognize the value of the credential. And, the CMA (AAMA) credential is valid wherever the medical assistant goes.

Credentials with names

Use commas around the CMA (AAMA) credential.

Example: The illustrious Jane Doe, CMA (AAMA), will be our guest speaker for the banquet.

Note: The credential “MA” stands for Master of Arts, not medical assistant; therefore noncertified medical assistants should not use “MA” after their names unless

they’ve also earned their Master of Arts. Referring to a medical assistant as an “MA” may lead to further confusion, so it’s best to always spell out “medical assistant” or say it in full.

Exam title

CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination

Magazine title

The magazine maintains the title *CMA Today*. When referring to the magazine, follow these guidelines:

- Italicize the title.
- “Today” should *always* be spoken and written as part of the title to legally distinguish the title from the credential.
- Capitalize the “t” in “Today.” (*Though the title on the cover is spelled with a lowercase “t” in “today,” that handling is considered display text and carries artistic license. For all other references to the title, the “t” should be in upper case.*)
- Refer to the magazine by its title only, without preceding it with the word “the.”

Incorrect: Continuing education articles are published in the *CMA*.

Incorrect: Continuing education articles are published in the *CMA today*.

Correct: Continuing education articles are published in *CMA Today*.



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