

Word for Word

Post- or *after*?

Post-, which appears frequently in scientific and medical writing, is a prefix indicating *after* or *behind*.¹ In other words, *post-* indicates that one thing follows another in time or space.

Examples

Post-treatment imaging showed a decrease in tumor size.
The patient underwent a biopsy of the post-nasal space.



The word *post* can be used as a noun (e.g., *Did you see the new Word for Word blog post?*) or a verb (e.g., *We post a new blog entry every 2 weeks*), but *post* should not be used as a preposition. Use *after* instead.

Examples

Incorrect: Patients completed modules on diet and exercise and were interviewed 5 months post-intervention.
Correct: Patients completed modules on diet and exercise and were interviewed 5 months after the intervention.

Avoid the use of *status post*, which is considered jargon; use *after* or a similar term instead.²

Examples

Incorrect: The study included men status post radical prostatectomy.
Correct: The study included men who had undergone radical prostatectomy.

References

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2000: 969.
2. American Medical Association. AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors. 10th ed. Iverson C, et al, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 409.

—Stephanie Deming, ELS

Image Credit: © [Can Stock Photo](#)

Copyright © 2019, All rights reserved. Research Medical Library, Scientific Publications Services.