Some Common Transgressions Against
Good Mathematical Writing

[AA] Arbitrary Abbreviation  Don’t abbreviate just because you don’t feel like writing the entire word.


[PG] Poor Grammar  This one is self–explanatory. (Note: According to the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, we may now split infinitives, end sentences with prepositions, and begin sentences with conjunctions. The rules against these things were made up by 19th century British schoolmasters who wanted English to be more like Latin.)

[PP] Poor Presentation  There are some presentation rules in technical writing. For example, short, simple formulae may appear in a line with your non-mathematical writing, but long, complicated ones should be set apart. The reader should be able to follow your work left–to–right and up–to–down. It should be free of margin notes, afterthoughts, sentence fragments scribbled between lines and other clutter of that sort. Move the reader along with words and brief phrases, not with arrows, “therefore” symbols etc.

[PR] Punctuation Required  Self-explanatory.

[PS] Poor Semantics  Get your meaning across clearly. Use words and symbols correctly. Craft your sentences carefully. Don’t make the reader work harder than necessary.


[SR] Sentence Required  Self-explanatory.

[US] Undefined Symbol  Introduce your notation. If, for example, $f$ is to stand for a certain function, define it for the reader before you use it.

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Above all, be brief and be clear.