

## LATIN TERMS FOR WRITERS

From *Writing Made Easy: Just the Basics*  
by Timothy Sharkey

A POSTERIORI (L *a posteriori* from the latter): known only *after* something has been observed: known from experience.<sup>1</sup> For example, “It was not easily proven *a priori* but it was easily demonstrated *a posteriori*.”<sup>2</sup> (*A posteriori* is the reverse of *a priori*.)

A PRIORI (L *a priori* from the former): known ahead of time: known prior to experience: understood without empirical evidence.<sup>3</sup> For example, “God is an *a priori* belief for the devout.” “We know morality *a priori*.” “It was true *a priori* but now it has been proven as well.”<sup>4</sup> (*A priori* is the reverse of *a posteriori*.)

AD HOC (L *ad hoc* for this): something improvised for a specific purpose.<sup>5</sup> For example, “They made *ad hoc* improvements to the script.” “We put together an *ad hoc* disaster response team.” “We built a promotional display with *ad hoc* decorations.”

AD INFINITUM (L *ad infinitum* continued to the point of infinity): an argument without end or limit and therefore no longer useful.<sup>6</sup> For example, “He argued the same basic idea *ad infinitum*.” “She bragged about her wardrobe *ad infinitum*.”

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<sup>1</sup> “A posteriori.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/a%20posteriori>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>2</sup> “Posteriori sentence example.” *Your Dictionary*, <https://sentence.yourdictionary.com/posteriori>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> “A priori.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/a%20priori>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> “How to use a priori in a sentence.” *Word Hippo*, 2021, [https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/sentences-with-the-word/a\\_priori.html](https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/sentences-with-the-word/a_priori.html).

<sup>5</sup> “Ad hoc.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ad%20hoc>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>6</sup> “Ad infinitum.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ad%20infinitum>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

AD NAUSEUM (L *ad nauseum* continued to the point of nausea): arguing to a sickening or excessive degree.<sup>7</sup> For example, “It was debated overnight *ad nauseum*.” “I will not repeat *ad nauseum* everything that was said.”<sup>8</sup>

ALUMNUS (L *alumnus* pupil): a graduate of a college or university. *Alumni*: many graduates (plural). *Alumnus* and *alumni* traditionally referred to male graduates. *Alumna* and *alumnae* traditionally referred to female graduates. *Alum* and *alums* are considered colloquial but can now be favored as gender-neutral.<sup>9</sup>

BONA FIDE (L *bona fide* good faith): genuine, authentic, real, with good intentions, without fraud or deceit.<sup>10</sup> For example, “She was a *bona fide* civil rights attorney with all the credentials.” “It was a *bona fide* Hollywood action film as opposed to a cheap imitation.”

DE FACTO (L *de facto* in fact): the way that things are, in reality, as opposed to what is officially presented: actual, not official.<sup>11</sup> For example, “What happens in practice (*de facto*), in contrast to what happens according to the law (*de jure*), are different.”<sup>12</sup>

IBID (L *ibidem* in the same place)<sup>13</sup>: in the past, *ibid.* was used in footnotes and endnotes to designate that the same source has been cited twice in succession. Today, however, The Modern Language Association’s *MLA Handbook* (Ninth Edition) explains Don’t use *ibid* (290). Simply repeat (copy) the full source listed above, if needed.

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<sup>7</sup> “Ad nauseum.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ad%20nauseum>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>8</sup> “Examples of ad nauseum.” *Cambridge Dictionary*. Cambridge University Press, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/example/english/ad-nauseum>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>9</sup> “Alumnus.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alumnus>. Accessed 15 Aug. 2021.

<sup>10</sup> “Bona fide.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bona%20fide>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>11</sup> “De facto.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/de%20facto>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>12</sup> “De facto.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De\\_facto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_facto). Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>13</sup> “Ibid.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ibid>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

IPSO FACTO (L *ipso facto* by the very fact): true because of something else.<sup>14</sup> For example,  
“If you’re born in the United States, then *ipso facto* you’ll get a Social Security number.”  
“If you grow up in Brooklyn, then you’re a New Yorker *ipso facto*” (Norman Mailer).<sup>15</sup>

\*\*Please Note: the full list of LATIN TERMS FOR WRITERS can be found in the full book version of *Writing Made Easy: Just the Basics* by Timothy Sharkey.

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<sup>14</sup> “Ipso facto.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ipso%20facto>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.

<sup>15</sup> “Ipso facto.” *Vocabulary.com*, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/ipso%20facto>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2021.