

RDA Examples Editorial Guide

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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This is a revision of [6JSC/RDA Editor's guide/rev/2/Appendix C](#), and an update to [RSC/ExamplesEditor/2023/1](#). This guide is designed to assist in the editing of contextual examples in RDA, and is maintained by the RDA Examples Editor. It was first published in January 2024 and last updated in March 2025 by Jessica Grzegorski and the RDA Examples Working Group. The most recent update adds Appendix 2, "Procedures for harmful content," clarifies instructions on recurring phrases in note labels in 8.3, and corrects minor typographical and formatting errors.

This guide:

- provides instruction on the content and style of RDA examples.
- presents some basic principles for choice of RDA examples.
- focuses on matters of style addressed in copyediting (or "mechanical" editing, as defined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*): capitalization, punctuation, spelling, abbreviations, etc.
- serves in part as a "style sheet" for RDA examples, documenting key aspects of sentence structure, phrasing, and word usage.

Certain instructions in this guide are specific to the English version of RDA. Translators of RDA should adapt those instructions as needed for their version. For example, in [6 Spelling](#), RDA translators should replace reference to *Webster's Third International Dictionary, Unabridged* with a dictionary appropriate to the language of translation. In [4.2](#), capitalization instructions for the explanatory notes may be replaced with instructions appropriate for the language of translation.

An **example** is defined here as data illustrating an RDA instruction or guidance chapter text, but is not a latent example (i.e., it does not follow “e.g.” or “for example”). A contextual example may include an explanatory note.

A **contextual example** is defined here as an example that appears in RDA in an example box and is not a latent example (i.e., it does not follow “e.g.” or “for example”).

Examples that appear on the RDA Toolkit website are not considered contextual examples and are not covered by this guide.

Examples in policy statements are maintained by the agency creating the policy statements and are not covered by this guide.

An **example set** is defined here as the examples that appear in one example box in the RDA Toolkit. An example set may contain one or more examples.

An **explanatory note** is defined as an explanation that may be given below the example data.

Data occurring within an explanatory note may be of two types: 1) a **note label** that is preceded by a colon and 2) **post-colon data** that follows the explanation text.

In the example below, “VES source:” is the note label and “Library of Congress” is post-colon data.

n 86847709

VES source: Library of Congress

A **latent example** is word(s) that appear in RDA text following “e.g.,” “for example” or other such terms and is considered part of the RDA Toolkit. These examples are added in coordination with the RSC Secretary and are not considered examples as defined by this guide, although they appear in example boxes.

Note: Examples from RDA appearing in this guide are presented close to how they appear in the RDA Toolkit. The PDF version of RDA has a slightly different format for examples.

2 GENERAL GUIDELINES

2.1 Basic principles for examples

These principles have been adapted from [6JSC/Chair/2](#) and the RDA Toolkit Guidance chapter section, [Introduction to RDA>Examples](#).

Examples should:

- be illustrative and not prescriptive (i.e., examples should not be used in place of an instruction)
- illustrate the instruction at which they appear
- be unambiguous
- require either no explanation or only a brief explanation
- represent a valid and useful application of the language version of RDA in which they appear
- not introduce concepts not found in RDA (e.g., terms that would require definition)
- be representative of the range of resources, agents (e.g., persons, families, and corporate bodies), and other entities
- can be made-up, but should always be plausible
- should not espouse hate or prejudice or incorporate content that is likely to cause harm or distress

While effort should be made to find examples that represent a diversity of persons, languages, etc., clarity is the most important principle for examples.

Examples using the same resources may be given for different instructions when appropriate. In particular, examples illustrating different options for the same element may use the same resource. For example, “The invisible man” may appear in an option to retain an initial article and “Invisible man” may appear in an option to omit an initial article. Examples may be used for elements or Guidance chapters.

For procedures that address the removal and replacement of examples with content flagged as harmful in the Toolkit, consult [Appendix 2](#).

2.2 Types of examples

There are four types of examples used in RDA: basic, recording methods, view as relationship (VAR), and view in context (VIC). The Examples Editor chooses which type of example or examples to add to RDA instructions.

Basic examples illustrate an element using an applicable recording method. A set of basic examples may contain one or more examples. When multiple recording methods are applicable to an element, the examples will usually show a variety of recording methods for different entities.

Example

Kana and kanji

Recording method: unstructured description

Devanagari (Nagari)

Recording method: structured description

VES source: ISO 15924

Arab

Cyrl

Recording method: identifier

VES source: ISO 15924

<http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300379151>

Recording method: IRI

Recording methods examples show all four recording methods applied to the same instance of an element. Recording methods examples only appear in an instruction where all four recording methods are available.

Example

NANCY PEARL

Recording method: unstructured description

Note: Description created by an agency following Guidance>Transcription

Guidelines>Guidelines on basic transcription

Example

Pearl, Nancy

Recording method: structured description

VES source: VIAF

Example

75645081

Recording method: identifier

VES source: VIAF

Example

<http://viaf.org/viaf/75645081>

Recording method: IRI

View as relationship (VAR) examples provide a linked data visualization of an element using RDA Registry labels and IRIs.

View in context (VIC) examples contain a set of elements repeated throughout RDA to demonstrate how elements identify an entity. VIC examples use RDA Registry labels.



Work	
<i>has creator agent of work</i>	Christo, 1935–
<i>has creator agent of work</i>	Jeanne-Claude
<i>has preferred title of work</i>	The gates
<i>has date of work</i>	1979
<i>has category of work</i>	Installation
<i>has identifier for work</i>	VIAF ID: 176321549
<i>has place of origin of work</i>	New York, New York
<i>has related work of work</i>	Christo, 1935– . The thousand gates (Drawing)

2.3 Use of explanatory notes

Explanatory notes may be used for basic and recording methods examples.

Basic examples may contain explanatory notes for these reasons:

- to specify the recording method for elements
 - recording methods were not initially added to all basic examples, but should be added to all new examples
- to specify a VES source, as instructed for the recording methods **structured description** and **identifier**
- to specify a string encoding scheme (SES) used to formulate an access point example
- to provide the value for another element that assists in understanding the example
- to provide explanatory information about the example.

In the examples below, the recording method is provided for both examples and the VES source is provided for the examples recorded using structured description:

<http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300379151>

Recording method: IRI

Devanagari (Nagari)

Recording method: structured description

VES source: ISO 15924

Recording methods examples may contain explanatory notes for these reasons:

- to specify a string encoding scheme (SES) used to formulate an access point example
- to specify the recording method for elements
 - recording methods were not initially added to recording methods examples because the recording method was thought to be obvious, but should be added to all new examples
- to specify a VES source, as instructed for the recording methods **structured description** and **identifier**
- to provide the value for another element that assists in understanding the example
- to provide explanatory information about the example.

Generally, either the value for another element OR explanatory information about the example is provided. If both of these notes are needed, consider whether the example is complex or ambiguous and should be replaced with one that requires less explanation.

When an explanatory note is given, enough information should be included to assist in understanding the example, but superfluous information should be omitted.

In the examples below, explanatory notes are given that provide enough information for the cataloger to know that the designation that is a distinguishing characteristic is recorded for two expressions of the same work because other expression elements, such as content type, would not distinguish the two expressions.

Dussollier

An audio recording of Victor Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris narrated by André Dussollier

Huber

Another audio recording of Victor Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris narrated by Élodie Huber

Explanatory notes may be used to explain the absence of expected data in an example.

Marine Awareness Workshop for Beqa Lagoon (1996 : Pacific Harbour International Hotel)

No applicable number of conference

Explanatory notes may be used to explain the choices of a particular cataloging agency that are demonstrated in the example data.

I, Claudius (Television programme)

Term added by an agency following British spelling

When additional information about an example is needed in an explanatory note, it may be given as explanatory text and/or as part of a “resource described” explanatory note.

These two examples of authorized access points for treaties show two different methods of providing the date of a treaty in the explanatory notes.

Concordat of Worms (1122 September 23)

Agreed to by Pope Callistus II and the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV on 23 September 1122

Das Konkordat zwischen dem Heiligen Stuhle und dem Freistaate Baden (1932 October 12)

Resource described: Das Konkordat zwischen dem Heiligen Stuhle und dem Freistaate Baden vom 12. Oktober 1932

2.4 Situations requiring new examples

New examples may be added to accompany new instructions in RDA or changes in RDA instructions.

New examples may be added to existing instructions to illustrate different aspects of that instruction.

New examples should not be added when similar examples already appear in the same instruction in RDA. In this context, “similar” means a similar cataloging situation (e.g., two examples of names of persons represented by arabic numerals).

Existing examples may be edited, replaced, or deleted when they are erroneous or confusing, and to increase the diversity of resources, agents, or other entities represented in examples.

2.5 Number of examples

The Examples Editor determines the number of example sets and individual examples for an instruction in collaboration with the Examples Working Group.

Some instructions may not have examples if the Examples Editor has determined they are not necessary.

3 LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

Generally, examples for the English version of RDA should illustrate decisions that would be made by an agency whose preferred language is English and preferred script is Latin. For instructions when this would not be applicable, e.g., instructions on capitalization in specific languages, whatever language and script would be appropriate for the instruction should be used.

Transliterated examples follow the [ALA-LC Romanization Tables](#) unless the instruction refers to using a different transliteration.

At least one example for an instruction should be in English unless English-language examples would not be appropriate. When appropriate, non-English examples should also be provided.

4 CAPITALIZATION

4.1 Examples data

Capitalization of the examples data should follow options provided in [Guidance>Transcription>Guidelines on normalized transcription>Capitalization](#) instructions unless illustrating the transcription of capitalization as found on a source of information.

4.2 Explanatory notes

Capitalization of explanatory notes follows these principles:

- a) the first word of an explanatory note is capitalized
- b) a proper noun within an explanatory note is capitalized
- c) post-colon data within an explanatory note follows Capitalization unless illustrating the transcription of capitalization as found on a source.

5 PUNCTUATION

5.1 Examples data

Examples may have internal punctuation that is part of the examples data.

editor: Wyndham Lewis
Why a duck?

Examples illustrating an element normally do not show preceding or enclosing punctuation such as that required for ISBD presentation. Examples showing multiple elements use ISBD punctuation. Separate ISBD areas using the em dash.

Facsimile of: 2nd edition, revised. — London : Routledge, 1877 Partial
description of the related resource

An example may show ISBD internal punctuation if needed for clarity (e.g., titles on resources with no collective title).

Examples illustrating authorized and variant access points should follow a string encoding scheme; the string encoding scheme should be specified in an explanatory note.

Earlier examples with unspecified string encoding schemes generally follow the punctuation specified in Appendix E of the Original RDA Toolkit, except as noted below.

When providing an authorized access point for a work that combines the authorized access point for the person, etc. and the preferred title for the work, separate the authorized access point for the person, etc., and the preferred title with a period and a space except when the authorized access point for a person ends with an en dash. When the authorized access point for a person ends with an en dash, separate the access point for the person from the preferred title with a space-period-space.

Eakin (Family : New Castle County, Del.). Eakin family papers, 1781–1828

Thompson, Tim, 1942– . Puget Sound

For information on use of the hyphen, en dash, and em dash, see the RDA Editing Guide, “Punctuation, diacritics, and symbols.”

5.2 Explanatory notes

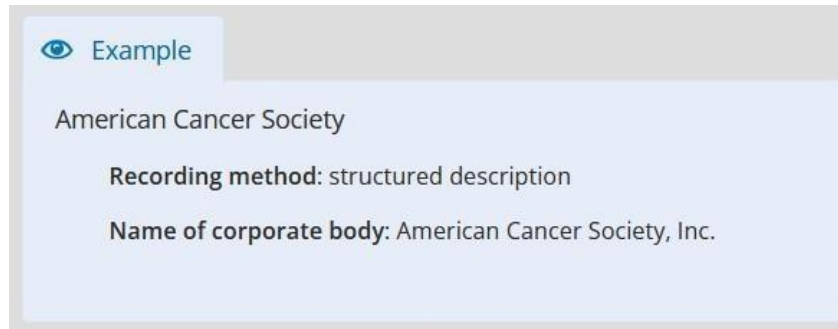
A colon is used within an explanatory note to separate the note label from the post-colon data. The colon is generated from a style sheet rather than added in the text.

Newark (N.J.)
Recording method: structured description
VES source: VIAF
Name of agent: Chakaia Booker

Catholic Church. Pope (1559–1565 : Pius IV). Bulla Collegii Militum (1560 March 13)

Note: Date of work included in authorized access point to distinguish from other works with the same preferred title created in the same year

An explanatory note does not end with a mark of punctuation unless the punctuation is part of quoted data or the punctuation is otherwise part of the text (e.g. it is part of post-colon data).



ISBD punctuation is used when multiple elements are given in the post-colon data of a “resource described” explanatory note.

Porter, Douglas R. Making smart growth work

Resource described: Making smart growth work / principal author, Douglas R. Porter ; contributing authors, Robert T. Dunphy, David Salvesen

Tutti i libretti di Bellini

Resource described: Tutti i libretti di Bellini / a cura di Olimpio Cescatti ; con una prefazione di Marzio Pieri.

Librettos for Bellini operas by various librettists

For instructions on use of the hyphen, en dash, and em dash, see the RDA Editing Guide, “Punctuation, diacritics, and symbols.

6 SPELLING

6.1 Examples data

In examples illustrating transcribed elements, the spelling appearing on the source is unchanged, unless the instruction indicates otherwise.

For other elements, example data should illustrate decisions made by an agency whose preferred language is English (see [3 LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT](#)) and either British or American spellings may be used, with explanatory text provided as needed.

I, Claudius (Television programme)
Term added by an agency following British spelling

6.2 Explanatory notes

Use the online edition of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*.

The following spellings identified in Webster's as variants are used as the preferred spelling in explanatory notes (excluding post-colon data representing an instance of an element):

analyse (not analyze)
catalogue (not catalog)
centre (not center)
colour (not color)

7 ABBREVIATIONS

7.1 Examples data

Examples may contain abbreviations when illustrating a transcribed element that contains an abbreviation, when illustrating instructions on abbreviations, or when otherwise illustrating situations when abbreviations are appropriate (e.g., elements that follow Abbreviations and symbols).

View in context example using an abbreviation with thematic index number:

has thematic index number BB 62

7.2 Explanatory notes

Explanatory notes should not contain abbreviations except for those listed in the RDA Editing Guide, "Abbreviations," and abbreviations used in internal examples.

For internal examples found within explanatory notes, see 7.1.

8 STRUCTURE, PHRASING, AND WORD USAGE

8.1 Examples sets

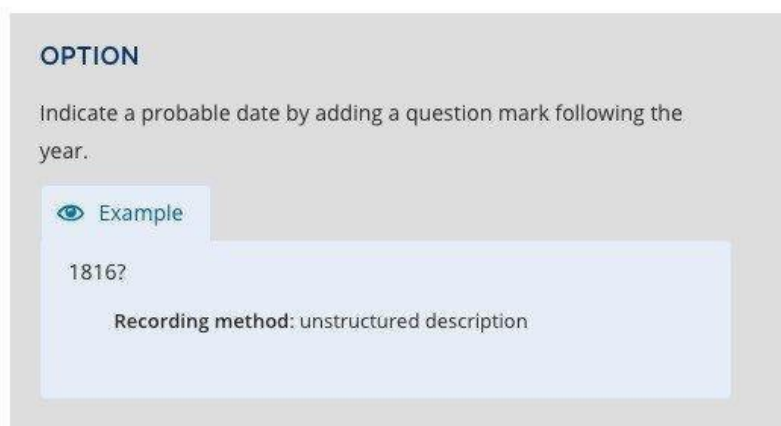
Examples sets appear in the Toolkit in colored collapsible boxes labeled “Example.”

An example set may contain one example or multiple examples. There is no limit for the number of examples that may appear within a box. However, it is preferable that a Toolkit user can view the entire example box on one page without having to scroll. When a user has to scroll to see all the examples in a box, they become somewhat removed from the instructions they illustrate.

RDA instructions may contain multiple example boxes.

When an RDA instruction contains several paragraphs, an example box should immediately follow the paragraph(s) to which it pertains to avoid confusion.

When an example applies to an instruction in an Option box, the example should be placed within that Option box to which it pertains to avoid confusion and possible displacement of examples as RDA content is edited.



An example may be one line or multiple lines of text. A line space (generated from a style sheet) indicates the end of an example.

In the examples below, “Ann Arbor, Mich.” and “Tylers Green, Buckinghamshire” represent one example and “Toronto”, “Buffalo”, and “London” represent a second example.

Ann Arbor, Mich.

Tylers Green, Buckinghamshire

Toronto

Buffalo
London

Explanatory notes appear underneath an example with no line space in between. If an example is multiple lines of text, the explanatory note appears below the last line.

Explanatory notes may be one line or multiple lines. When an explanatory note spans multiple lines, there is no line space.

8.2 Note labels

Basic and recording methods examples should always supply a note label, even if the label is only “Note”.

8.3 Recurring phrases

In addition, prefer the recurring phrases below for the note label in the explanatory notes. This list is not exhaustive, but consider whether one of the labels below is sufficient before devising a new phrase.

Name of agent
Name of corporate body
Name of person
Name of timespan
Note
Preferred name of agent
Preferred name of corporate body
Preferred name of person
Preferred title of work
Recording method
Resource described
Source consulted
Title of work
Variant name of agent
Variant name of corporate body
Variant name of person
Variant title of work
VES source

8.4 Data generated from the Registry

Two types of examples (VAR and VIC) use labels for entities and elements and controlled vocabulary terms that are generated from the Registry.

The Toolkit label is used for the entity name and RDA value vocabulary terms (e.g., spoken word for content type).

The Registry label is used for the element labels.

(rdakit:toolkitLabel)
(rdfs:label)

9 FONT FEATURES

9.1 Type of font

For examples that require diacritical marks, precomposed Unicode characters should be used if possible.

Example using precomposed characters:

Åström

Example using decomposed characters with the diacritics appearing after the base letter:

As°tro¨m

Transliterated Cyrillic script examples that require the combining double inverted breve (U+0361) appear in Times New Roman font to display this diacritic properly. Insert the diacritic between the two letters so that it will appear over both letters.

A. Skriabin

Use other fonts as needed for non-Latin script examples.

9.2 Bold

A style sheet is used for bold text in examples in the Toolkit. These areas appear in bold text:

- Note labels in basic examples
- Entity label at the top of VIC and VAR examples
- RDA value vocabulary terms in VIC and VAR examples

9.3 Bold italic

When a VIC example appears on an element page, that element label appears in bold. This is accomplished by coding, matching the IRI for the element in the example tagging to the element IRI in the prolog tag.

When a VIC example appears in an instruction that is not an RDA element, none of the element labels will appear in bold. For example, the VIC example that appears in “authorized access point for musical work” does not have any labels in bold because there is no element “authorized access point for musical work.” Note that for examples in these instructions, RDA Registry labels for elements are still used.

APPENDIX 1 HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Development of examples in the Original RDA Toolkit

During the original development of RDA, two examples groups were formed. The membership of the groups was drawn from the constituencies represented on the JSC at the time, which meant they were drawn from Anglo-American cataloging communities.

Example Group 1 (see [5JSC/Chair/1/Rev](#)) was formed in 2005 and charged with reviewing examples in AACR2 and determining whether the examples were appropriate and what new examples might be needed. Example Group 2 (see [5JSC/Chair/Rev/2](#)) was formed in 2006. The two groups were assigned different parts of RDA to provide examples for, based on how the draft was organized at the time. Example Group 1 was in charge of examples for Part A, chapters 1-5, and Example Group 2 was in charge of examples for Part A, chapters 6-7, and Part B.

In 2012 the JSC determined Examples Group 3 should be established to develop new contextual examples (see [6JSC/Chair/2](#)) for RDA as a result of approved proposals and fast tracks and to continue development of the complete examples provided on the Toolkit website.

APPENDIX 2 PROCEDURES FOR HARMFUL CONTENT

The RDA Steering Committee (RSC) and RDA Examples Working Group do not condone language or imagery that promote hate toward individuals or groups or exhibit prejudice with respect to race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexuality, ability, and other characteristics. While many cataloging agencies describe a wide range of resources and entities, including those containing harmful and prejudicial content, it is not necessary or appropriate to surface such content in RDA, an international metadata standard implemented by diverse communities and user groups.

In the event that an RDA user identifies potentially harmful content in an RDA example and contacts the RDA Examples Editor, RSC Secretary, or other RSC member, the following actions will be taken:

1. If the content of the example is especially egregious, the RDA Examples Editor will request that the Director of ALA Digital Reference remove the example, a process that typically takes 72 hours, while the RDA Examples Working Group deliberates.
2. The Examples Working Group will meet asynchronously via Basecamp or virtually during a regular monthly meeting and determine within one week how to proceed.
3. If the example represents a specific community or culture and the Examples Working Group can determine a representative to consult, the Examples Editor will make every effort to reach out to this contact via one of the RSC's regional representatives or other channels. If the example is specific to a particular RDA translation, the Examples Editor will also consult with the relevant translator. If the Examples Working Group still cannot make a determination regarding the removal of an example, the Examples Editor will consult with the RSC Executive Committee.
4. Once a decision has been made to remove an example, the Examples Editor will inform the Director of ALA Digital Reference. The example will be removed from the Toolkit, typically within 72 hours. If any community representatives were consulted during the decision-making process, the Examples Editor will inform them of the removal of the example.
5. To the extent possible, the Examples Working Group will find or create an appropriate replacement example. If the example is specific to a particular RDA translation, the Examples Editor will also consult with the relevant translator. If appropriate, the Examples Editor will consult with communities represented by the removed example to help with determining a suitable replacement.
6. If an RDA user believes that an example has been removed in error, the user may appeal the decision to the Examples Editor, who will consult with the Examples Working Group, RSC Executive Committee, and relevant community representatives.