

## Guidelines on Listing and Abbreviating Degrees, Licenses and Credentials

### Background

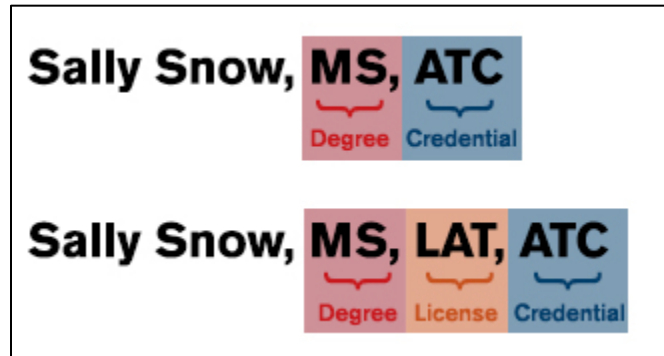
Proper treatment of degrees, licenses and credentials has been a source of confusion and misuse for years. Many Athletic Trainers are unsure how to list or abbreviate the qualifications that follow their names.

Consistency in how Athletic Trainers identify themselves alleviates confusion and lends credibility to the profession. The following is intended to provide clarity as you identify yourself in signatures, business cards, letterhead or any other written format.

### Guidelines

A 2003 [article](#) by Ken Knight, Chad Starkey and Chris Ingersoll established guidelines for displaying degrees, licenses and credentials, and this information is still valid today.

The article says it is proper to list academic degrees first, licenses second and credentials last. Here, credentials include BOC certification. For instance, a BOC Certified Athletic Trainer holding a master's degree and working in a state where licensure is not required should write, "Sally Snow, MS, ATC" – not "ATC, MS." The same BOC Certified Athletic Trainer working in a state with licensure would correctly write, "Sally Snow, MS, LAT, ATC." See the illustration for an example.



What do these qualifications mean? Licensure provides a legal right to practice, while certification, which is voluntary, states that a professional body – in this case, the BOC – has determined that your knowledge and skills have met a pre-determined standard. If you use more than one credential, list them in order of difficulty of obtaining them. With credentials of similar difficulty, such as ATC and PT, list them in chronological order.

### Common Errors and Exceptions

Because confusion has persisted over the years, we know of several common errors. One such error involves listing licensure and certification as a single abbreviation; such incorrect examples include ATC/L, LATC and ATC/R. The first example implies that certification is more important than licensure, which is not the case. The second and third examples improperly append the ATC® credential, which is a registered trademark and cannot be modified.

Two exceptions exist. Wisconsin, by state law, does not allow you to use ATC®; the law specifies the use of LAT. And in Texas, everyone must use "ATC, LAT."

So as far as BOC and our protection of the credential, we do not regulate against the improper treatment of licensure and regulation. However, we do regulate against those who use the ATC® credential and are not currently certified.

Finally, we offer one more note on usage. Despite the common misconception, ATC is not a noun. An AT is the person who holds the credential, while ATC is the credential. For this reason, it would be

inappropriate to say, “Bob Jones is the ATC for the Cardinals.” Instead, it is correct to say, “Bob Jones is the AT for the Cardinals.”

**Access the article by Knight, Starkey and Ingersoll at [www.bocatc.org/ats/market-your-certification](http://www.bocatc.org/ats/market-your-certification), and click on the “Public Relations” tab.**