

PARTS OF PRESCRIPTION

A **prescription** is a **legal written order** from a **registered medical practitioner (RMP)** to a **pharmacist**, directing the preparation and dispensing of one or more medicines to a patient.

It is both a **clinical** and **legal** document — clinical because it guides therapy, and legal because it authorizes drug dispensing under the law.

A well-written prescription helps in:

- Ensuring **safe and effective** therapy.
- Avoiding **medication errors**.
- Maintaining **legal and professional accountability**.

Definition

According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**:

“A prescription is an instruction from a prescriber to a dispenser regarding the formulation, composition, and administration of a medicine for a particular patient.”

Essential Parts of a Prescription

A standard prescription is divided into the following **essential parts**:

S. No.	Part of Prescription	Meaning / Content
1.	Date	Date on which the prescription is written — helps determine validity and refills.
2.	Patient's Details	Patient's full name, age, sex, and address. For children, weight should be mentioned for dosage accuracy.

3.	Superscription (R)	The symbol “R” (Latin <i>Recipe</i> = “Take thou”). It signifies “you take” — the pharmacist must take and prepare the medicine as ordered.
4.	Inscription	The main body of the prescription. It includes the names and quantities of ingredients or medicines to be dispensed. It may contain one or more drugs, written in proper sequence.
5.	Subscription	Directions to the pharmacist for compounding or dispensing — e.g., “Mix and make 60 ml,” or “Dispense 10 tablets.”
6.	Signatura (or Transcription)	Directions to the patient — how to use the medicine. It includes dose, route, frequency, and timing (e.g., “Take one tablet twice daily after meals”). It is often written as “Sig.”
7.	Prescriber’s Details and Signature	Name, qualifications, registration number, and address of the prescriber along with signature and seal.
8.	Renewal Instructions	Indicates if the prescription can be refilled, and how many times (e.g., “Repeat × 2”).
9.	Special Precautions / Warnings	May include instructions like “For external use only,” “Shake well before use,” or “Do not drive after taking.”
10.	Signature of Pharmacist (Optional)	Pharmacist’s initials to confirm dispensing — useful for record-keeping in hospital or community pharmacy.

Description of Each Part in Detail

1. Date

- The prescription should always bear the **date of issue**.
- Helps prevent misuse and indicates when treatment began.
- Important for **controlled substances** (Schedule X or H₁ drugs).

2. Patient Information

- Includes patient's **name, age, sex, and address**.
- Essential to identify the right patient and tailor the dose (especially for pediatric or geriatric patients).

3. Superscription (R)

- Traditional symbol derived from the Latin word *Recipe*, meaning “take thou”.
- It marks the beginning of the prescriber's order to the pharmacist.

4. Inscription (Medication Order)

- The heart of the prescription — it lists **the names and strengths of the drugs**.
- In the case of mixtures, drugs are usually written in the following order:
 1. **Base** (active ingredient).
 2. **Adjuvant** (enhances the action).
 3. **Corrective** (improves taste or appearance).
 4. **Vehicle** (to make up the desired volume).

Example:

Rx Paracetamol 500 mg

Ibuprofen 200 mg

Sig: 1 tablet every 8 hours after meals

5. Subscription

- Directions to the pharmacist regarding compounding and quantity.
- Example: “Dispense 10 capsules” or “Make a solution of 100 ml.”

6. Signatura (Direction to Patient)

- Directions that appear on the **label** for the patient.
- Should be written in **simple language** — dose, route, time, and duration clearly stated.
- Example: “Take one tablet twice a day after meals with water.”

7. Prescriber's Details

- Includes **doctor's name, qualification, registration number, signature, and address**.
- Without these, the prescription is **legally invalid**.

8. Renewal Instructions

- Indicates whether the medicine can be **refilled or repeated**.
- Essential for **chronic conditions** or **controlled drugs**.
- Example: “Refill x 3” or “No repeat without consultation.”

9. Precautions and Warnings

- Special labeling instructions to ensure patient safety.
 - “External use only.”
 - “Store in a cool, dry place.”
 - “Shake well before use.”
 - “Keep away from children.”

10. Signature of Pharmacist

- In many hospital or community pharmacies, the pharmacist initials each dispensed prescription.
- Acts as proof of **dispensing accountability**.

Example of a Standard Prescription Format

Dr. R. Sharma, M.D. (Gen. Med)
Reg. No.: AP12345
Sunshine Clinic, Hyderabad

Date: 12/11/2025

Patient Name: Mr. Ravi Kumar
Age: 35 years Sex: Male
Address: 45, Green Park Colony, Hyderabad.

R
Tab. Amoxicillin 500 mg 15 tablets
Tab. Paracetamol 500 mg 10 tablets
Syr. Ambroxol 100 ml 1 bottle

Sig: Take one tablet of Amoxicillin every 8 hours after food.
Take one Paracetamol tablet every 6 hours if fever persists.
Take 5 ml syrup twice daily after meals.

(Refill: o)

Dr. R. Sharma (Signature)

Importance of Proper Prescription Writing

- Ensures **rational and safe drug use**.
- Prevents **medication errors and misuse**.
- Provides a **legal record** for reference.
- Enhances communication between **doctor, pharmacist, and patient**.
- Protects the **rights and responsibilities** of healthcare professionals.

Legality of prescription

A **prescription** is a *legal written order* given by a **Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP)** directing a pharmacist to prepare, compound, and dispense a specified medicine to a particular patient.

It forms a **legal bridge** between the **doctor, pharmacist, and patient** and is governed by laws to ensure safe and rational use of medicines.

Legal Definition

According to the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1940)** and its Rules (1945): “A prescription means a written direction by a registered medical practitioner for the preparation or dispensing of a drug.” Only practitioners registered under recognized medical councils — **Allopathic, Dental, Veterinary, Ayurvedic, Unani, or Siddha** — are legally authorized to issue valid prescriptions.

Legal Requirements of a Valid Prescription

A prescription must include all legally required elements to be valid.

Each part has legal significance for **traceability and authenticity**.

A. Heading (Prescriber Details)

- Full name, qualifications, and registration number of prescriber.
- Clinic/hospital address and telephone number.
- Signature (in ink or approved digital signature).
- Date of issue.
- Official seal/stamp.

B. Patient Details

- Patient’s name, age, sex, and address.
- In case of a child, mention age and weight.
- Hospital registration or OP/IP number if applicable.

C. Superscription

- Symbol **R** (Recipe = “Take thou”) to start the order.

D. Inscription (Medication Order)

- Name of drug (preferably generic name).

- Strength, dosage form, and quantity.
- Clear instructions about formulation if needed.

E. Subscription

- Directions to the pharmacist for dispensing, e.g. “Dispense 10 capsules.”

F. Signature of Prescriber

- Must be personally signed; no rubber stamps or photocopies.
- Number of authorized refills (if any) should be stated.

G. Directions to Patient

- Route of administration, dose, frequency, and duration.
- Special instructions such as “After food,” “Do not drive,” “Shake well.”
- Legible and comprehensible to avoid medication errors.

Legal Restrictions on Prescribing

1. **Schedule H Drugs –**

Must not be sold without a prescription from a registered medical practitioner.

The container and label must carry “Schedule H Drug – Warning: To be sold by retail on the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner only.”

2. **Schedule H₁ Drugs –**

Record must be kept for **three years** with details of prescriber and patient.

Pharmacist should maintain a separate register.

3. **Schedule X Drugs & Psychotropic Substances (NDPS Act 1985) –**

- Special prescription form required.
 - Quantity written in **words and figures**.
 - Prescription to be preserved for **two years**.
 - Sale only by licensed dealer under Form 17 register.
4. **Schedule C & C₁ (Biological products)** –
Require proper storage conditions and licensed pharmacist supervision.
5. **Telemedicine Prescriptions** –
Permitted under 2020 guidelines with digital signature and secure platform.
6. **Veterinary and Dental Prescriptions** –
Valid only when issued by registered professionals of respective councils.

Responsibilities of the Pharmacist

- Dispense drugs **only against a valid prescription**.
- Verify authenticity and legibility before dispensing.
- Never substitute or alter without prescriber's approval.
- Check for dosage accuracy, drug interactions, and contraindications.
- Maintain records of Schedule H₁ and Schedule X sales.
- Refuse to dispense if prescription appears **forged, expired, or improperly signed**.
- Counsel the patient regarding safe use and storage of medicines.

Record Keeping and Retention Period

Type of Drug	Register/Form to Maintain	Retention Period
Schedule H ₁ Drugs	H ₁ Register (Separate Record Book)	3 years
Schedule X Drugs	Form 17 Register	2 years
Poisons	Poison Register (as per Poisons Act 1919)	2 years
Narcotic & Psychotropic	NDPS Register (Form 3C & 3D)	2–5 years

Common Legal Violations

- Issuing prescriptions without proper examination.
- Pre-signing blank pads for medical representatives.
- Prescribing banned or unauthorized drugs.
- Dispensing medicines without a valid order.
- Tampering with or forging prescriptions.

Such offences are punishable under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1940)**, **Pharmacy Act (1948)**, and **NDPS Act (1985)**.

Legal Importance of Prescription

- Acts as a **legal document** for dispensing.
- Serves as **evidence** in medico-legal disputes.
- Ensures **accountability** of prescriber and pharmacist.
- Encourages **rational drug use** and prevents abuse of controlled substances.
- Provides **audit trail** for pharmacy and regulatory inspection.

Legal Requirements for a Valid Prescription

Must be written in indelible ink (handwritten or computer-generated).

Must be signed in indelible ink by the practitioner using their own name.

Must be dated.

Must include address of the practitioner.

If issued by a dentist, it should state “for dental use only.”

Should be written legibly, with spacing to avoid confusion.

Must contain complete medication orders.

Avoid unnecessary abbreviations.

Electronic prescriptions are increasingly used to reduce errors.

Latin terms are traditional but now rarely used.

Identification of Drug Interactions

1. Prescription Screening

Pharmacists use pharmacy software or drug interaction tools to check interactions by comparing the patient's medication profile with a drug database.

2. Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

Integration with EHRs helps pharmacists see complete medication history and identify possible interactions.

3. Drug Information Resources

Pharmacists use:

Online databases

Reference books

Clinical guidelines

These provide details about severity, mechanisms, and management of interactions.

4. Clinical Judgment

Pharmacists use knowledge and experience to judge clinical significance, considering:

Patient's health

Co-morbidities

Other medications

Dose adjustments

5. Communication and Collaboration

Pharmacists consult with prescribers and other healthcare professionals to prevent risks.

Though tools provide information, the pharmacist's interpretation and recommendations are crucial for patient safety.