

## The standardized EEG electrode array of the IFCN

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- An array of 25 electrodes is recommended for standard EEGs with inferior temporal electrodes.
- Due to thinner skulls (spatial aliasing), pediatric EEG requires as many scalp electrodes as in adults.
- Arrays with higher electrode numbers (64–256 electrodes) allow source imaging at sublobar level.

### ABSTRACT

Standardized EEG electrode positions are essential for both clinical applications and research. The aim of this guideline is to update and expand the unifying nomenclature and standardized positioning for EEG scalp electrodes. Electrode positions were based on 20% and 10% of standardized measurements from anatomical landmarks on the skull. However, standard recordings do not cover the anterior and basal temporal lobes, which is the most frequent source of epileptogenic activity. Here, we propose a basic array of 25 electrodes including the inferior temporal chain, which should be used for all standard clinical recordings. The nomenclature in the basic array is consistent with the 10–10-system. High-density scalp EEG arrays (64–256 electrodes) allow source imaging with even sub-lobar precision. This supplementary exam should be requested whenever necessary, e.g. search for epileptogenic activity in negative standard EEG or for presurgical evaluation. In the near future, nomenclature for high density electrodes arrays beyond the 10–10 system needs to be defined, to allow comparison and standardized recordings across centers. Contrary to the established belief that smaller heads needs less electrodes, in young children at least as many electrodes as in adults should be applied due to smaller skull thickness and the risk of spatial aliasing. © 2017 International Federation of Clinical Neurophysiology. Published by Elsevier Ireland Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Contents

1. History ..... 2071
2. Basic electrode array and nomenclature of the 10–20 system ..... 2071

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3.	Modification of the 10–20 nomenclature . . . . .	2072
4.	Extension to 10–10 combinatorial nomenclature . . . . .	2072
5.	Recommended standard set-up . . . . .	2072
6.	High density recordings . . . . .	2073
7.	Measurement of electrode positions . . . . .	2075
8.	Polygraphic channels . . . . .	2076
9.	Special considerations in children . . . . .	2076
10.	Conclusion and recommendations . . . . .	2076
	Acknowledgements . . . . .	2077
	Conflict of interest . . . . .	2077
	Appendix A. Supplementary material . . . . .	2077
	References . . . . .	2077

## 1. History

Standardising the position and nomenclature of scalp electrode arrays was an important step in the development of electroencephalography. First, the 10–20 system of the International Federation was developed by Herbert H. Jasper and his co-workers (Jasper, 1958), resulting in the first published guidelines in 1999 (Klem et al., 1999). Early on the lack of proper coverage of the temporal lobe was criticized, resulting in the proposition of the ‘Maudsley electrodes’ to sample the temporal pole (Binnie et al., 1982). Later, the 10–20 system was extended with the 10% electrode positions of the modified combinatorial nomenclature. With the advent of source imaging, high density EEG electrode arrays including 5% electrode positions, were developed, resulting in electrode arrays of up to 345 positions (Oostenveld and Praamstra, 2001). Due to engineering advances in EEG amplifiers, a much higher number of electrodes can be simultaneously recorded, and currently available systems allow EEG recording from up to 256 locations on the scalp. However, such a large array is reserved for specific applications, such as electric source imaging for presurgical evaluation.

In this guideline we define the minimum number, position and nomenclature of scalp electrodes for standard recordings and discuss the yield of higher electrode numbers for special clinical questions. This paper presents a unified approach for the use of electrode arrays, ranging from the basic array (25 electrodes, including six electrodes in the inferior temporal chain), through an extended version of the modified combinatorial array to the high-density array (currently commercial systems accommodate up to 256 electrodes).

## 2. Basic electrode array and nomenclature of the 10–20 system

Electrode positions are based on percentages of the circumferential measurements from cephalometric landmarks of the skull

(Klem et al., 1999). The electrode names consist of letters and numbers. The letters (F, T, P, O) indicate the underlying lobe (exception: P7/8, overlying the posterior temporal lobe). C indicates the central region. Anatomical studies showed that using the measurements described here, C electrodes are located 1 cm within the central sulcus (Klem et al., 1999). Fronto-polar electrodes are annotated Fp. Odd numbers are on the left side, and even numbers on the right side. Electrodes in the midline are annotated with z (for zero). Landmarks on the skull are: the left and right preauricular points (depressions at the root of the zygoma, just anterior to the tragus), nasion (depression between the eyes, just superior to the bridge of the nose, at the intersection of the frontal bone and the nasal bones) and inion (the highest point of the protuberance of the occipital bone, in the midline; Fig. 1).

Based on the anatomical landmarks detailed above, the following measurements have to be obtained.

The first (longitudinal) circumferential measurement is in the sagittal plane, in the midline of the skull, from the nasion, through the vertex (the uppermost point of the head) to the inion (Fig. 1-A). Considering this distance as 100%, five points are marked between the nasion and inion, in the anterior-posterior direction, giving the level (longitude) of the following points: Fpz (10% from the nasion), Fz (20% from Fp), Cz (20% from F), Pz (20% from C) and Oz (20% from P and 10% anterior to the inion).

The second (transversal) circumferential measurement is in the coronal plane, from the left to the right preauricular point, through the vertex (Fig. 1-B). Considering this distance as 100%, seven points (latitudes) are marked in this direction: T9 (at the left preauricular point), T7 (10% from the preauricular point), C3 (20% from T7), Cz (20% from C3, at the intersection of the first and second circumferential measurement), C4 (20% from Cz), T8 (20% from C4) and T10 (10% from T8, at the right preauricular point).

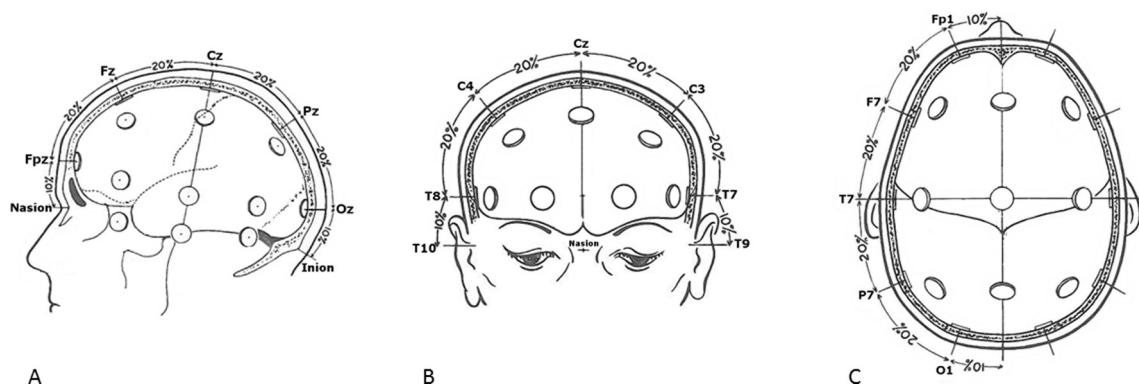
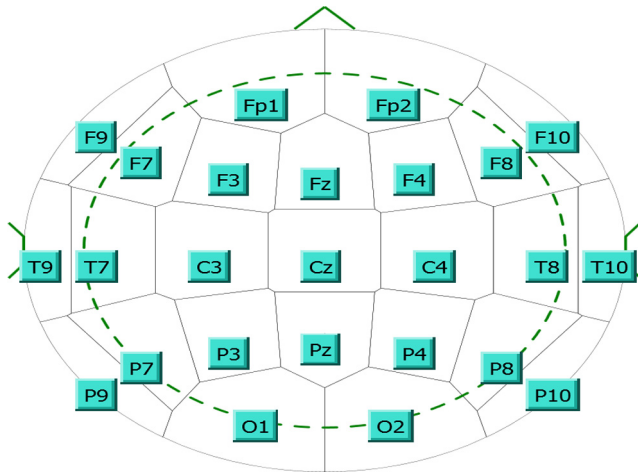


Fig. 1. A–C: Placement of the standard electrodes of the 10–20-system (modified from Klem et al., 1999, with permission). A: lateral view, B: frontal view, C: from the top.





**Fig. 3.** New standard montage, with the additional coverage of the inferior and anterior brain regions.

## 6. High density recordings

Standard electrode set-ups provide an incomplete coverage of the patient's brain but represent a compromise between the everyday routine, given that additional electrodes require additional time and effort of technicians, and reliable detection of all epileptogenic activity. Indications for standard EEG include several settings, like diagnosis of encephalopathy, coma monitoring, search for generalized discharges, etc. which may not need extensive coverage. However, it should be kept in mind that coverage by standard montages is limited and epileptogenic activity may be

overlooked if present only at distinct contacts (Fig. 4). If there is a high suspicion of epilepsy, but no epileptiform discharges can be detected in standard EEG, or precise localization of the epileptic focus is necessary, recordings with electrodes from the full modified combinatorial 10–10-system or use of high density recording systems with even more electrodes is recommended by the task force.

High density EEG (HD-EEG) which refers to the use of 64–256 electrodes has become an established tool over the past 10 years. Technical developments have made it easier to apply a large number of electrodes, which is particularly helpful in the clinical context. Geodesic electrode systems is a term used for equally distributed electrodes over a curved space, like the head. These systems provide dense and even sampling over the entire scalp, neck, cheeks, allowing to detect brain activity which could be otherwise missed (Fig. 5). Electrodes can be measured and attached individually on the scalp (cumbersome, usually very difficult beyond 64 electrodes) or applied by using expandable nets or caps which allow coverage within 30 min. Large electrode arrays cover more brain regions, and logically, allows better localization and definition of epileptogenic sources.

While visual analysis alone is possible for aiding localization, it can be very difficult. Therefore source localization algorithms, also called high density electrical source imaging (HD-ESI), have been developed to estimate the brain sources that give rise to certain scalp EEG distributions (Michel et al., 1999; Pittau et al., 2014; Michel and He, 2011; Plummer et al., 2008). HD-ESI is mostly used in the context of presurgical evaluation with the aim to identify the electric sources underlying epileptogenic activity guiding surgical resection of this zone.

There are two classes of source imaging algorithms: 1. equivalent current dipole models (He et al., 1987) that were used in the early EEG source localization studies and are still prevalent in

**Table 1**

Suggested montages with the extended standard array.

	Bipolar old longitudinal	Bipolar new longitudinal	Bipolar old transverse	Bipolar new transverse	Referential
1.	Fp2-F8	Fp2-F10	F7-FP1	F7-FP1	FP2
2.	F8-T8	F10-T10	FP1-FP2	FP1-FP2	F10
3.	T8-P8	T10-P10	FP2-F8	FP2-F8	F8
4.	P8-O2	P10-O2	F7-F3	F9-F7	T10
5.	Fp2-F4	Fp2-F8	F3-FZ	F7-F3	T8
6.	F4-C4	F8-T8	FZ-F4	F3-Fz	P10
7.	C4-P4	T8-P8	F4-F8	Fz-F4	P8
8.	P4-O2	P8-O2	T7-C3	F4-F8	F4
9.	Fp1-F3	Fp2-F4	C3-CZ	F8-F10	C4
10.	F3-C3	F4-C4	CZ-C4	T9-T7	P4
11.	C3-P3	C4-P4	C4-T8	T7-C3	O2
12.	P3-O1	P4-O2	P7-P3	C3-Cz	FP1
13.	Fp1-F7	Fp1-F3	P3-PZ	Cz-C4	F9
14.	F7-T7	F3-C3	PZ-P4	C4-T8	F7
15.	T7-P7	C3-P3	P4-P8	T8-T10	T9
16.	P7-O1	P3-O1	P7-O1	P9-P7	T7
17.	Fz-Cz	Fp1-F7	O1-O2	P7-P3	P9
18.	Cz-Pz	F7-T7	O2-P8	P3-Pz	P7
19.	ECG	T7-P7	ECG	Pz-P4	F3
20.		P7-O1			
21.		Fp1-F9		P4-P8	C3
22.		F9-T9		P8-P10	P3
23.		T9-P9		P7-O1	O1
24.		P9-O1		O1-O2	Fz
25.		Fz-Cz		O2-P8	Cz
26.		Cz-Pz		ECG	Pz
		ECG			ECG

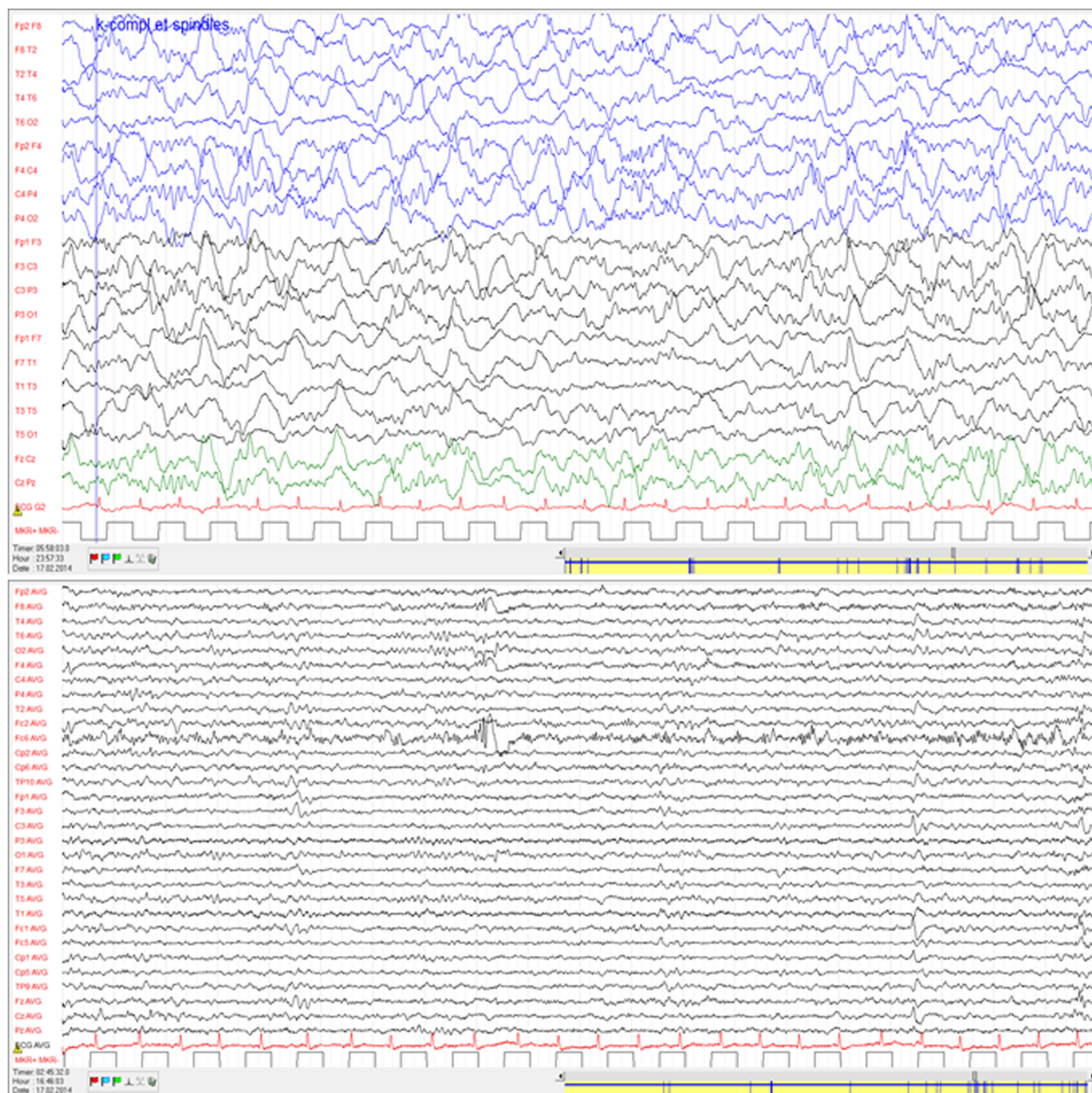
Here we propose bipolar montages from right lateral → right parasagittal → left parasagittal → left lateral → midline electrodes. Any other arrangement is possible (e.g. left to right) and left to the discretion of the user.

Transverse montage: attention is drawn to the fact that inter-electrode distance between the inferior and superior temporal electrodes is shorter (10%) compared to the other inter-electrode distances (20%). However, this montage has shown its usefulness for identifying basal temporal and orbito-frontal discharges, due to the large voltage-gradient in these areas.

Regarding referential montages, it is well established that the reference electrode should be remote from the underlying source. Since the localization of the interesting source is often not known or might change, we recommend the use of average reference, i.e. average of all active scalp electrodes.

We do not recommend the recording with linked earlobes as reference, due to its potential difficulty for source localization applications.





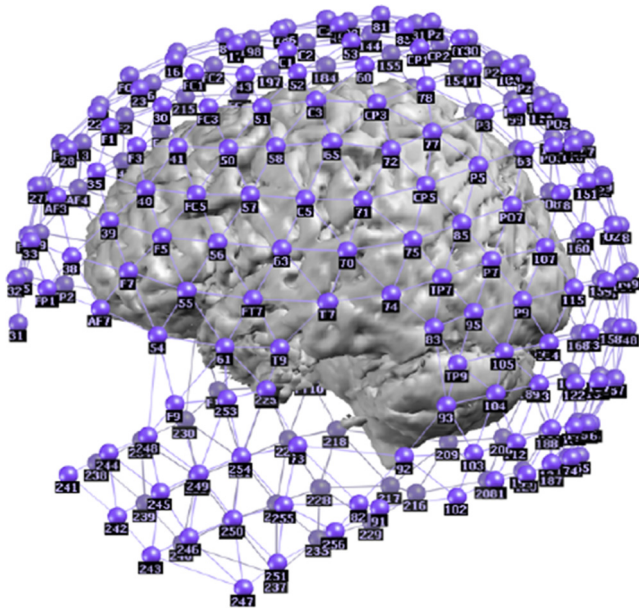
**Fig. 4.** Top: 11 year old boy with focal epilepsy. Negative scalp EEG, including sleep recordings using “double banana montage” from 31 scalp electrodes. Bottom: careful review of the monopolar montage (average reference) of the 31 electrodes showed a circumscribed focus, essentially restricted to FC6 with occasional spreading to F8. FC6 is not part of the usual clinical set-up which is why the epileptic focus was never seen in standard scalp recordings.

magnetoencephalographic source imaging; 2. distributed current source models (Pascual-Marqui et al., 1994; Dale and Sereno, 1993) which parcel the whole brain (or cortex) into small regions and determine which electrical current distribution in each of these regions most likely gives rise to the measured scalp field. The advantage of distributed source models is that calculations can be done without a priori assumptions on the number of equivalent dipoles. ESI solutions need then to be coregistered with a human brain's anatomy, ideally from the patient's own MRI, using so-called realistic head models.

Recent prospective studies showed that 128–256 electrodes provided more accurate ESI localizations compared to 29–31 electrodes (Brodbeck et al., 2011; Lascano et al., 2016)<sup>1</sup>, including patients with negative MRI (Brodbeck et al., 2010; Rikir et al., 2014). Early simulation studies estimated that the distance

between electrodes should be 1–2 cm (Freeman et al., 2003) which would require more than 100 electrodes to cover the whole head. Major localization errors of known epileptic foci were observed when the electric field was sampled with less than 64 electrodes (Lantz et al., 2003). A recent interictal study using 128-electrodes recordings in pediatric and adult epilepsy patients indicated that at least 64–76 electrodes are desirable to avoid significant source localization errors (Sohrabpour et al., 2015). Another ictal ESI study using 76 electrodes reported good results in localizing partial epilepsy (Yang et al., 2011).

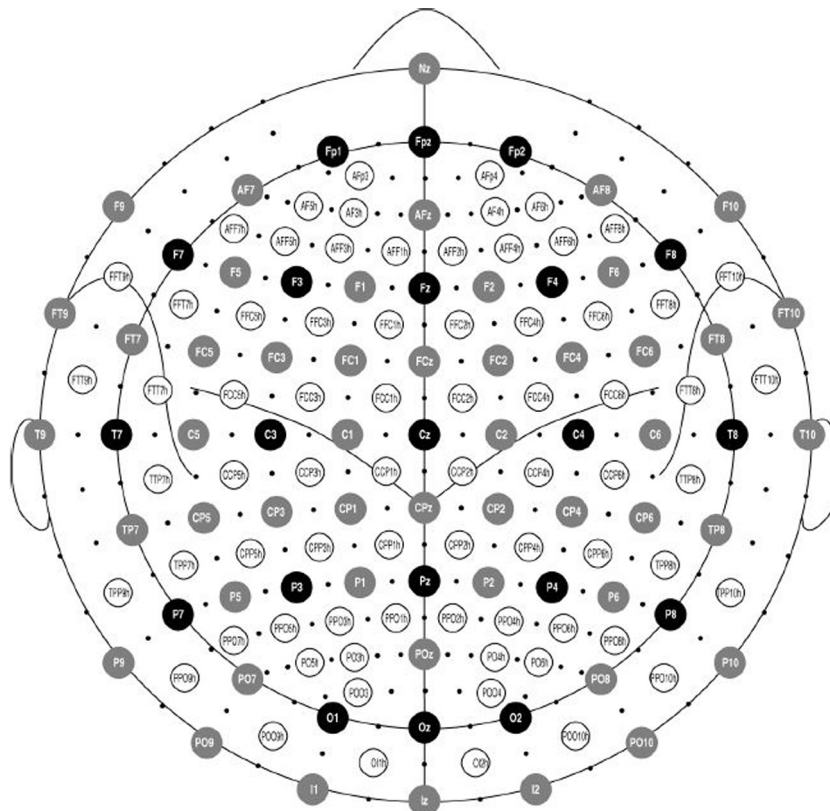
In 2001, the 10–5 system was introduced (Oostenfeld and Praamstra, 2001). Equidistant electrode positions are added to the 10–10-system, in keeping with the logic of the labeling of the 10–10-system. Similar to geographic directions (“north-northwest”), the authors proposed electrode labels like CCP or FCC,



adding “h” to indicate a position half-way between the 10–10-positions (Fig. 6). They also introduced “Iz” which is placed over theinion and label electrodes below the occipital electrodes O1h and O2h as I1 and I2, or OI1 and OI2. However, the nomenclature was not yet formally accepted by the American Clinical Neurophysiology Society or the International Federation of Clinical Neurophysiology.

## 7. Measurement of electrode positions

The EEG electrode positions can be measured using a hand-held FastTrack 3D digitizer. Certain companies are marketing other electrode position measurement devices (see review [Koessler et al., 2007](#)) like (i) ultra-sound system with a stylus, a transmitter and receptor system (triangulation-based distance method), (ii) optic system (infrared system, photogrammetry system or 3D Laser scanner) that takes pictures of the head with the scalp



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electrodes according to different angles (Qian and Sheng, 2011) or (iii) use of specific MR-visible scalp electrodes combined with automated detection and labeling for 3D localizations directly in the individual anatomical space (Koessler et al., 2008; Marino et al., 2016). Finally, standardized 3D coordinates using average positions obtained from healthy controls represent a suitable alternative, but can be misleading in patients with skull deformations or very small/very large skulls.

## 8. Polygraphic channels

Polygraphy represents the simultaneous recordings of several physiological parameters. The combination of scalp EEG and other electrophysiological signals has two main objectives: first to obtain complementary and additional information from different organs, and second to distinguish physiological artifacts in scalp EEG signals.

Table 2 summarizes the most commonly acquired polygraphic modalities: electrocardiography (ECG), surface electromyography (EMG) and electrooculography (EOG). These modalities are recorded with dedicated pre-amplifiers or input couplers (bipolar channels) due to their amplitude range (from  $\mu\text{V}$  to mV) and frequency characteristics (from very slow wave to several hundred Hz). The use of the same recording device as for EEG, allows synchronous recording that permits direct investigation of the co-occurrence of electrophysiological and/or behavioral phenomena without the complex use of time indexing system.

ECG should be recorded whenever technically possible. It is useful for assessment of heart-rate, and identifying ECG artifacts. EMG can be recorded easily using surface electrodes placed directly on the skin, close to relevant muscle groups, for example deltoid muscles (Conradsen et al., 2011). This modality yields highly relevant information in sleep studies, in long term video-EEG recordings, and in pediatric studies. It is particularly relevant for the investigation of myoclonus (Avanzini et al., 2016), epileptic spasms, for differentiation between tonic and atonic seizures and also for differentiation between epileptic and nonepileptic convulsive seizures (Beniczky et al., 2015, 2016). Guiding on the placement of muscle electrodes is given in the Supplementary Fig. S1. In behavioral studies and especially in polysomnography recordings EOG is mandatory. In scalp EEG recording it is useful for identifying eye movement artifacts (Chang et al., 2016) and studying slow waves (Virkkala et al., 2007). Moreover, long-term EEG recording coupled with EOG is capable of differentiating epileptic seizures from syncope, psychogenic or other non-epileptic seizure, in case video of the seizure is not available (Chung et al., 2006). However, usually both eyelid and ocular

movements can be detected by EOG (Iwasaki et al., 2005). In practice, Fp1 and Fp2 scalp electrodes could serve for a global eye movement investigation and especially movements in the vertical plane. For precise eye position investigation (especially in the horizontal plane), additional surface electrodes are required especially near the external canthi (Table 2).

Other modalities like body movements (actigraphy), blood pressure (plethysmography), respiration (transducers or pulse oximetry), intracranial pressure or temperature can be coupled to scalp EEG, but their use are less common and are dedicated to special issues, like comprehensive ICU monitoring.

## 9. Special considerations in children

Although the temptation of reducing the number of electrodes because of potential compliance problems in (small) children sounds reasonable, we recommend to adhere to the standards defined for adults. Low electrode numbers with even less than the defined 10–20 electrodes may lead to significant loss of crucial information with respect to the detection of certain activities and their localization. With regard to EEG source analysis, the general statement that the accuracy correlates with the number of electrodes especially applies to infants and young children because of the higher values of volume conductivity of the skull (Lew et al., 2013; Hoekema et al., 2003; Wendel et al., 2010). Thus, due to thinner skull measurements, children theoretically need *more* electrodes than adults to capture similar signals (risk of spatial aliasing), despite established practice to use fewer electrodes in pediatric EEG (often only 10 or 12 electrodes) because of the smaller heads. However, except neonates or premature babies, 25 electrodes can be easily applied. The number of electrodes for (long-term) EEG may be reduced to 16 in critical ill children (Herman et al., 2015) or even 12 for long-term and EEG-monitoring in neonates (Shellhaas et al., 2011; Kuratani et al., 2016) for practical reasons. In all other settings, we recommend to use at least the same number of electrodes as in adults, i.e. 25 electrodes.

## 10. Conclusion and recommendations

1. We recommend using at least 25 electrodes, including the inferior temporal chain, in the basic standard EEG array.
2. The risk for spatial under-sampling is particularly true for younger children who have thinner skulls. Thus, pediatric EEG should use at least as many electrodes as in adult group, and not less as it is still common practice.
3. For source localization purpose using source imaging algorithms or as a complement to standard scalp recordings, we

**Table 2**  
Most commonly used polygraphic channels.

Modality	Placement of electrodes	Recording conditions
Electrocardiogram (ECG)	One bipolar recording, corresponding to the orientation of lead-II in standard ECG recordings, is sufficient for assessment of heart-rate. To obtain maximal amplitude, electrodes are placed on the upper third of the sternum and the left 8–12 ribs, under the apex of the heart.	Sampling rate: >128 Hz Filters: 0.3–60 Hz
Electromyography (EMG)	Depending on the semiology and the level of cooperation of the patient, several channels ( $\geq 2$ ) can be used. Always record from homologous muscles on both sides; if possible, include antagonistic muscles. Place active electrode on the belly of the muscle and the reference electrode on a nearby bone. Polysomnography: electrode on the chin should be included	Sampling rate $\geq 1$ kHz  High-pass filter: 2 Hz (for review, off-line high-pass filters of 20–50 Hz can be used to minimize the movement artifacts)
Electrooculography (EOG)	Place electrodes on both sides, one centimeter lateral and one centimeter below and above the outer canthi (oblique position).	Sampling rate: >128 Hz Filters: 0.3–35 Hz

See also Supplementary Document on placement of EMG electrodes.

recommend the use of the entire or parts of the 10–10 system or high density systems with 64–128 or more electrodes.

4. Modification of labeling of electrodes and headboxes will help to facilitate the transition towards the new standard array and also towards larger arrays, like the 10–10 system, for specific clinical questions.

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## Conflict of interest

FL holds shares in ProLira, MS holds shares in Epilog. C. Michel is Editor-in-Chief of Brain Topography and remunerated for this appointment by Springer Publishing International. BH is Editor-in-Chief of IEEE Transactions on Biomedical Engineering and remunerated for this appointment by the IEEE.

## Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.clinph.2017.06.254>.

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