

# Academic Writing

Sources: Concise Rules of APA style, American Psychological Association: The Official Pocket Style Guide From the American Psychological Association 5<sup>th</sup> edition; APA Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition; APA website, 2009; UBC Library, 2010

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# Writing and Thinking

- ▶ “Writing is neither a simple skill nor an inborn talent... It is a complex intellectual activity that engages us throughout our adult lives as academics and practicing professionals.”

# Guidelines for Academic Writing

- ▶ Keep your reader in mind
  - ▶ Use 1<sup>st</sup> rather than 3<sup>rd</sup> person
  - ▶ Use words that can be understood
  - ▶ Use active tenses
  - ▶ Sequence sentences – subject, verb, object
  - ▶ Avoid negatives and abbreviations
  - ▶ Avoid overloading the sentences with text
  - ▶ Vary sentence length
  - ▶ Use subheadings as appropriate
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# More guidelines

- ▶ Print out and review draft copies
  - ▶ Read the text aloud
  - ▶ Ask others to read the draft
  - ▶ Read and listen to other authors
  - ▶ Revise continuously
  - ▶ Develop a *thick skin*
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# General reminders

- ▶ Be consistent throughout your document.
  - ▶ Be careful not to make declarations that can be contested by the reader.
  - ▶ Do not rely too heavily on one author.
  - ▶ Search out major authors/researchers relevant to your study.
  - ▶ Be clear when using quotations ... who said what?
  - ▶ Determine whether or not a quotation contributes to your study.
  - ▶ Summarize one section before introducing another.
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# Reducing bias in language

## ▶ Bias

- To write without bias, include references only when relevant, i.e., sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity should not be mentioned gratuitously.

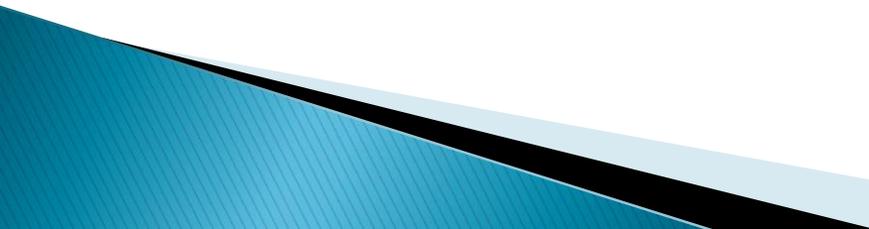
## ▶ Use the appropriate level of specificity:

- When in doubt be more specific rather than less.
- Using 'man' to refer to all people is not as accurate as using 'men' and 'women'.
- When describing age, it is better to give a specific range 'ages 45–53' rather than 'over 45'.

## ▶ Gender

- *Gender* is cultural and is used when referring to men and women as social groups.
- *Sex* is biological and can be confused with sexual behaviour.

# Economy of Expression

- ▶ Jargon – scrupulously avoid using jargon.
  - ▶ Wordiness – can impede the grasp of ideas.
    - Change “based on the fact” to “because”
    - Change “at the present time” to “now”
    - Change “for the purpose of” to “for” or “to”
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# Precision and clarity

## ▶ **Word choice**

- Be specific...do not use informal language... do not substitute 'feel' for 'think' or 'believe'.

## ▶ **Colloquial expressions**

- Avoid expressions such as 'write up' rather than 'report'.

## ▶ **Pronouns**

- ▶ Be sure that the referent for each pronoun is obvious.
- ▶ Readers should not have to search the previous text to determine the meaning of a term.
- ▶ Simple pronouns are the most problematic when they refer to a previous sentence, i.e., these, those, this, that.
- ▶ Eliminate ambiguity by writing... these students, those documents, this report, that trial.

# Neither/nor

- ▶ When the subject is composed of a singular and a plural noun joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the noun that is closer.
  - Incorrect: Neither the participants nor the confederate were in the room.
  - Correct: Neither the participants nor the confederate was in the room.
    - or
  - Correct: Neither the confederate nor the participants were in the room.
  
- Concise Rules of APA Style, 2005, p. 13.

# Plural form of nouns

- ▶ Words ending in 'a' may appear to be singular and cause the author to choose an incorrect verb:
  - Incorrect: The data indicates that John was available.
  - Correct: The data indicate that John was available.
  - Incorrect: The phenomena occurs every 100 years.
  - Correct: The phenomena occur every 100 years.

# Mechanics of style

## ▶ APA changes:

- Two spaces after a period rather than one are recommended to ease comprehension.
- Numbers expressing lengths of time can be written as follows:
  - 1 hr 24 minutes
  - at 12:30 a.m.
  - about three months ago (approximations may be written as a word)
  - \* Generally use words to express numbers below 10 (that do not represent precise measurements) and figures to express numbers 10 and above.

# Parentheses and Brackets

## ▶ Use parentheses:

- To set off structurally independent items.
  - The results were significant (see Figure 3).
- To set off reference citations in text.
  - Smith and Jones (2011) reported . . .
- To introduce an abbreviation.
  - British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF).
- To set off letters in a series.
  - The subjects included (a) girls, (b) boys

## ▶ Use brackets:

- To enclose parenthetical material that is already within parentheses.
  - (The results of the study group [n=10] are also presented in Figure 3)
- Do not use brackets if the material can be set off with commas without confounding the meaning.

# Italicizing

- ▶ In general, use italics infrequently.
- ▶ Use italics for:
  - Titles of books, periodicals, and microfiche publications:
    - *American Educator*
  - Introduction of a new, technical, or key term:
    - *turnaround* principal
  - Letters used as statistical symbols:
    - *t* test
  - Periodical volume numbers used in references lists:
    - *13*, 46–54
  - Anchors of a scale:
    - Success ratings ranged from 1(*poor*) to 5(*excellent*)

# Punctuation p.1

## ▶ Semicolon

- To separate elements in a series that contains commas.
  - The color order was red, yellow, blue; blue, yellow, red; or yellow, blue, red.
- To separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction.
  - The teacher required that the students attend the seminar; however, expectations were not clear as to the specifics of the time and location.

# Punctuation p.2

## ▶ Dash

- Use to indicate a sudden interruption in the continuity of a sentence.
  - “These two participants—one from the first group, one from the second—were tested separately.” (APA, p.34)
- Overuse weakens the flow of the material.

## ▶ Hyphens for temporary compound words

- If a temporary compound precedes what it modifies, it may need to be hyphenated for clarity.
  - Low-frequency words
  - Information-rich material
- If it follows what it modifies it usually does not need to be hyphenated.
  - The words were low frequency

# Punctuation p.3

## ▶ Ellipsis points

- Use three spaced points (. . .) within a sentence to indicate material omitted from an original source.
- Use four points to indicate omissions between two sentences.
- “Do not use ellipsis points at the beginning or end of any quotation, unless, to prevent misinterpretation, you need to emphasize that the quotation begins or ends in midsentence.” (APA, p. 126)

## ▶ Ampersand (&)

- Use inside brackets in the text of the document.
  - Rossman and Rallis (2003) argued that . . .
  - The descriptions are drawn from data about different people (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 45).
- Use in the reference list.

# Double quotation marks

- ▶ Observe the following guidelines for uses of double quotation marks other than in material quoted directly from a source: (p. 34)
  - To introduce a word or phrase used as an ironic example:
    - Her actions were considered to be “normal” behaviour.
    - Use quotation marks the first time the word or phrase is used; thereafter, do not use quotation marks.
  - To set off the title of an article or chapter when the title is mentioned in the text:
    - Roger’s article (1992), “Epistemological Debates, Feminist Voices: Science, Social Values, and the Study of Women”
  - To reproduce material from a test item or verbatim instructions to participant:
    - The first fill-in item was “could be expected to \_\_\_\_\_.”
    - If instructions are long, set them of in a block format without quotation marks.

# Direct quotations from a source p.1

- ▶ When quoting, always provide the author, year, and specific page citation in the text, and include the complete reference in the reference list.
- ▶ The following examples illustrate the application of APA style to direct quotations from a source. (APA, p.126)
  - Example 1:
    - She stated, “The ‘placebo effect’ . . . disappeared when behaviours were studied in this manner” (Miele, 1993, p. 276), but she did not clarify which behaviours were studied.
  - Example 2:
    - Meile (1993) found that “the ‘placebo effect,’ which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when [only the first group’s] behaviours were studied in this manner” (p. 276).
    - \* The first letter of the first word in a quotation may be changed to an upper or lowercase letter without explanation.
    - Use single quotation marks within double quotation marks to set off material that was enclosed in double quotation marks in the original text.

# Direct quotation from a source p.2

- Example 3: Block quotations: (APA, p. 126)
  - 40 or more words
  - single spaced
  - indented
  - not enclosed in quotations
  - The quotation must follow the original wording and spelling even if it is incorrect. Use sic in italics and brackets.
  - If you wish to emphasize a word in a quotation, italicize the word and indicate this in a bracket immediately following the word.
- Miele (1993) found the following:

The “placebo effect”, which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when behaviours were studied in this manner. Furthermore, the behaviours *were never exhibited again* [italics added], ever when reel [*sic*] drugs were administered. Earlier studies (e.g., Abdullah, 1984; Fox, 1979) were clearly premature in attributing the results to a placebo effect. (276)

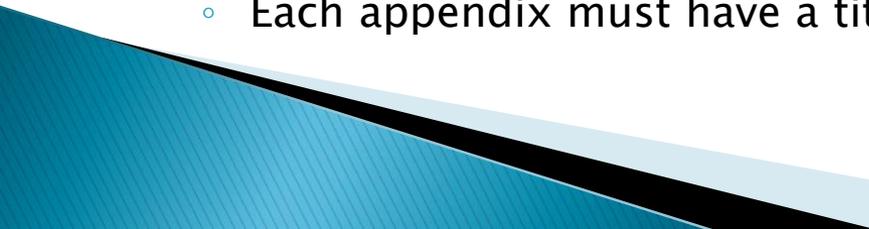
# Series

- ▶ **Within a paragraph or sentence, identify elements in a series by lowercase letters in parenthesis. Do not italicize.**
  - The participant's three choices were (a) working with a friend, (b) working with a coach, and (c) working alone.
- ▶ **Within a sentence, use commas to separate three or more elements that do not have internal commas; use semicolons to separate three or more elements that have internal commas.**
  - We tested three groups of skaters: (a) beginners, who had no previous experience; (b) moderate skaters, who had completed five to ten lessons; and, (c) experienced skaters, who practiced five times a week.
- ▶ **If the elements of a series constitute a compound sentence proceed as follows:**
  - The events upon which we report were intended to address two specific findings: (a) Only a limited number of participants are able to skate, and (b) decreasing numbers of participants showed an interest in skating.

# Using footnotes

- ▶ Footnotes should only be included if they strengthen the discussion.
- ▶ Number footnotes consecutively throughout the paper.
- ▶ Footnotes in text are of two kinds:
  - Content footnotes
  - Copyright footnotes

# Appendixes

- ▶ An appendix serves two purposes:
    - It allows the author to include information that would be distracting to the reader in the main body of the article (i.e., samples of survey instruments).
    - Be sure to reference you appendixes in the body of the paper.
  - ▶ Identifying and citing appendixes:
    - If your paper has only one appendix, label it Appendix.
    - If your paper has more than one appendix, label each with a capital letter... Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.
    - Label each appendix in the order it appears in the paper.
    - Each appendix must have a title.
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# Citations p.1 (source, APA, 2005)

## ▶ One work by one author:

- James (2000) compared reading levels . . .
- In a recent study of reading levels (Walker, 2000) . . .
- Within a paragraph, you need not include the year in subsequent references as long as the study cannot be confused with other studies cited in the article.

## ▶ One work by multiple authors:

- When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the references occur in the text.
- When a work has three, four, or five authors, cite all authors the first time the reference occurs; in subsequent citations, include only the name of the first author followed by et al. and the year if it is the first citation of the reference within a paragraph.
  - Smith, Walters, James, and Rock (2004) found ...
  - Smith et al. (2004) found . . .
  - Smith et al. found . . . (do not include date after the first citation in a paragraph)

# Citations p.2

- ▶ Six or more authors:
  - Cite only the surname of the first author followed by et al. and the year for the first and subsequent citations.
- ▶ Groups as authors:
  - The names of groups that serve as authors (associations, government departments) are usually spelled out each time they appear in a text citation.
  - The names of some groups are spelled out and abbreviated thereafter.
  - In deciding, the general rule states that you need to give enough information in the text so that the reader can locate the entry in the reference list.
    - Entry in reference list: British Columbia Teachers' Federation. (2010).
    - First text citation: (British Columbia Teachers' Federation [BCTF], 2010).
    - Subsequent text citations: (BCTF, 2010)

# Citations p. 3

- ▶ Authors with the same surname:
  - If a reference list includes publications by two or more primary authors with the same surname, include the first author's initials in all text citations, even if the year of the publication differs.
  - Remember ... the information that you provide is intended to help the reader locate the entry in your reference list.
  
- ▶ Two or more works within the same parentheses:
  - Order citations in the same order that they appear in the reference list (refer to next slide).
    - (Bomotti, 1998; Echols, McPherson & Willms, 1990; Lauen, 2006; Maguire, 2006; Raham, 2002; Willms & Echols, 1992)
  - Arrange two or more works by the same author by year of publication.
  - Identify works by the same author in the same year by the suffixes a,b,c, and so forth.
    - Smith, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c

# Citations p.4

## ▶ Paraphrasing:

- When paraphrasing an idea, the citation will include author(s) and date.
  - Author's name given in the body of the paper:
    - Lindgren (2001) reported ...
  - Author's name not given in the body of the paper:
    - A study of the comparison process (Lindgren, 2001)

## ▶ Electronic sources without page numbers:

- Use the abbreviation “para”. If the paragraph number is not apparent, cite the section heading and the paragraph number following it.
  - (Myers, 2000, para. 5)
  - (Butler, 2000, Conclusion, para.1)

▶ Source ... *Getting started with APA Citation Style*, p.1, UBC Library

# Reference list – Journal articles

- ▶ Journal article retrieved online with digital object identifier (DOI).
  - Rutherford, B. J. (2006). Reading disability and hemispheric interaction on a lexical decision task. *Brain and Cognition*, 60, 55–63. doi:10.1016/j.bandc.2005.09.013
  - In text ... (Rutherford, 2006, p.5)
- ▶ Journal article retrieved online with no digital object identifier (DOI).
  - Mathieson, C. M., Bailey, N., & Gurevich, M. (2002). Health care services for lesbian and bisexual women: Some Canadian data. *Health Care for Women International*, 23, 185–196. Retrieved January 10, 2004 from <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/07399332.asp>
  - In text ... (Mathieson, Bailey, & Gurevich, 2002)
- ▶ Author cited in another author's article.
  - Kolb, B., & Cioe, J. (1998). Absence of recovery or dendritic reorganization after neonatal posterior parietal lesions. *Psychobiology*, 26, 134–142.
  - In text ... Diamattia and Kesner's study (as cited in Kolb & Cioe, 1998).

# Order of References in Reference List

- ▶ Arrange entries in alphabetical order by the surname of the first author using the following rules for exceptions:
  - Alphabetize letter by letter; however, “nothing precedes something” ... Brown, J.R. precedes Browning, A.R.
  - Alphabetize M', Mc, and Mac literally, i.e., MacDonald precedes McGovern, and MacKinnon precedes M'Carthy.
  - Alphabetize entries with numerals as if the numerals were written out.
  - Alphabetize group authors by the first significant word of the name.
  - Order of several works by the same author:
    - Arrange by year of publication.
    - One-author entries precede multiple-author entries beginning with the same surname.
    - References with the same first author and different subsequent authors are arranged by the surname of the second author.

# Reference list examples

- ▶ Adamson, D., & Austin A. (2006). *It's all about the children: Understanding poverty in early childhood programs* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Langley, BC: Miya-piya Books.
  
- ▶ Allington, R. & McGill-Franzen, A. (2003). The impact of summer setback on the reading achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(1), 68–75.
  - \* If each issue of a journal begins on page 1, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number.
  
- ▶ Association for Community Education in British Columbia. (2004). *Community schools research project: Phase one report*. Retrieved March 10, 2008 from <http://www.acebc.org>
  
- ▶ British Columbia Ministry of Education – Media Room. (2008). *Edufacts*. Retrieved June 14, 2008, from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/news/edufacts/parentrep.htm>

# Basic Formatting in APA

## ▶ General Format

- Use standard paper (8.5" x 11")
- Use 1" margins on all sides (2.54 cm)
- Use 12 pt. *Times New Roman* font
- Double space text
- One space after commas, colons and semicolons
- Two spaces after period
- Paragraph indentation is 5–7 spaces
- Page number in top right corner