

GRADUATE WRITING EXPECTATIONS AT PRESCOTT COLLEGE  
(August, 2007)

According to the MAP Student Handbook (2006), Section 5 (p. 6), “All writing should be original thought versus reportage and include appropriate depth of inquiry. Students’ writing should demonstrate both breadth and depth of understanding of the materials being studied and the field of study.” It is expected that graduate students will take the time to learn how to access the professional research literature utilizing databases provided through the Prescott College Library and other research institutions. These databases allow access to the “deep internet,” and include but are not limited to PsycInfo, ProQuest, Ebscohost, and Google Scholar. It is expected that students will look beyond the information summarized in textbooks, provided to consumers in popular media, and published without review on the “surface internet.”

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
WRITING GUIDELINES  
(Synopsis of APA Publication Style)

Please purchase the following book at the start of your studies here at Prescott College:

American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition). Washington, D.C.: Author.

1. **KISS (keep it simple stupid!).** Do not ignore the reader when writing; do not be verbose, vague, and pompous; and do revise when necessary. Avoid unnecessary repetition of words or phrases. **PROOF READ** and check for **SPELLING ERRORS!**
2. **PURCHASE AND READ THE APA PUBLICATION MANUAL (5<sup>th</sup> edition).** APA writing style may be different from the style in which you have been used to writing. The APA Publication Manual provides specific information on how to format and write a paper right down to the way headings, quotations, spacing, and language are used. It is the writing standard used for professional communication within the health sciences. The easiest way to begin to learn APA style is to look at journals that are published in this format. Almost all professional psychology and counseling journals use APA format. In addition, it might be helpful for beginning writers to look at the sample paper in Figure 5.1 starting on page 306 of the APA Publication Manual. Students should only use secondary sources if absolutely necessary. It is much preferable (and really required for scholarly work) to use primary sources (published and peer reviewed scholarly articles and books). Textbooks are typically not considered scholarly sources. Some websites may be appropriate, but should be used in moderation. Students are expected to do a comprehensive and thorough review of the professional literature as part of all coursework.
3. **USE AN OUTLINE:** Write from an outline when possible; put aside the first draft, then reread it after a delay; ask a friend or colleague who is not familiar with the topic to criticize the first draft for you. Following is one example of a potential outline for a paper. Students should read Chapter 1 in the APA Publication Manual , esp. “Parts of a Manuscript” starting on page 10.

## SAMPLE OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
  - A. Purpose of study or paper.
  - B. Research question (spend a lot of time on this, it's important!)
  - C. How do you plan to write the rest of the paper? The layout?
  
- II. Review of the Literature--be OBJECTIVE...report other sources.
  - A. Topic 1
  - B. Topic 2
  
- III. Conclusions--can be somewhat SUBJECTIVE...integrate your ideas.
  - A. Summary
  - B. Conclusions/ideas/where to from here?
  
- IV. Reference Section (not a Bibliography unless requested).

NOTE: Research papers would also include Abstract, Methodology and Results sections. At Prescott College, a Literature Review is always part of a larger research paper or project. Rarely is a literature review an acceptable piece of research in and of itself.

4. **PROPER HEADINGS:** There is a specific format for placing proper headings in your paper. See "Headings and Series" starting on p. 111 in the APA Publication Manual. Do not add extra spaces before or after headings.
  
5. **PERSONAL PRONOUNS and the use of "I":** Though this issue is no longer addressed directly in the APA Manual, it seems that the de facto 'rule' is not to use "I" unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Purdue's writing center states it well:

When writing in APA Style, you rarely use the first person point of view ('I studied ...'). First person is not often found in APA publications unless the writer is a senior scholar who has earned some credibility to speak as an expert in the field. You should use the third person point of view ('The researcher showed ...') unless you are co-authoring a paper with at least one other person, in which case you can use 'we' ('Our finding included ...'). In general, you should foreground the research and not the researchers. However, it is a common misconception that foregrounding the research requires using the passive voice ('Experiments have been conducted ...'). This is inaccurate. APA Style encourages using the active voice ('We conducted an experiment ...'). The active voice is particularly important in experimental reports, where the subject performing the action should be clearly identified (e.g. 'We interviewed ...' vs. 'The participants responded ...').  
(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/15/>).

6. **GRAMMAR:** Use the past tense when reviewing literature from other sources. Verbs must agree with subjects and pronouns with the nouns to which they refer. An example of how to write in past tense: "Smith (1995) reported that issues related to disability were brought up in 14 out of 17 articles published in a recent issue of a professional rehabilitation counseling journal." An example of matching: "The **researchers** reported that **their** analysis of disability related issues... (Smith & Kohl, 1999)." OR "The **researcher** reported that **her** analysis of disability related issues...(Smith, 1995)." Make sure you read Chapter 2 in the APA Publication Manual, "Expressing ideas and reducing bias in language," starting on page 31.
7. **VALUE JUDGMENTS:** Avoid value judgments with terms such as good, poor, well, adequate, etc. Be **OBJECTIVE**. Use "The author indicated that most persons with disabilities were unemployed by age 35" not "The excellent author indicated that persons with disabilities were unfortunately unemployed..." A review of the literature should read like an objective newspaper report of the facts. Also, do not use such phrases as, "The fact is...", "the truth is," or "The research proved..." Most research provides us with successive approximations to the "Truth" and very few theories are actually "proven."
8. **QUOTATIONS:** Quotations are used for emphasis only--**DO NOT OVERUSE!** vs. paraphrasing. Starts on page 117 in the APA Publication Manual,

- \*Quotes must be given exactly as written...even spelling, punctuation, and other errors. Use [sic] to note errors made by the original author.
- \*Always provide the author, year, and specific page citation in the text with every quote--do not use page number when referencing something paraphrased.
- \*Short quotes of 3-4 sentences (under 40 words) are incorporated into the text with standard quotation marks.
- \*Longer quotes must be indented 5 spaces on the left with **NO QUOTATION MARKS**.
- \*Paraphrasing requires references but no quotation marks or specific pages.

Examples:

**STANDARD SHORT QUOTE:**

Smith (1995) noted that, "the new relationship between the Rehabilitation Services Administration and consumers is based on empowerment" (p. 44).

LONGER BLOCKED QUOTE (40 words or more):

According to Smith (1995), there is an inherent problem that is built into bureaucratic systems and interferes with empowerment. This problem is described in the following quote:

The new relationship between the Rehabilitation Services Administration and consumers is based on empowerment. However, this empowerment has never been defined accurately. The relationship between the consumer and the service providing agency has always been one based primarily on paternalism and is very difficult to challenge. (p. 44).

9. **NUMBERS:** General rule--use figures to express the numbers 10 and above, words to express numbers less than ten. There are exceptions of course...always use words at the beginning of a sentence and use numbers for precise measurement. Information about numbers starts on page 122 in the APA Publication Manual.
10. **FORMATTING:** Most papers being turned in for a general college course assignment should have 1 inch margins on all four sides. The APA Publication Manual also requires writers to double space the entire document, including quotations and references. Never include additional spacing between paragraphs and headings.

\*Note: Faculty at Prescott College requires a 1 ½ inch margin on the left and 1 inch margins on the other three sides for the final copy of the thesis. In addition, Prescott College faculty requires students to single space all block quotes and the reference section in order to save paper. In the reference list, each single reference should be single spaced with a double space between references.

11. **LANGUAGE:** Do not use sexist, racist, or disabling language. See APA Publication Manual starting on page 61. For example, with regard to disability, “person with a disability” is preferred over “disabled person.”
12. **CLARITY:** Watch for the dangling this, those, they, these. For example, in the quote below, what's missing?:

The new relationship between the Rehabilitation Services Administration and consumers is based on empowerment. However, this has never been defined accurately. This has always been one based primarily on paternalism and is very difficult to challenge. This is difficult to achieve.

Note that the “this” in subsequent sentences could refer to either “the relationship” or “empowerment.”

13. CITATIONS IN TEXT (do not put a single reference at the end of a paragraph unless it is very clear by the way you have written the paragraph that all the information in that paragraph is related and from the identified source). Please note that specific information on how to reference electronic media is available in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Do not include URL's in the body of the paper. They belong in the reference section.

Active referencing: Use as often as is possible. Example: Smith (1983) compared reaction times...  
OR

Passive referencing: In a recent study of the reaction times of persons with spinal cord injury, it was concluded that driving was not significantly impaired (Smith, 1993).

Multiple authors: Williams, Jones, Smith, Bradner, and Torrington (1993) found...[use all of the names the first time article is cited...in subsequent citations you may use Williams et. al. (1993).  
DON NOT USE FIRST NAMES OR INITIALS IN TEXT CITATIONS. See APA Publication Manual for exceptions.

Secondary sources: If referencing one source from another source, make certain that you read the section of the APA Publication Manual (p. 247) governing documentation of secondary sources. Example: Rogers (cited in Corey, 2004) argued for peaceful solutions to world problems. Note that the reference citation for Corey is what will appear in the reference section.

14. REFERENCE SECTION: Only materials actually cited in the text of a paper are to be included in a reference section. Do not turn in a bibliography or an annotated bibliography unless asked to do so. Detailed information regarding how to format the reference section can be found in the APA Publication Manual starting on page 215. Please note that specific information on how to reference electronic media is available in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Make certain that everything you cited in-text is listed in your References, and vice-versa.

Samples given are for a journal article and a book.

Spetch, M.L. & Wilkie, D.M. (1983). Subjective shortening: A model of pigeon's memory for event duration. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Behavior Processes*, 9, 14-30.

Bernstein, T.M. (1965). *The careful writer: A modern guide to English usage*. New York, NY: Atheneum.

NOTE: Book and journal article titles are not capitalized, but the first letters of proper names and names of journals are.

15. USE OF "FIGURES" AND "TABLES:" There are correct and incorrect ways for formatting and submitting "figures" and "tables." Please read the information starting on p. 147 in the APA Publication Manual.
16. RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS: All research proposals and papers involving research of any kind that involves human subjects must go through a formal review process. This process is designed to help protect research participants. Please review the procedures and forms related to

this process prior to formulating your final research question. See Ethics section on p. 387 of the APA Publication Manual.

## **REPEAT WRITING STYLE ERRORS IN RESEARCH PAPERS**

1. Improper use of quotations. Please read the APA Publication Manual regarding when to use quotation marks and when to use "block" quotes. ALL QUOTES MUST INCLUDE THE PAGE NUMBER and must be quoted exactly as written in the original article. Do not overuse quotes--quotations should be used for emphasis. Page numbers are not necessary when paraphrasing. Quotes should rarely stand by themselves without some form of introduction or transition sentence to introduce the quote (unless you're using it at the beginning of the paper to set the tone of the material).
2. Incorrect tense or inconsistent use of the proper tense. For the most part, all research papers should be written in the past tense.
3. Match verbs, modifiers and nouns with regard to plurality. The data are...the datum is. The counselors are new and uncertain about their future. The counselor is new and uncertain about his/her future.
4. Watch sentence and paragraph construction--include good transition sentences. Paragraphs and sentences should not be too long or too short. A paragraph should express one idea or thought and should begin with an introductory sentence and end with a summary sentence. The beginning and ending sentences also should be "transition" sentences that assist the reader in moving nicely from paragraph to paragraph, idea to idea, and section to section.
5. Improper use of "cited in." Please see the APA Publication Manual regarding the proper way to cite an article already cited from another text.
6. Improper use of creative writing style. Understand the difference between "creative writing," and "technical" or "research writing" which can be creative.
7. Make sure the reader is clear about your use of pronouns. For example, never use "this" without being absolutely clear about what "this" (or those, these, etc.) refers to--do not make the reader work for the answer or have to assume the answer. For example, "There are two conflicting items to be addressed, counselor continuing education plans which tend to be more positive and personnel review strategies which tend to be more punitive. This is a challenge for our professional colleagues who are supervisors." Does the "this" refer to "two conflicting items," "continuing education plans," or "review strategies?" A clearer way of writing this sentence would be, "This conflict creates a challenge for...."
8. Vary your reference citation format. When citing material from the work of other authors, make certain the reader is clear about the source of your information (otherwise, you may be guilty of plagiarism!). Do not write down several unrelated ideas and then put one author in parentheses at the end of the paragraph unless you have written the paragraph so well that it is absolutely clear that everything is from one source. It must be absolutely clear which ideas are yours and which ideas come from specific external sources.
9. Do not make inanimate objects animate. For example, "The paper says..." or "The article concluded..." are incorrect. Authors conclude, researchers conclude, writers conclude, but papers can't.

10. Don't use contractions in formal writing. In other words, this sentence should be “Do not use contractions...”
11. Watch the use of the word "too" vs. "to." "Too" is possessive and “to” is a preposition in most cases. For example, "You can return with too many things when you go to the store."