APA Writing Style Workshop

University of North Texas
Willis Library
Fall 2012
NOTEWORTHY: A WORD OF WARNING!

- The information in these slides is not intended as a substitute for the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition*. Refer to it, as well as www.apastyle.org, as the definitive guide to the APA style.

- It is each student’s responsibility to learn the rules and guidelines appropriate to whatever project he or she is working on.

- It is also important to remember that your professor is the final word in your course. Their requirements take precedence over rules in the APA Manual.
If you have choices, try to start with the question that covers information with which you are the most familiar.

Read the question carefully and break it down into sections.
- Underline or circle each segment of the question that needs to be answered. This helps ensure that everything is covered in your paper!
- Use these key ideas as headings for your outline.
Make an outline!

- Remember, while your paper does not have to follow your outline perfectly, it helps with initial organization.
- If you plan to include subheadings, an outline is the perfect place to figure out what should go where.
- Try to ensure that your body paragraphs are fairly even in size—don’t spend too much time adding subheadings on one topic and not enough on another.
STRUCTURING YOUR PAPER

• For example:

  Define preservation and explain why it is important to practice preservation in all libraries, not just special collections. Create and describe a hypothetical preservation program to implement at your library.

• Use the key words and phrases to decide what your main points will be. They can also serve as headings for the initial outline and help you get those ideas organized!
APA writing style should be as objective as possible which means that you will have to learn to check your writing for implied biases.

APA is committed to both science and the fair treatment of individuals and groups.

From the APA Manual: “Part of writing without bias is recognizing that differences should be mentioned only when relevant” (71).
Common biased writing errors include:

- Gender
- Racial and ethnic identity
- People with disabilities
- Labels

In the next few slides, we’ll discuss ways to reduce bias in your writing.
Sensitivity to Labels

- Avoid labeling people whenever possible. Especially avoid broadly categorizing a group of people as objects by using noun forms such as *the elderly* or *the gays*.
- Instead, use adjectival forms (e.g., *gay men* or *older adults*).
- Another way to avoid labeling is to “put the person first” followed by a descriptive phrase (e.g., *people diagnosed with schizophrenia*).
Gender

- Try to avoid using man or woman (e.g., policeman). Instead, use a more gender neutral term (e.g. police officer).
- Refrain from using the awkward “he/she” or “his or her” phrasing too often.
- Often rephrasing the sentence solves this issue. For instance, instead of “A therapist who is too much like his client can lose his objectivity” use plural pronouns to rephrase to “Therapists who are too much like their clients can lose their objectivity”.
- To find more ways to rephrase, see page 73, section 3.12 of the APA Manual.
Reducing racial and ethnic bias

- Do your best to be aware of the preferred designation for the racial or ethnic group you are writing about (e.g., not *Black*, instead *African-American*)
- Although *minority* is often used as a proxy for non-Caucasian racial and ethnic groups, this usage may be viewed pejoratively because *minority* is usually equated with being less than, oppressed, and deficient when compared to the majority.
- Use a modifier when using the word minority (e.g., *ethnic minority* or *racial minority*).
*People with disabilities*

- The overall principal for “nonhandicapping” language is to maintain the integrity of all individuals as human beings.
- This means avoiding language that objectifies a person by his or her condition (e.g., *autistic* or *neurotic*).
- Avoid excess and negative labels (e.g., *AIDS victim* or *brain damaged*).
- And remember...
  
  **People-first language!**
  
  *(People with disabilities not The disabled people)*
APA WRITING STYLE
WRITING CLEARLY & CONCISELY

- Avoid being wordy. Although sometimes it sounds nicer (and adds to page length!), wordiness can confuse the reader. Remember, APA is a scientific and objective writing style.
- Faculty who grade papers appreciate specificity!
- Avoid redundancy by saying only what needs to be said.
  - For instance, instead of using “period of time”, just use “time”.
  - For more examples of frequently used redundant phrases, see page 67 of the APA Manual.
APA WRITING STYLE
WRITING CLEARLY & CONCISELY

• Avoid colloquial expressions (slang, jargon, clichés, and trite expressions)
  • Use *children* or *child* not *kids* or *kid*.
  • Other examples of colloquialisms to avoid: *As a matter of fact, write-up* (instead of report), *job-hunting* (instead of searching for a job)

• Avoid anthropomorphism
  • Attributing human features or actions to something that is not human.
  • Common error: “The article states…” or “This paper will explain…”
  • Instead, use “The author states…” or “The purpose of this paper is to explain…”
Avoid misplaced modifiers:

- Place an adjective or adverb as close as possible to the word it modifies in order to avoid confusion.
- For example:
  - Correct: Using this procedure, the investigator tested the participants.
  - Incorrect: The investigator tested the participants using this procedure.
  - The sentence is unclear about whether the investigator or the participants used this procedure.
APA WRITING STYLE
PARAPHRASING

- Paraphrasing is writing a source’s information or thoughts in your own words.
  - Although not required, you are encouraged to include a page or paragraph number when paraphrasing. This gives credit to the original source and helps prevent plagiarism.

- Paraphrasing is a great way to integrate information without using too many quotes.

- When paraphrasing, try to write the information in a whole new way—don’t just change a word here or there (that’s plagiarism!).

APA 6th Manual: p. 171; Section 6.04
APA WRITING STYLE
PARAPHRASING

The Purdue OWL’s 6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing
 Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
 Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.
 Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.
 Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
 Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.
 Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

APA WRITING STYLE
INTEGRATING QUOTES

- When using direct quotes, integrate them into sentences of your own narrative.
  - Avoid stand alone quotes (quotes with no narrative context)!
- Try to quote only important information directly from a source and put the rest of the information in your own words.
- Avoid using long quotations; try to quote only what you need. If filled with unnecessary information, quotes can confuse or bore the reader.
APA Writing Style
Integrating Quotes

- Including too many direct quotes in your work can prevent your voice from coming through and can make it seem like you’re letting your source do the work for you.

- There is not a precise number that determines “too many” direct quotes. You know you’ve used “too many” quotes when there are more quotes than your own thoughts.
Think of integrating quotes as a brick wall. **Your thoughts** are like the bricks—they take up most of the wall. **Direct quotes or paraphrasing** are like the mortar—they support your thoughts and your research but they do not create it. Your voice and original content should make up the bulk of the paper.
Active voice
- Generally speaking, active voice is much preferred over passive.
- In the active voice, the subject is performing the action.
- For example, *Mary wrote the paper on Saturday.*
- Look at the UNT Writing Lab and the Purdue OWL links at the end of this presentation for some active verbs!

Passive voice
- In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon.
- For example, *The paper was written by Mary on Saturday.*
- Sometimes indicators of passive voice can include variations of “be” verbs (am, is, was, were, are, and been), but not every sentence with a “be” verb is passive.
- Another indicator is the word “by”.

UNT Writing Lab & Purdue OWL
APA WRITING STYLE
GRAMMAR OVERVIEW

- Verb tense agreement
  - From the Purdue OWL: “Do not shift from one tense to another if the time frame for each action or state is the same.” Be consistent!
  - For more help on verb tenses, visit: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/04/

- Subject/verb agreement
  - A verb must agree in number with its subject regardless of intervening phrases.

- Pronoun agreement
  - Each pronoun should refer clearly to its antecedent and should agree with the antecedent in number and gender.
APA WRITING STYLE
GRAMMAR OVERVIEW

- **Commas**
  - Separate two independent clauses (expresses a complete thought, contains both a subject & a verb) joined by a conjunction. (*Cedar shavings covered the floor, and paper was available for shredding.*)
  - Sets off a nonessential clause (adds information to a sentence). When this type of clause is removed, the sentence still makes sense. (*Switch A, which was on the panel, controlled the recording device.*)

- **Semicolons**
  - Semicolons are NOT commas!
  - Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses not joined by a conjunction.
  - For instance, *The participants in the first study were paid; those in the second were unpaid.*
  - Only use the semicolon if the two independent clauses have related information.

APA 6th Manual: pp. 88-89; Sections 4.03 & 4.04
APA WRITING STYLE
EDITING TECHNIQUES

- Read out loud to yourself (or someone else!) from a printed copy.
- Write on it! Don’t be afraid to circle, cross out, and indicate what needs to be moved.
  - Ask yourself, does it make sense?
  - Does it cover every part of the question?
- Take a break between writing the paper and editing it.
- Make your own rubric—make sure you can identify which part of the question each paragraph answers.

APA 6th Manual: p 70; Section 3.11
ADDITIONAL (AND TRUSTWORTHY!) SOURCES

  - Focus on Chapters 3 & 4, Writing Clearly & Concisely and The Mechanics of Style, respectively.

- **www.apastyle.org**
  - The FAQ section has some additional information on references that may not be in the manual: http://apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx

- **Purdue Online Writing Lab**
  - http://owl.english.purdue.edu
  - Explore the site and thoroughly read their pages on Paraphrasing and Active vs. Passive voice
ADDITIONAL (AND TRUSTWORTHY!) SOURCES

- UNT’s Writing Lab resources: [http://www.unt.edu/writinglab/writingresources.htm](http://www.unt.edu/writinglab/writingresources.htm)
  - Pay special attention to the Active Verb and Active Voice and Passive Voice links on this page!


- Texas A&M Writing Center: [http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/)
  - Take advantage of their resources for students, particularly Planning and Drafting ([http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/c/how-to/planning-drafting/](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/c/how-to/planning-drafting/))
For Reference:
940-565-3245
or
877-872-0264

Email:  https://www.library.unt.edu/forms/ask-us/