Writing Guide for Course Papers:
Punctuation, Grammar, and Formatting
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Writing Guide for Courses Papers:

Punctuation, Grammar, and Formatting

Writing Academic Papers

Many of us may have had a long absence before returning to academia. Others of us must have been absent the day the semicolon was explained. On the other hand, writing in the style of the American Psychological Association (APA) may be a new experience. In any case, writing may not be your strong suit. In scholarly, scientific, and technical writing, there is a bit of a formula for writing papers, which can be learned. This guide is meant to cover some of the common problems that students encounter in their writing; however, it is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

The information in this document is organized under the major headings of punctuation, grammar, and formatting. Under each heading, the information is listed in alphabetical order. The items covered under formatting include APA style and items unique to academia and the University. This document is written in APA style.

APA has no Opinion

Because the Publication Manual is a guide for publishing manuscripts, APA has no opinion about tables of contents, PowerPoint presentations, annotated bibliographies, format for dissertations (capstones projects, practica, five-chapter papers, or thesis papers), or outlining (see http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2010/09/dear-professor.html for more information). The faculty can set the format for these items. Check with the instructor for any templates or guides for these items.
Punctuation

Apostrophe

There is only one use for the apostrophe: to indicate possession. Use (apostrophe’s) student’s book to indicate one student, and use (s-apostrophe) students’ books to indicate more than one student. The doctor saw the patient's medical records. The doctor saw the patients' medical records. The first example is one patient; the second example is more than one patient.

If the word indicating possession already has an "s" at the end, the apostrophe can be used either way. She went to Dr. Chambers' office. She went to Dr. Chambers's office. If there are two people possessing something, put the apostrophe with the second name. Mary and John's home was on fire. Do not use apostrophes with possessive pronouns, such as his, hers, its, theirs, or whose. It’s means it is. There is no such word as its’.

One way to evaluate if the word needs an apostrophe is that the word with the apostrophe always possesses something. Mary's lamb was little. Mary possesses the lamb. The test will be ready in a week's time. We will celebrate on New Year's Eve. I went out to brunch on Mother's Day. If the sentence is the following: The patient's went home. The patient does not possess anything, so the use of the apostrophe in this case is incorrect. The patients went home.

There are no contractions in APA style. Contracted words, such as can’t, won’t, didn’t, it’s, and other contractions, are not used. Apostrophes are not used to make words plural (APA, 2010, pp. 96, 110). Just add an “s” to the word or acronym, such as MDs, RNs, or 1960s.

Bullets

Bullets are only used in two instances (APA, 2010, p. 64). One instance is when the order of the items is important, such as oldest child, middle child, and youngest child. The other
use is with paragraphs in a series to enumerate points under each number. Bullets are only used in two instances:

- When the order makes a difference, such as oldest child, middle child, and youngest child.
- When points need to be made under a line of text with Arabic numerals in paragraphs in a series.

**Capitalization**

Everyone knows to capitalize the first word of a complete sentence (APA, 2010, pp. 101-104). The “important” words are capitalized in titles, headings, and sources used in the body of the paper. So what are the “unimportant” words? Conjunctions, articles, and short prepositions are not capitalized. If a hyphenated word is used in a title or heading, capitalize the both words.

Here is an incomplete list of capitalization.

1. Proper nouns and trade names are capitalized, but not generic names.
2. The names of diseases are not capitalized unless named after a person or place, such as Parkinson’s disease and German measles.
3. Names of races, ethnicities, and religions are capitalized (APA, 2010, p. 75), including Black and White. African-American is always hyphenated.
4. Names of departments are capitalized for a specific department, such as LAC+USC Medical Center Emergency Department. Otherwise, emergency department is not capitalized when used generically.
5. Professional titles, such as physician or physical therapist, are not capitalized unless it is part of someone’s title.
6. The names of models are not capitalized, but the names of tests are capitalized (APA, 2010, pp. 102-103). Models and other evaluation tools, such as frameworks, evaluations, and assessments, are not capitalized. Names of tests include instruments that are given to participants to collect data, such as instruments, surveys, and questionnaires (C. Lee, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

7. Capitalize the genus, but not the species, such as *Staphylococcus aureus* or *S. aureus*. If the genus is being used generically, such as staph or chlamydia, then no capitalization or italicization is used (APA, 2010, p. 105).

8. Capitalize the names of geographic area, such as continents, peninsulas, bodies of water, mountain ranges, forests, canyons, and regions. Examples include the Antarctic, the Bay Area, Central America, Cook County, the Florida Panhandle, the Loop (in Chicago), New York State (but the state of New York), the Third World, the Silk Route, Upstate New York, Atlantic Ocean, Western world, and the East Coast.

9. Capitalize the names of events and legislation, such as the Civil War era, American with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, World War II, Geneva Convention, the Great Depression, Public Law 89-74, and the Taste of Chicago. Generation X is capitalized, but not baby boomer or millenials.

10. Capitalize official names, such as the Congress (but congressional approval), the Senate, the Republican or Democratic Party, the House of Representatives, and the Board of Trustees (but the board of the trustees).

11. Capitalized computer terms. Capitalize commands, such as the Back button or click Go. Capitalize email when it starts a sentence. (American Medical Association, 2007, pp. 374-380)
12. Do not capitalize directions, such as north, south, east, and west. Do not capitalize the seasons of the year, such as fall semester. (University of Chicago Press, 2010)

The rules for capitalization are different for the reference list.

**Full Caps.** The only use of full caps is in the running head. See the format for running heads for pages one and two on page 41 of the *Publication Manual*.

**Colon**

The only place a colon is used in a sentence is at the end of a complete sentence. A colon is used like a period at the end of a complete sentence. Does this next sentence make sense? The items included. No, it does not, so that is the test. If the placement of a period does not make sense, then the colon cannot be used (APA, 2010, p. 90). Add the magic words “the following” to make a sentence complete. *The items included the following.* The items included the following: X, Y, and Z.

**Comma**

There are many more uses for commas than described here. In the grand scheme of things, commas are used to set off non-essential (non-restrictive), dependent, and contrasting information. It may be difficult to decide if a phrase is essential or non-essential for the sentence. Here is a listing of common uses of commas in scholarly, scientific, and technical writing.

Commas go before the phrases they set off. Depending where the phrase is located in the sentence, there may be an opening and closing comma to set off the phrase (APA, 2010, pp. 88-89).

1. Use a comma at the end of an introductory phrase before the subject of the main sentence starts. *When there is ice cream for dessert,* I will be there. Introductory
phrases give additional information, such as when, who, or how. The subject of the sentence should be the first words of the sentence. If the phrase that starts the sentence is not the subject of the sentence, then a comma is used to separate the introductory phrase to let the reader know the main sentence is coming up.

2. There is a comma before “such as” with non-essential phrases (i.e., a list of examples), but not with essential phrases (i.e., definitions or limits).

I like fruit-flavored ice cream, such as cherry and blueberry.

The kitchen was missing items such as appliances.

3. There is a comma before “ing” (participial) phrases that are descriptive, such as “including.” Verbs can be used as other parts of speech, such as nouns and adjectives. The caveat is that sometimes verbs are used as verbs. In this instance, check to see if the verb is being used with a phrase that is descriptive. Here is an example: The basket contained several items, including napkins, plates, and cups.

4. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, yet, for) when it is used to join two complete phrases with subjects and verbs. *If the second phrase is missing a subject or a verb or cannot stand alone as a sentence, then the comma is not used.* The coordinating conjunction is the only connector word that uses a comma. The patient waited for the nurse, and the nurse was late. An 80-year-old man died in Hong Kong from the H7N9 bird flu, and he was the second confirmed human case. An 80-year-old man died in Hong Kong from the H7N9 bird flu and was the second confirmed human case. In this case, “and” is joining the two verbs “died” and “was.”
5. In addition to “but” needing a comma as a coordinating conjunction, there is a comma before “but” and with other phrases that are considered contrasting phrases even if the phrase may not be a complete sentence. The puppies were cute, but very messy. She wanted his love, but not his money. Other contrasting phrases may include “not,” “unlike,” or “despite.” She was wide-awake, despite having little sleep.

6. There is always a comma before “which” when used as a relative pronoun (pp. 83-84). Which is used with non-essential phrases. Princess Elizabeth lived in a castle, which was at the edge of the forest. Non-essential phrases give information that could be removed from the sentence, and the sentence will still make sense.

7. Do not use a comma before “that” when used with an essential phrase. Princess Elizabeth lived in an apartment that was in one of the towers of the castle. “That” introduces essential information, which is necessary for the meaning of the sentence.

8. Use a comma with “who” when the information is non-essential, and do not use a comma with “who” for essential information.

9. Generally speaking, do not use a comma before a prepositional phrase or phrases with adverbs. There are a few exceptions. Princess Elizabeth’s apartment was located in one of the towers of the castle. Princess Elizabeth will be queen when the time is appropriate.

10. Do not use a comma before a subordinating conjunction (as well as, as, if, although, while, because, since, rather, whether, etc.). The word itself signals the reader a dependent phrase will be next. Subordination conjunctions are connector words that do not use commas. The exception is in the case of contrasting information. Princess
Elizabeth had not ridden a horse since the accident. The castle was being decorated because Lady Godiva was visiting.

11. Use a comma to set off “interrupter” phrases (particularly and especially). Princess Elizabeth liked fancy clothes, especially satin ball gowns.

12. Use a comma to set off non-essential phrases. A non-essential phrase contains information that could be removed from the sentence, and the sentence will still make sense. Eleanor, his wife of 30 years, suddenly decided to open her own business. The pearl necklace, which is on sale, would be perfect with the dress. Non-essential phrases are usually descriptive.

13. Use a comma before the conjunction and the last element for elements in a series whether the elements are enumerated or not. She named the kittens Faith, Hope, and Charity.

14. Use a comma before a dependent phrase at the end of a sentence. She was invited to the wedding, a Greek wedding.

15. Use a comma to set off an exact dates and locations within a sentence, such as commencement is August 21, 2015, for the graduate students. However, the next commencement will be held in May 2016 for the undergraduates. Use a comma to set off a city and state in a sentence, such as the commencement will be held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, at the arena. However, no comma with the two-initial abbreviation of the state, such as commencement will be held in Ft. Lauderdale, FL at the arena. (AMA, 2007; APA, 2010, p. 89; University of Chicago Press, 2010)

16. No commas with the following phrases

- Correlative phrases
• either or

• neither nor

• not only but also

• Other phrases

• including but not limited to

• xxxxxxxx compared with

• xxxxxxxx due to

• xxxxxxxx based on

Elements in a Series

Elements in a series are three items or more, which are listed in a sentence (APA, 2010, pp. 63-64). He gave her the sun, the moon, and the stars. There is always a comma before the conjunction and the last element. APA style is to enumerate the items to make the sentence clearer. In this example, enumerating is overkill. He gave her (a) the sun, (b) the moon, and (c) the stars.

There is no enumeration for two items. This sentence would be correct: He gave her the sun and the moon. Along this line, there is only one way to make two points in a sentence. There are two points to be made: the first point and the second point.

The only other way to make two points would be to use paragraphs in a series. There are two points to be made:

1. The first point.

2. The second point.

This formatting is not allowed in APA style: (a) first point and (b) second point. This formatting is not allowed in APA style: 1. first point and 2) second point.
If one or more of the elements already has comma in it, then separate all the items with semicolons (APA, 2010, p. 90). Here is an example: The color schemes included (a) red, white, and blue; (b) silver and gold; and (c) shades of purple. Enumeration of elements in a series in a sentence works best with statistical information and phrases separated by semicolons (APA, 2010, pp. 63-64).

**Hyphens, Dashes, and Slashes**

**Hyphens.** There are no spaces around hyphens, dashes, or slashes marks. They must touch the words on either side (APA, 2010, pp. 97-100, 90, 95).

All words with “self” are hyphenated. Words that are brought together as temporary compounds to modify nouns are hyphenated, such as 5-year-old girl and well-dressed man. However, if there is no noun to modify, then no hyphen is used, such as the following: The girl was 5 years old. The man was well dressed. Notice how there is no hyphen with fractions used as nouns: One third of the group was in favor of the suggestion. No hyphen with “ly” words, such as sexually transmitted infection.

Do not use a hyphen with a range of numbers in the body of the paper. Spell out “to.” For example, the ages of the subjects ranged from 18 to 64.

There are three pages of rules about hyphens (APA, 2010, pp. 97-100). There are a few words that always have a hyphen, such as mother-in-law and decision-making. It may be easier to look it up in the *Publication Manual* or the dictionary if there is a question.

**Dashes.** With technical writing, do not use dashes to set off non-essential information when commas can be used. Dashes are used to separate the title from the subtitle in sources in the reference list. When dashes are used in the titles of sources, capitalize the first word following the dash because it is the subtitle (APA, 2010, p. 90).
Slashes. Slashes are used in particular instances in APA style (APA, 2010, p. 95). The most common use is with units of measure, such as 7.4 mg/kg or “and/or.” When slashes are used, there is no space around them.

Italics

Italics are used to introduce a technical term (APA, 2010, pp. 104-105). After the term has been introduced, then the italics are not used again. The exception would be to make a point more clear. Italics are used with statistical symbols and algebraic variables. Italics are used when spelling out genera and species, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Italics are used with sources that have covers or are containers. For example, books, reports, and journals all have covers. Books and journals contain chapters and articles. Brochures and posters stand alone. Movies are “in the can,” so to speak. All these sources are in italics: books, reports, journals, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, fact sheets, movies, and television series. The items inside the containers are not in italics, such as the title of the chapter in the book, the title of the article in the journal, or the title of one episode of a television series. The titles of articles from Web pages are not in italics (APA, 2012).

Numbers

Spell out numbers zero through nine (APA, 2010, pp. 111-114). There were eight million people with the condition. Spell out numbers that start sentences. Use the numerals for 10 and above and for numbers with decimal points. Numerals are used with units of measure, time, ages, and scores (such as Likert scores) even if the value is less than 10. Spell out fractions, such as one-third and ordinal numbers, such as first or second, up to nine. If you have a range of numbers, it is correct to say the following: There were three to 12 students in each group. The students in the third grade include ages 9 and 10.
**Paragraphs in a Series**

Paragraphs in a series are a good way to enumerate phrases or sentences vertically in the paper (APA, 2010, pp. 63-64). It is an effective way to list steps in a procedure, list of definitions, or a list of questions.

1. Paragraphs in a series are formatted this way. The indent is one-half inch like a paragraph. Use Arabic numerals to enumerate. There are two spaces after the number and the period, and then start the phrase.

2. You may need to reset the automatic numbering. Go into the paragraph section and change the left indent to 0.5 inch, the hanging indent to 0.25 inch, all other settings to zero, and check off the box about spacing.

3. The “paragraph” may be one word, one phrase, one sentence, or multiple sentences. There is a period (or sentence-ending punctuation) at the end of the paragraph even if it is one word.

In APA style, there is no way to enumerate two points in a sentence. The only way is to use paragraphs in a series.

**Parentheses**

The uses for parentheses in APA style are explained on pages 93 and 94. (If a complete sentence is put in parentheses, the period goes inside the closed parentheses like this sentence.) Otherwise, parentheses are used to enclose words or phrases as part of a sentence (such as this example). Parentheses are not used back to back. This example would be incorrect: (Butler, 2009) (O’Hara & Kelly, 2010, p. 26). The correct way to format multiple citations would be the following: (Butler, 2009; O’Hara & Kelly, 2010, p. 26). Notice how the citations are in alphabetical order. If there is an abbreviation and a citation, separate each with a semicolon in a
similar way to the citations. For example, there is a sentence with a reference to gunshot wounds (GSW; Green & Green, n.d., para 10).

There are no parentheses inside parentheses (APA, 2010, p. 94). In this case, use the square brackets to enclose parenthetical material inside parentheses. A frequent example is the abbreviation of an organization when formatting an in-text citation, such as (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.). See the section on citations for more examples.

**Percentage**

The rules for percentage are on page 118. Use the symbol for percentage with numerals, such as 2%, even if the numeral is less than 10. Only spell out the number and “percent” when starting a sentence. The word percent is only used with words, not with numerals.

**Periods**

There are two spaces after periods that end sentences (APA, 2010, p. 88). There is one space after the period for initials, such as M. O’Hara. There are no spaces after the periods in U.S. U.S. is used as an adjective (such as U.S. population), and US is a noun and means the country, the United States. Using US for the abbreviation for the country is in keeping with the two-initial abbreviation for the states or Washington, DC. No periods are used with capital letter abbreviations or acronyms, such as APA, CDC, MD, or PhD.

No period is used at the end of a URL (Web address) or digital object identifier (doi). If a Web address is used in the body of the paper, enclose it in parentheses if it will be placed at the end of a sentence. Look at these two examples. Go to apastyle.org for more examples of formatting in APA style. For more examples of formatting in APA style, go to (apastyle.org).
Quotation Marks

Use double quotation marks to enclose quotations (APA, 2010, p. 92). If there is quoted material inside the quotation, use single quotation marks. “Martin Luther King, Jr. said, ‘I have a dream’ on the Capital Mall.” Quotations in a sentence are 39 words or less. For quotations of 40 or more words, use a block quotation. Block quotations are indented one-half inch, double-spaced, and no quotations marks are used. There is a period at the end of the quotation and then the in-text citation with the page or paragraph number. Remember, there is a limit as to how many quoted words can be used from one source (APA, 2010, p. 173).

Use quotation marks to introduce ironic comments, slang, or invented expressions. Similar to the way italics are used, only use the quotation marks the first time the term or word is introduced. Subsequently, the quotation marks are not used. Italics and quotation marks are the only two ways to emphasize words or expressions in APA style.

Semicolon

Semicolons have three uses.

1. Use a semicolon to join two complete sentences.
   
   I like ice cream; however, my favorite ice cream is chocolate chip.

2. Use a semicolon to separate elements in a series when one or more of the elements ALREADY contain commas WHETHER THE ELEMENTS ARE ENUMERATED OR NOT. The problem-based learning (PBL) model stimulates clinical reasoning; promotes the application and retention of knowledge; and encourages self-directed, lifelong learning (Rhee et al., 2003). The sentence would be clearer with enumeration. The problem-based learning (PBL) model (a) stimulates clinical
reasoning; (b) promotes the application and retention of knowledge; and (c) encourages self-directed, lifelong learning (Rhee et al., 2003).

3. Use a semicolon to separate multiple in-text citations in parentheses. (APA, 2010, pp. 89-90)

Sentence Structure

There are only two ways to join complete sentences (meaning two phrases with subjects and verbs). One is with the semicolon. The other is a comma with a coordinating conjunction. Those are the only choices. Here are some examples.

- Princess Elizabeth lived in a big castle. She had beautiful princess clothes.
- Princess Elizabeth lived in a big castle, and she had beautiful princess clothes.
- Princess Elizabeth lived in a big castle; she had beautiful princess clothes.
- Princess Elizabeth lived in a big castle; therefore, she had beautiful princess clothes.

If the second phrase is missing a subject or a verb, it is not a complete sentence, and no comma is used with the conjunction. For example, Princess Elizabeth lived in a big castle and had beautiful princess clothes. In this case, “lived” and “had” are being joined by “and.”

An introductory phrase can be added on to the beginning of the sentence. When I knew Princess Elizabeth, she lived in a big castle, and she had beautiful princess clothes. There can be more than one introductory phrase. The phrases can be stacked up before the main sentence. In 2001, when I knew Princess Elizabeth, she lived in a big castle on the edge of the forest.

A dependent phrase can be added on to the end of the sentence. A dependent phrase may or may not have a subject and a verb, but it cannot stand on its own.

Princess Elizabeth had many beautiful gowns, all satin.

Here is the test:
1. Princess Elizabeth had many beautiful gowns.

2. All satin.

“All satin” cannot stand alone as a sentence, so it needs a comma to signal the reader there is some extra information about the clothes.

The introductory phrases and dependent phrases augment complete sentences. They give the reader extra information about the phrases they come before or after. However, the phrases or sentences being augmented make sense without the extra information. These phrases are set off with commas to signal the reader there is non-essential information.

There can be non-essential information in the middle of a sentence. This information needs to be set off with commas.

Princess Elizabeth had beautiful princess clothes at the castle.

Princess Elizabeth had beautiful princess clothes, including satin gowns, at the castle.

Princess Elizabeth had beautiful princess clothes, such as satin gowns and velvet coats, at the castle.

Princess Elizabeth had beautiful princess clothes, such as satin gowns, velvet coats, and opera-length gloves, at the castle.

The non-essential information is interrupting the sentence, which is why there is a comma before “at the castle.” Otherwise, there would not be a comma before the prepositional phrase as the first sentence demonstrates. The commas are enclosing the non-essential phrase even with the commas for the elements in a series.

**Run-on sentence.** One way to prevent run-on sentences is to have short sentences. It may seem choppy, but it is never wrong (APA, 2010, p. 67). Have a little variety with joining two sentences together and having an occasional introductory phrase or dependent phrase to
provide extra information. It is better not to try to pack so much information into one sentence. It is easier for the reader to have smaller bites to digest.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Conjunctions join phrases together like the coordinating conjunctions (and, but, so, for, nor, yet) that are used to join two complete sentences. Subordinating conjunctions are used to join dependent phrases (phrases that cannot stand alone as a sentence or depend on the main sentence to have meaning) to a complete the idea in a sentence. Subordinating conjunctions do not need a comma when adding the dependent phrase to the sentence. The subordinating conjunction signals the reader to the upcoming dependent phrase. Subordinating conjunctions are connector phrases that do not use commas.

The subordinating conjunctions *while* and *since* have special meanings with time (APA, 2010, pp. 83-84). While means at the same time. He listened to classical music while reading a book. *Since* indicates an interval of time, such as (a) since he was born, (b) since the store was opened, or (c) since 1985. Substitute (a) *although*, (b) *but*, or (c) *and* for while. Use *because* instead of *since*.

There are over 100 subordinating conjunctions, including *although*, *as*, *while*, *because*, *if*, *even though*, *rather than*, *so that*, *and that*, and *since*. “As well as” is a subordinating conjunction and never has punctuation around it. “As well as” is NOT a substitute for “and” in a list of things.

These words are frequently used with introductory phrases. Introductory phrases need commas to set them off from the main sentence. Use these words as flags as a reminder to put in the comma for the introductory phrase. However, when these words are used in the middle of
the sentence, no comma is used because the connector words themselves indicate the dependent clause.

Princess Elizabeth liked to look for dragons in the forest since she was a little girl.

Since she was a little girl, Princess Elizabeth liked to look for dragons in the forest.

When the clock struck midnight, the coach turned into a pumpkin.

The coach turned into a pumpkin when the clock struck midnight.

Although Princess Elizabeth lived in the castle, she enjoyed going to town.

Princess Elizabeth enjoyed going to town although she lived in the castle.

Although there were dragons in the forest, Princess Elizabeth was not afraid; however, as a favor to the king, she promised to stay on the highway to be safe. Notice this example has two complete sentences joined by a semicolon, and both sentences have an introductory phrase.

Grammar

Noun-Pronoun Agreement

Nouns and the pronouns they replace must agree in number (APA, 2010, p. 79). “Their” is not the universal pronoun, not yet anyway. Sometimes, in an effort to be gender neutral, their is used, but it is not correct (APA, 2010, pp. 73-74).

The student brought his book to class.

The student brought his or her book to class.

The student brought his/her book to class.

The students brought their books to class.

The restaurant raised its price for appetizers.

The restaurants raised their prices for appetizers.

The business made an announcement to its employees.
The businesses made an announcement to their employees.

Notice how all the personal possessive pronouns (his, hers, its, their) do not have apostrophes to indicate possession. There is no such word as its’. “One” can be used as a neutral third-person pronoun.

Paragraphs

All indents are one-half inch (APA, 2010, p. 229). This is true for the paragraphs in the body of the paper and the hanging indent for the reference list. The level three-four-five headings are indented one-half inch and precede the first sentence of the paragraph on the same line (APA, 2010, pp. 45, 62). Block quotations are indented one-half inch.

A paragraph is more than one sentence. Most instructors will say a paragraph is at least three sentences. APA has no opinion on paragraph length except to say, “Single-sentence paragraphs are abrupt” (APA, 2010, p. 68); however, paragraphs that are too long will lose the reader’s attention. No minimum length is given or suggested. Most people will agree that each paragraph contains one idea.

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns are similar to subordinating conjunctions. They introduce phrases that support the main part of the sentence (APA, 2010, pp. 83-84). The three relative pronouns are which, that, and who. Which and that are used for things, and who is used for people. Which is used to set off non-essential phrases, meaning COMMAS ARE REQUIRED for phrases with which. Phrases with that are considered essential for the sentence and NEVER take a comma. Phrases with who require commas when the information is non-essential for the sentence, and no commas are used for essential phrases.
Spelling

The authority for the spelling of words is the *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary Eleventh Edition* (p. 96). The online version of the dictionary is convenient for checking the spelling of words (http://www.merriam-webster.com/). There is an app for that!

Some commonly misspelled words include the following:

1. Health care. When the writer has control over the spelling of health care, it is spelled as two words. This is primarily in the body of the paper.
2. Internet. “Internet” is a proper noun and always capitalized.
6. PowerPoint presentation (not PowerPoint). Microsoft named its product this way.
7. Online. Online used to be hyphenated; now it is one word.
8. Literature, search, training, and faculty are singular. Use faculty members if plural pronouns and verbs are needed.
9. Give your regards to Broadway. In all other cases, use regard.
10. Nova Southeastern University or NSU (not Nova, NOVA, or NOVA Southeastern University). NOVA Southeastern University is the way the name is spelled in the logo of the University.

The rule is to spell out the term the first time it is used, and put the abbreviation in parentheses. The exception to this rule is if the abbreviation is listed as a word in the dictionary. For example, look up US in the dictionary. It will say “US abbreviation” or “US abbr.” This means the term must be spelled out first time and abbreviated. Some examples of abbreviations
that are used as words that do not need to have the abbreviation explained include AIDS, HIV, RN, IV, DNA, pdf, MRI, and CD.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

Subjects and verbs agree in number regardless of the phrases in between the subject and the verb (APA, 2010, p. 78). Some nouns are a little tricky. Collective nouns represent a group, such as faculty, and take a singular verb. Use *faculty members* if a plural verb sounds better.

Uncountable nouns, such as sugar and jewelry, take singular verbs. There are some nouns that only have a singular form, such as literature and research. Watch out for nouns that are spelled in a plural form, but take a singular verb, such as news, mumps, and measles.

Be aware of the singular and plural of Latin words. The word curriculum is singular and the word curricula is plural. Data, criteria, and bacteria are plural forms of the nouns and take plural verbs (APA, 2010, p. 96).

There are indefinite pronouns, such as *each, nobody, anyone, someone, and every*, which take singular verbs. There are indefinite pronouns, such as *several, both, few, and many*, which take plural verbs. Some indefinite pronouns, such as *some, any, none, all, and most*, are singular or plural, depending on the context. All of the jewelry is on the table. All of the cupcakes are on the table (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Compound subjects take plural verbs when “and” is used whether the subject themselves are singular or plural. Pencils and pens are used for writing. However, compound subjects joined by or/nor take a singular verb if the subjects are singular, or match the last subject to a singular or plural verb, depending if the subject is singular or plural. A pencil or pen is used for writing. A pencil or pens are used for writing. Pens or a pencil is used for writing (University of Chicago Press, 2010).
APA Style Formatting Issues

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are used to save space in a manuscript. However, abbreviations should be used sparingly to avoid having the reader lost in an alphabet soup (APA, 2010, p. 107). Just because a term can be abbreviated does not mean it has to be abbreviated. Terms are spelled out and abbreviated the first time they are used in the text. Do not explain abbreviations in titles or headings. Only explain the abbreviation one time. After that time, use the abbreviation. If an abbreviation will be used three times or less, do not use the abbreviation. There is no limit to the number of different abbreviations can be used in a paper; however, please have consideration for the reader.

The exceptions for abbreviations are for units of measure (see page 109) and for abbreviations that are considered words in the dictionary. Some examples include HIV, AIDS, RN, DNA, RNA, MRI, and pdf. US is not a word in the dictionary. Put the abbreviation for the United States in parentheses the first time it is used. Remember to use US for the country (like the two-initial abbreviations for states and Washington, DC) and U.S. as an adjective, such as U.S. government (see page 88).

Latin abbreviations. Latin abbreviations (i.e., e.g., vs., etc.) are used in parentheses in the body of the paper (APA, 2010, p. 108). Otherwise, the terms they represent are spelled out (that is, for example, versus, and “and so forth”) when used in the body of the paper. The only Latin abbreviation that can be used in the body of the paper is et al. The spelling is et al. (which is an abbreviation for et alii, meaning and others). The abbreviation et al. is used with people, and et cetera (etc.) is used with things.
Abstract

Follow the example for the abstract on page 41. There are other examples of abstracts on the apastyle.org Web page. If an abstract is used, it is always page two (APA, 2010, p. 229). It is one paragraph of approximately 250 words or less, which is not indented, and no citations are used. APA does not specify an exact word count or a minimum word count. The page is entitled “Abstract” and is not bolded (APA, 2010, p. 27). The keywords are the search terms someone would use to find your paper if it were published (APA, 2010, p. 26).

Appendix and Appendices

The plural of appendix is appendices (APA, 2010, p. 96). There is no separate title page for the appendix or appendices as was used in the previous DHS Style Guide. If there is one appendix, then the appendix identifier is “Appendix,” which is the first line on the page and centered. Double-space and center the title of the appendix. Neither the appendix identifier nor the title of the appendix is bold. If there is more than one appendix, then the appendix identifier is Appendix A and Appendix B (APA, 2010, p. 39). The information displayed in the appendix does not have to be in APA style. Only the format of the appendix identifier and the title of the appendix need to be in APA style. Because there is no title page for the appendix, the page number for the Appendix or Appendices line in the table of contents will be the same page number as the first appendix page.

Appendix A

Title of the Appendix

Bolding

Bolding is used only for the headings in the body of the paper (APA, 2010, pp. 41-49).
Use regular font formatting (no boldface or italics) for all section titles, such as Abstract, Title of the Paper (on the title page and on the page where the text begins), References, and Appendix/Appendices. These are not headings but labels for these sections. (APA, n.d., para. 3)

**Front Matters**

Front matters include font style and size, margins, alignment, line spacing, and running heads among others (APA, 2010, pp. 228-230). These are the items for formatting the Word program.

1. Times New Roman 12-point font. Make this the default for the paper each time.
2. Margins are one inch on all four sides of the paper.
3. The alignment is left flush, so the margin is ragged on the right side.
4. The entire paper is double-spaced.
5. All indents are one-half inch.

Use “Normal” or “No Spacing” in the Styles box. Go into the paragraph section and change all the settings to zero, double-spacing, and check off the box about spacing. Make this the default for the paper on the first page of the paper each time a paper is written. If “first line” indent is chosen, then remember to change the indent to “none” for level one and two headings. Clear all the tabs so the default indent is one-half inch. Taking the time to set up the default for the paper on the first page will save time and effort later on to correct spacing issues.
Do not use the Word formatting for APA style. It makes mistakes. If a program for APA formatting is used, such as Endnote, check for mistakes because all the programs make mistakes. It may be easier to learn how to do it correctly in the first place!

Headings

There are five levels of headings in APA style (APA, 2010, pp. 45, 62). The use of the headings is top-down, meaning there must be a level one heading to have a level two heading. Headings are not labeled with numbers or letters. The number of headings required for the paper depends on the length of the paper. Subheadings (level two-three-four-five) can be used as transitions, which guide the reader through the paper. A minimum of level one headings are introduction, discussion (analysis, literature review, or some other heading), and conclusion. The complexity of the topic will dictate other level one headings (review of literature, methods, results, etc.) and subheadings (APA, 2010, pp. 62-63). There can be any level of heading without text underneath. The next level of heading may be used as an outline might be used.
Diabetic Neuropathy

Peripheral Neuropathy

Example of a paragraph with text under the level two heading.

Autonomic Neuropathy

Gastroparesis. Example of a level two heading without any text but with a level three heading.

It is not recommended to use the function for the levels of headings in the Word program. If used, they must be modified to APA style. As mentioned, be wary of APA style computer programs. They make mistakes. The writer (you) are responsible to be sure the paper is written correctly.

The Publication Manual says not to use the Introduction heading because it is understood by its position in the paper. However, because the Introduction heading is part of the five-chapter format and helpful for the organization of some course papers, the Introduction heading will be used when appropriate. However, if the paper is short, or no other headings will be used, then the Introduction heading can be omitted. The instructor of the course may have some specific instructions regarding the format for the papers in the class, so check with the instructor for the organization of course papers. Here is an example of the first page of the body of the paper.

Title of the Paper from the Title Page

Introduction

The title of the paper is repeated on the first page of the body of the paper (APA, 2010, p. 41). This page is page three if there is an abstract or page two if no abstract is used. It could be page four if there will be an abstract and a table of contents.
**Widows and orphans.** A widow or orphan refers to lines at the end of a paragraph or the end of a page. A heading cannot be the last line on the page. Move the heading to the next page to be with its paragraph even if it will leave more than one inch of white space at the bottom of the page.

**Outlining**

APA has no opinion about outlining because it is not used in writing manuscripts. If the assignment calls for outlining, then check with the instructor for the format. However, there are three ways to list ideas in APA style without formal outlining.

The first one is to use the levels of headings, which is an excellent way to organize the paper before writing the text (APA, 2010, p. 62). Using the levels of headings provides a structure to the paper to be sure all the points are included.

**Level One Heading**

**Level Two Heading**

*Level three heading.*

*Level four heading.*

*Level five heading.*

The second way is to use paragraphs in a series (APA, 2010, pp. 63-64). Paragraphs in a series are very flexible because the “paragraphs” can be one word, a phrase, a sentence, or multiple sentences. If there are subpoints under the paragraphs, bullets can be used.

1. Point one.
   
   • Subpoint one.
   
   • Subpoint two.
2. Point two. If there is more text, the overflow sentence will align with all the previous sentences, such as this sentence does.

3. Point three.

The third way is to use bullets. Bullets are similar to the format of paragraphs in a series in that the first word is capitalized and there is a period at the end of the phrase (APA, 2010, p. 64). It is probably easier to list all the main points, then go back and put in any subpoints.

- Point one.
- Point two.
  - Subpoint one.
- Point three.

References and Citations

The examples here are not exhaustive. Please refer to Chapter 7 in the Publication Manual. In addition, please refer to the APA Style Guide to Electronic References for the format of other electronic sources and gray literature.

Citations. The sources used in writing the paper are cited in the text with an author-date format (APA, 2010, pp. 174-179). The purpose of the in-text citation is to give enough information so the entry in the reference list can be found, which will have the complete retrieval information. Each source used to write the paper will have an in-text citation and a corresponding entry in the reference list. There cannot be an in-text citation without an entry in the reference list, or there cannot be an entry in the reference list without an in-text citation. Therefore, the author will be the same for the in-text citation and the entry in the reference list. There are two exceptions to this rule. Personal communication is not listed in the reference list because it is not retrievable. The Bible and the Qur’an are not listed in the reference list because
they have a standardized format for locating the passages. Both of these exceptions will have the proper in-text citations (APA, 2010, p. 179).

**Format.** There is a table on page 177, which demonstrates how to format the in-text citation. The format is (Author, year). The ampersand (the “and” symbol [&]) is only used in the in-text citations and the reference list. The ampersand is not used in the body of the paper. When the authors’ names are used in the running text, use “and” instead of the “&,” such as O’Hara and Kelly (2010) compiled a list of health maintenance items for diabetics.

With three to five authors, list all the names the first time. Subsequently, use et al. with the first author’s name. With six or more authors, use et al. with the first author’s name every time. Remember that abbreviations are made when the term is used for the first time, which includes sources. Use the square brackets for the abbreviation of an organization inside the parentheses (APA, 2010, p. 94). For example, there may be a sentence talking about information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.). Even though Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was used in the sentence, the proper name must be spelled out and abbreviated in the parentheses. The next time the citation will be (CDC, n.d.). Remember that more than one citation can be listed in the parentheses. Each citation is separated with a semicolon in alphabetical order. Parentheses cannot be used back to back. If there is an abbreviation of a term and a citation, then put the abbreviation in the parentheses first, then a semicolon, then the in-text citation (APA, 2010, p. 94). For example, there may be a sentence talking about thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH; Rose, 2010). Remember there is no comma before the ampersand with two authors; use (O’Hara & Kelly, 2010) for the in-text citation in the body of the paper.
**Sources as authors.** If the title of a source is used for an in-text citation, it can be shortened (APA, 2010, p. 176, 200). Capitalize all the important words. Put the titles of articles in quotations marks ("Title of the Article," n.d.), and put the titles of books and reports in italics (Title of Report, n.d.). Notice the comma goes inside the quotation mark (APA, 2010, p. 92).

**Quotations and paraphrases.** Quoted material must have the page or paragraph number included in the in-text citation, or it is considered plagiarism (APA, 2010, pp. 170-172). Page numbers are used for sources with page numbers. Paragraph numbers are used for sources without page numbers, such as open-access journals and information from Web pages (APA, n.d., para. 10). Use p. for one page and pp. for a range of pages. The use of page or paragraph numbers is optional for paraphrased material.

Paraphrasing is preferred over using quotations. A quotation means that information was found. Paraphrasing indicates syntheses of information and critical thinking. There is no industry standard for the number of quotations allowed. For example, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* does not allow any quotations. Check with the instructor for the number or amount of quotations that will be allowed. For example, some instructors allow one quotation per page or 10% of the total words.

**Reference list construction.** The reference list is a list of all the sources used to write the paper (APA, 2010, pp. 180-181). Every entry in the reference list will have the same basic information: author, date of publication, title, and publishing information (APA, 2010, pp. 183-192). The idea is to have a specific set of information, so the source can be retrieved. The author of the paper is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the reference list. The reference list is double-spaced with the hanging indent format. Go into the paragraph section and change all the settings to zero, hanging indent (0.5"), double-space, and check off the box.
about spacing. See chapter six for more information about formatting the reference list entries, and see page 59 for an example.

The only choice for the entity that goes in the author’s spot is persons, organizations, or titles of articles or reports. Whatever name is chosen for the author in the reference list is the same author that will be used in the in-text citation. **Remember, the purpose of the in-text citation is to locate the publishing information in the reference list, so the authors have to be the same.**

**Authors.**

*Individuals.* The first choice for the author is a person or persons. List all the authors’ names up to seven authors in the reference list. Use a comma before the ampersand and the last author’s name (APA, 2010, p. 198), which means there will be a comma before the ampersand with two authors’ names in the reference list (but not for the in-text citation).

With eight or more authors, list the first six authors, and then put an ellipse before the last author’s name. Notice the spacing of the ellipse. There is a space before and after the ellipse and in between each dot (e.g., O’Hara, M., . . . Kelly, P. E.). The computer will not include the spaces between the dots, so it must be manually changed. There is no et al. in the reference list.

*Organizations.* The next choice for the author is an organization that takes responsibility for the information. Check the copyright date where the © symbol is. Usually the name associated with the symbol is the publisher (such as a Web page) and can be responsible for the accuracy of the information. The names of organizations are not abbreviated when used for authors in the reference list. The full name of the organization is listed as the author. The only exception is using the abbreviation for United States (U.S.) with the names of governmental agencies in the reference list. If there is no author, then the title of source is used, such as an
article, book, or report. Only the first word of the title and subtitle will be capitalized in the reference list if it is used as the author or the title of the source.

With governmental agencies, list all the agencies in the reference list as the organizational author, starting with the cabinet-level agency, down to the agency giving the information. Separate each name with a comma. For example, information may be taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The entry for the author in the reference list would be U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The in-text citation would be (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Labor Statistics, year). Here is another example: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. The in-text citation would be (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], National Institutes of Health [NIH], National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [NHLBI], year) the first time and (USDHHS, NIH, NHLBI, year) the next time or if the abbreviation has already been explained.

Sources. If there are no obvious persons or organizations that will take responsibility for the information, then the last resort is to use the title of the source. These are usually titles of articles or reports. In the reference list, the first word of the title and subtitle and any proper nouns are capitalized (APA, 2010, p. 200).

Publication date. For most sources, the year of publication is sufficient (APA, 2010, p. 185). For publications that are daily or weekly, such as newspapers and magazines, give the exact date of publication (2010, February 10). Use the exact date of publication for Web pages. The copyright date of the Web site is not the date of publication. If there is no obvious date of publication, use n.d. for “no date.”
**Titles.** Only the first word of the title and subtitle are capitalized (APA, 2010, pp. 185-186). Subtitles are found after colons or dashes. Proper nouns are capitalized, and acronyms can be in full caps. The only sources that have all the important words capitalized are journals, newspapers, and newsletters. The only sources that are in italics are those that have covers or are “containers.” Examples of sources in italics include books, reports, movies, television series, video, podcasts, brochures, journals, newspapers, and newsletters. Whatever is inside the container (article, chapter, television episode) is NOT in italics. ARTICLES FROM WEB PAGES ARE NOT IN ITALICS.

**Publication information.**

**Periodicals.** For periodicals, see the examples on pages 198 to 202. Please be aware that citations in PubMed and many suggested citations are in the American Medical Association (AMA) style. This information must be translated into APA style. Many publications have digital object identifiers. The doi is preferred because it is considered to be stable. If the URL address is available, it can be used, but do not use both the doi and the URL. Pick one or the other. Here are two examples of doi: doi: 10.1037/rmh0000008 or http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rmh0000008 (this is the new format). Notice how the newer format does not have “Retrieved from” or “doi:” preceding it. The date the article was retrieved does not need to be included in the reference list entry unless the Web site is an unstable source, such as a wiki (APA, 2010, p. 192). Do not list a password-protected doi or URL address as one might find from a library database. Instead, list the entry page URL (APA, 2010, p. 192).

**Books and reports.** For books and chapters in books, see pages 202 to 203. Be sure to include the two-initial state abbreviation with the location of the publisher. If the location of the publisher is international, include the country. If the author is the publisher, put “Author” for the
name of the publisher instead of listing the name of the author in both the author and publisher’s spot (APA, 2010, p. 203). For chapters in book, notice the punctuation and the order of the editors’ names is different from the entry for a book.

Look at page 205 for the format for reports; the format is similar to the format for a book. Many reports give suggested citations. The suggested citations save time in hunting down the needed information. However, remember to translate the information to APA style. Many times the suggested citation gives more information than needed. Pick out only the needed information for the reference entry: author, publication date, title of the source, and publishing information. Please include the URL address if no doi is provided.

Web addresses. The computer likes to make Web addresses into hyperlinks at the drop of a hat. However, this is not APA style. The hyperlink must be removed with the right click of the mouse, or manually change the color of the ink from blue to black and remove the underline. The retrieval date is used when the source is considered unstable. However, “unstable” sources are probably not scholarly or reputable and should not be used. Therefore, the retrieval dates are not necessary with URL addresses (APA, 2010, p. 192).

Reference managers. A word about reference managers. All reference managers make mistakes. It is the writer’s responsibility (your responsibility) to correct the errors the reference manager makes. It may be easier to not use a reference manager and just learn how to format the sources correctly.

Running Heads

Running heads are part of the format for the title page, and they are not difficult to put into the header with the page numbers. The “different first page” and the “show text” boxes need to be checked off when inserting the page numbers at the upper right-hand corner of the
The running head is a shortened title (no more than 50 characters, including spaces [not including “Running head:”]) that appears on every page (APA, 2010, p. 229). Fifty characters is almost 5 inches in length. Use the automatic functions of the word-processing program to create a header that contains the running head and the page numbers for the paper. The header is located within, not below, the paper’s margin, one-half inch from the top of the page. The words for the running head and the page number are on the same line. The words “Running head:” precede the title in full caps on the title page only (APA, n.d., para. 1).

Tables and Figures

The convention is that one table or one figure can be included in the body of the paper before a list of tables or a list of figures would be required with the table of contents. Tables or figures included in an appendix or appendices would be exempt from this requirement.

Tables. Tables must be in APA style in the body of the paper. Tables need to be in the “floating” format. Tables should not be split between two pages. See pages 147 and 148 for an example of how to continue a table. Notice how the headings are repeated.
Table 1

*Patients with Low Vision*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient category</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found to have low vision</td>
<td>12/28</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients with a known age-related visual diagnosis</td>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients with cataracts or cataracts were removed</td>
<td>7/28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription glasses for near or distance vision</td>
<td>21/28</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Information for formatting tables and figures is described in chapter five of the *Publication Manual.* The font is Times New Roman. The table itself can be 12 point or 10 point, and the table can be single- or double-spaced. However, the note is double-spaced unless it would cause the note to continue onto the next page. In that case, the note can be single-spaced and 10 point. Notice how the citation for the table is a different format from the reference list for the adaptation.

Tables can be made in Excel and imported, or the table can be formatted in Word. If the Word table function is used, go into the paragraph section and use the “Borders” icon to take out the grid lines. Grid lines can also be removed from the View tab. As a last resort, put the tables in the appendix. Remember, the item that it is in the appendix does not have to be in APA style. Try to keep the table on one page. If needed, move the table to the next page, which may leave a large portion of the paper blank.

*Figures.* Figures are displayed differently from tables in the body of the paper. The title of the figure is under the figure. Notice only the first word of the title of the figure is capitalized. There is usually an explanation in the caption. Then the adaption information is listed if the
Figure 1. Nerve cell. The axon carries the messages out to the periphery or back to the brain. The myelin sheath is like insulation, which increases the speed of message from that cell to the next. The longest axons in the body go to the toes! Adapted from “Neuron,” by University of Michigan Health System, n.d., (http://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/tp12596). Copyright 2014 by Regents of the University of Michigan.

**Adaptation.** If a table or figure is used from a published source, there needs to be a specialized citation under the table or the figure called an adaptation. The in-text or running-text citations are not used. The source must also be listed in the reference list. Here is the formatting for the adaptation for different sources.


2. Book. Adapted from *Title of Book or Report* (Vol. x, Xth ed, p. x), by A. A. Author and B. B. Author, xxxx, Location: Publisher. Copyright 2xxx by Publisher.

3. Chapter in a book. Adapted from “Title of Chapter,” by A. A. Author and B. B. Author, in E. E. Editor (Ed.), *Title of Book* (Vol. x, Xth ed., p. x), 2xxx, Location: Publisher. Copyright 2xxx by Publisher.

5. Adapted with permission. Adapted from “Title of Web Document,” by A. N. Author and C. O. Author, 2xxx (http://URL). Copyright 2xxx by Name of Copyright Holder. Reprinted [or Adapted] with permission.

Take note of the formatting the publisher of the Publication Manual has for the tables and figures for its own publication is separate from the example in APA style. Note that the gray box and “Table 5.12. Sample Regression Table” on page 144 or the gray box and “Figure 5.1. Complex Theoretical Formulations” on page 152 is the title of the example of a table or figure in the Publication Manual, and is not part of the title of the table or figure.

**Understood in the Writing of Papers**

**Names of Sources**

It is understood not to mention the titles of sources in the writing of papers unless the name of the source is germane to the point being made. It does not add anything to the point being made to say in which journal an article was published. If readers want to know more information about the source, they can look it up from the reference list.

**Authors’ Names**

It is preferred to use the authors’ names when referring to a source. The authors’ names may have more meaning or relevance to the reader. In addition, it may be important to mention the names of the authors who are doing the most recent research in the field. “According to O’Hara and Kelly,” can be used, but it is stronger writing to use the authors’ names with an active verb. “O’Hara and Kelly (2010) reported . . .” Or make a statement and put the citation at the end of the sentence, such as There were 28 million diabetic patients in the United States in 2008 (O’Hara & Kelly, 2010).
**Anthropomorphism**

Articles and journals cannot speak: Only people can speak. Anthropomorphism is giving human qualities to non-human sources (APA, 2010, p. 69). Avoid “the article stated” or “the results stated.” Instead, give credit to the authors or researchers. (Smith did a survey on ice cream preference.) The passive voice may also be an effective choice. The results indicated more people like chocolate chip ice cream. Instead say one of the following:


3. The preference of chocolate chip ice cream was documented in the qualitative study (Smith, 2014).

**Passive and Active Voice**

The active voice is preferred in the writing of scientific and technical papers (APA, 2010, p. 77). Here is an example of the passive voice. It was reported there were 28 million diabetic patients in 2008 in the United States. The survey was conducted by Rose and White (2009) in a controlled setting. It is stronger to have the authors doing the action: Rose and White (2009) conducted a survey. The active voice is preferred, but the passive voice is not forbidden.

**Age of Sources**

It is customary to use peer-reviewed articles published within the last 5 years for the majority of the sources for the writing of papers. Historical or seminal articles would also be used. Recent textbooks can also be used. Check with the instructor to see if articles older than 5 years will be acceptable. Check to see which other reputable sources will be acceptable for the writing of papers. See the section on scholarly sources for some general guidelines.
Scholarly Tone

The use of the third person is thought to be more objective in academic writing. However, depending on the assignment, the first person may be appropriate. Check with the instructor to see if the first person is allowed for the assignment. It is understood not to use the second person (you, your, our) in academic writing. The second person can be avoided by using the third person or “one.”

The tone of the paper should be more formal. The spoken word and the written word are different. Colloquial expressions, slang, and jargon should not be used (APA, 2010, p. 68). Technical language is acceptable if it meets the sophistication of the audience of the paper.

One may say, “The lesson plan is on how to wrap a bandage.” “On how” is a colloquial expression. It is more scholarly to write, “The lesson plan is about how to wrap a bandage,” or “The lesson plan is about instructions for wrapping a bandage.”

Another colloquial expression is “to get.” She got tested for HIV. She got vaccinated. She is getting the flu. Try to think of other verbs. She was tested for HIV. She was vaccinated. She is symptomatic for the flu. Some words that can be substitutes are receive, obtain, and become.

When we talk to each other, we say, “The reason behind the change was due to an event.” “Behind” is a colloquial expression. Here are some suggestions for a more scholarly tone. The rationale for the change was due to an event. The reason supporting the change was due to an event.

This and that. This, that, these, those, and what are pronouns and adjectives. They are frequently used as placeholders in the course of speech, which means the people in the conversation understand the meaning of “this.” However, in scholarly writing, the meaning of
words needs to be more precise. This, that, these, and those should not be used as subjects of sentences, and they need nouns to go with them. This what? This situation? This factor? This condition?

**What.** The use of “what” should be limited to asking a question. Instead of saying, “what was meant,” “the meaning” can be substituted. What the patient wanted → the patient’s wishes. What constituted program analysis → the factors that constituted program analysis. Try to find a noun or phase that represents “what.”

**Tense in the Review of Literature**

The tense of the verbs in the review of literature should be the past tense (APA, 2010, p. 78). One way to think of it is that the study being referred to was published in the past. The action is over and done. The *Publication Manual* says to use the present perfect tense (which tense??) to describe a past action or condition, which started in the past, but continues to the present. An example of the present perfect tense would be the following: Since that time, several investigators have used this method (APA, 2010, p. 78).

**Wordiness**

In scientific and scholarly writing, there needs to be an “economy of expression” because precise writing is more understandable (APA, 2010, p. 67). Excessive wordiness is considered flowery, which is not appropriate for scientific or scholarly writing.

**Unique to the University**

**Five-Chapter Papers**

Five-chapter papers are a convention to organize and write a research report. In the five-chapter paper, usually, the chapters are Introduction, Review of Literature, Methods, Results, and Discussion/Conclusion/Implications/Recommendations. Your instructors may have other
chapter identifiers or titles that should be used. The chapter identifiers are formatted like level one heading. The title page, abstract, reference list, and appendices are not chapters.

The five-chapter format is similar to the IMRAD format, which is a popular convention along the same lines, used by many journals. The letters stand for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. These are the level one headings, and all other headings are subordinate to these level one headings. Chapter two of the Publication Manual describes papers written in the IMRAD format without chapter identifiers.

The format for papers in various courses may be based on the five-chapter format if the five-chapter paper format itself is not used. The instructor may change the requirements for one of the chapters, such as the fourth chapter (the results chapter) to fit the subject matter of the course. Traditionally, the results chapter is for displaying findings from data collection.

The traditional heading for the last part of the paper is Discussion, Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations. The instructor may format the paper for a particular course with a beginning, a middle, and an end, such as introduction, the “evidence” (which can be labeled discussion, review of literature, analysis, etc.), and summary or conclusion. There are many variations on this theme. Check with the instructor for the organization and format of the paper for his or her class.

**Chapter designations.** For simplicity, use a level one heading for the chapter identifier. Level one headings are bold and centered with all the important words capitalized (APA, 2010, p. 62).

**Chapter 2**

**Review of Literature**

**Diabetic Neuropathy**
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Diabetic Neuropathy

Double space and start the text for the paragraph. If no text will be inserted after the level one heading, start with the level two heading. See the next line for the level two heading.

Level Two Heading

Indent and start the paragraph here, or a level three heading could be used. Remember, the levels of headings are sequential from level one to five (APA, 2010, p. 62).

Level three heading. The level three, four, and five headings are all indented one-half inch. The way to tell them apart is by the use of italics for the level four heading and no bolding for the level five heading. All three have this format for the text.

Level four heading.

Level five heading.

Lists of Tables and Figures

Just as the APA has no opinion about tables of contents, there are no examples of lists of tables and list of figures in the Publication Manual. However, in academia, there is a list of tables and a list of figures when there are two or more tables or two or more figures in the body of the paper. The list of tables or the list of figures is one of the first entries on the table of contents, and then the lists physically follow the table of contents in the order of the paper.

Which comes first? Arbitrarily, the list of tables comes before the list of figures. The title of the table will be on the list of tables with all the important words capitalized, similar to the table of contents. The title of the figures will be formatted like the list of tables. See the appendices for some examples of tables of contents, lists of tables, and list of figures.
Table of Contents

APA does not have an opinion on the table of contents because tables of contents are not used in the writing of manuscripts.

Because the Publication Manual provides guidelines for writers submitting manuscripts to scholarly journals, it is silent on the topic of tables of contents. Usually questions about tables of contents come from students or teachers who want the information to complete a class assignment. (APA, n.d., para. 7)

However, some papers lend themselves to a table of contents, such as the five-chapter paper and other course papers. The table of contents for this paper is formatted with APA principles. These principles include the following:

1. One-inch margins on all sides.
2. No bold.
3. All important words of each entry are capitalized. No full caps will be used.
4. All the entries are double-spaced.
5. Dot leaders will be used.
6. Page numbers line up at the one-inch margin on the right-hand side.
7. Level one headings have no indent and line up with the one-inch margin on the left-hand side.
8. Level two headings are indented one-half inch.
9. If level three headings are used, they are indented one inch. Level three headings are optional and may be left out if the paper is long.

If the Word table of contents function is used, use the custom table setting and modify the font and paragraph tabs to conform to APA style with the indent and line spacing. Otherwise, it may
be easier to make one dot leader that can be adjusted by changing the indent. The dots will span from the left margin to the right margin. The dots will adjust to the length of the words and page number.

Level One Heading ............................................................................................................................

Level Two Heading................................................................................................................

Level Three Heading..................................................................................................

Third Person

In academic writing, using the third person is thought to keep the writer more objective than using the first person. The Publication Manual says, “To avoid ambiguity, use a personal pronoun rather than the third person when describing steps taken in your experiment” (APA, 2010, 69). Again, the Publication Manual is referring to the writing of a manuscript for publication. The editorial “we” is not to be used. We should refer to the author and coauthors of the manuscript being submitted for publication. For some classes, however, the use of the first person would be appropriate. To eliminate confusion, the third person will be used unless instructed otherwise by the professor. “You” is not used in scholarly papers.

Title Page

Here is the APA position on the format of title pages: “The title page includes five elements: title, running head, author, byline, institutional affiliation, and author note (which includes grant/funding information and a full correspondence address). The title page is numbered page 1” (APA, n.d., para. 8). The title page in the Publication Manual is for the editor and not directed to the professor.

The college curriculum committee has adopted some minimal information to be contained on the title page. More can be included, but these are the basic items. The title has all
the important words capitalized, and it is centered on the page (APA, 2010, pp. 23, 41).

Unimportant words are articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Double-space six times from the top of the page, and then start the title of the paper. This will start the identifying information in the upper half of the page around two inches down from the first line of the page. Under the View tab, be sure the Ruler box is checked off so the measurement can be see down the side of the page. Double space about five times, then start the title of the paper.

Title of the Paper

Student’s Name

Nova Southeastern University

College of Health Care Sciences

Course Number: Title of the Course

Name of the Instructor

Type of Assignment (optional, if applicable, e.g., Course Paper, Assignment 2, Final Paper)

Date (choose one: July 10, 2012, March 2012, or Spring 2012)

Because there is a large space in the bottom half of the paper, other optional language could be introduced as appropriate to individual programs.

**Scholarly Sources**

Information is published in many venues and fora (forums). The Internet is largely self-published and is not monitored or regulated by anyone. Sometimes it is difficult to be able to distinguish scholarly from non-scholarly sources.

These guidelines are meant to serve as a minimum for the criteria that constitute a scholarly source, so a source can be evaluated to decide if the source should be used. Instructors may allow sources to be used that are not scholarly. In order to look at other points of view, it
may necessary to look at information that may not qualify as scholarly. The information or Web site is no less valid in representing the ideas of an individual or organization.

**Scholarly**

1. Peer-reviewed journals (refereed).
2. Text books.
3. Sources, which are retrievable from a database in the library, such as PubMed, Web of Science, Ebsco Host, CINHAL, Cochrane Database.
4. Web sites and reports from governmental agencies (i.e., CDC, NIH, WHO, UN, CIA, FDA, Institute of Medicine).

These are considered the best sources for the writing of scholarly papers. The first three sources can be found in the library. The last two are usually found on Web sites.

**Reputable and/or Reliable, but not Necessarily Scholarly**

7. Web sites from professional organizations and societies (i.e., American Diabetic Association, American Cancer Society, Society for Assisted Reproduction).
8. Newspapers.
9. Newsletters.
10. WebMD.
11. University Web sites.
12. Dissertations.
Not Considered Scholarly, Reputable, or Reliable, but may be Used at the Discretion of the Instructor

13. Wikipedia.
14. The White House, The U.S. Congress (House or Senate), Democratic Party, Republican Party, Other political groups.
15. PowerPoint® presentations found on Web sites.
16. Blogs from Web sites.
17. Commercial Web sites.
18. Partisan think tanks.
19. Pre-Print Server of Open Access Journals (authors can post articles prior to being accepted by an editor for publication for comment from the public)

Miscellaneous

20. Random chapters in books found on Web sites must include information for the book it comes from and all the publishing information, or the source cannot be used.

Remember to check with the instructor for the age and types of sources that can be used in a particular course. It is always acceptable to use scholarly sources.

Plagiarism

In academia and scientific writing, intellectual property is valued. Because intellectual property is ideas, intellectual property is protected by copyright laws, meaning the ideas and words of other people can be used on a limited basis, such as writing a course paper. In exchange for the use of the author’s work, credit is given for the source of the work. Sources must be cited, “Whether paraphrasing, quoting an author directly, or describing an idea that influenced your work, you must credit the source” (APA, 2010, p. 170).
Using citations indicates you have done the reading about the topic. Citations highlight the important researchers in the field. The instructor will recognize the important researchers in the field. One way to look at citations is that someone else agrees with your point of view. Do not assume the reader has the same common knowledge as you do. It is better to err on the side of citing information than not.

**Conclusion**

The items discussed here are meant to provide explanation and augment the *Publication Manual*, which is the authority that has chosen for the writing of papers. The *Publication Manual* does not go into great detail or give examples for many issues of grammar and punctuation. The purpose of this document was to provide a review of grammar and punctuation in addition to the other formatting issues needed to write scholarly papers. The idea is to keep the exceptions from the *Publication Manual* to a minimum. By having agreed-upon standards, the confusion and frustration will be reduced for students and faculty alike.
References


Appendix A

Examples of Tables of Contents and Lists of Tables and Figures

1. Table of Contents for Course Paper.
2. Table of Contents for Five-Chapter Paper.
3. Table of Contents with List of Tables and List of Figures.
4. Table of Contents with List of Tables.
5. Table of Contents with List of Figures.
6. List of Tables.
7. List of Figures.

The headings and the organization are suggestions. Change the table of contents to suit the instructions for the paper from the instructor. Use the justified margin alignment for the headings. Line-up the page number under the “e” in Page. Only put the page number where the heading starts in the body of the paper. Add or remove level one-two-three headings as appropriate. If you need to continue the table of contents, just put “Page” as the first line of the next page and continue the headings. Remember, the page number for “Appendix” and the title of the appendix are the same number. See the separate document about formatting tables of contents, lists of tables and lists of figures.

For the dot leaders, go to the paragraph section and click on Tabs. Then choose 6.5” for the tab stop position. Then click on the leader Number 2. Click on Set and OK.
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List of Tables

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The list of tables or the list of figures follows the table of contents. Then the body of the paper starts. Remember, a list of tables is needed with two or more tables.
<table>
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<td>2. Title of Figure</td>
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</table>

The list of figures follows the list of tables. Then the first page of the body of the paper is next.

Remember, a list of figures is needed with two or more figures.
Appendix B

Title Page

Double-space five times so the title of the paper starts about 2 inches down from the top of the page. This title page is the format agreed upon by the college curriculum committee.

Title of the Paper

Student’s Name

Nova Southeastern University

College of Health Care Sciences

Course Number: Title of the Course

Name of the Instructor

Type of Assignment (optional, if applicable, e.g., Course Paper, Assignment 2, Proposal)

Date (use July 10, 2012, March 2012, or Spring 2012)
## Appendix C

### APA Topics in Alphabetical Order

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