

APA 6th Edition – Summarized by Rose Steele, Ph.D., York University

Chapter One: Writing for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (pp. 9-20)

Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism (pp. 15-16)

- Credit must be given to others when credit is due.
- Quotation marks must be used to indicate exact words of another.
- Paraphrasing must be credited to the original source.
- It is not acceptable to use your own previous work in a new paper and not cite it.
- Students cannot submit the same paper for two different assignments, whether in the same or a different course.
- Students who build on previous work or who wish to write about a similar topic, whether in the same or a different course, must have a discussion with the current course professor before submitting the latest paper to ensure that self-plagiarism does not occur.

Chapter Two: Manuscript Structure and Content (pp. 21-59)

Title (p. 23)

- Concise summary of main topic of the paper.
- Descriptive and should stand alone, so using *Assignment One* as a title is not acceptable.
- Easily shortened to running head.
- Recommended length is no more than 12 words.
- Uppercase and lowercase letters; centred; in upper half of cover page; not bold.

Introduction (pp. 27-28)

- No heading.
- In a student paper: (a) typically fairly short at 1-2 paragraphs; (b) identifies the main thesis (i.e., position that will be taken in the paper); and (c) lays out what will be done in the paper.
- Be careful that the introduction is congruent with the expectations of the assignment.

References (p. 37)

- Rule of thumb for total number of references required in a scholarly, student paper: total = 1-2 x # pages, e.g., if an 8 page, double-spaced paper (so # text pages, excluding cover page and references) then 8-16 references should be anticipated.
- Reference list starts on a new page.
- The word References is centred, and in uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Use hanging indent format; do not use tabs.
- Double-space all references; but note that some professors will allow the reference list to be single spaced within and double-spaced between each reference to save paper.

Chapter Three: Writing Clearly and Concisely (pp. 61-86)

Length (p. 61)

- Pay attention to the length allowed for an assignment and submit a paper that falls within the page allotment.
- Professors typically state a certain number of pages (often a range, e.g., 6-8 pages) because they have calculated that number to be the optimal length for answering the assignment succinctly, but in sufficient breadth and depth.
- Too few pages often means you have not provided sufficient breadth and depth in your paper, so may lead to you earning a low grade.
- Too many pages likely means that you have not focused your paper sufficiently; note that professors typically will not grade beyond the maximum number of pages, so important parts of an assignment may not be graded and you may earn a low grade.

- Follow the “less is more” rule and ensure you answer all the required points in an assignment without including extraneous words and material.
- State your points clearly; remain focused on the topic; write in the active voice.

Levels of Heading (pp. 62-63)

- I recommend that students use headings in all assignments because they serve multiple purposes: e.g., (a) provide an outline that can be compared with the assignment requirements, so students can see if they are on the right track; (b) help students effectively organize their work; and (c) make it easier for the reader/professor to track key points and identify how well students have met the requirements of an assignment; correct use of headings can contribute to a higher grade because of improved flow and clarity.
- Indicate organization of the paper and establish importance of each topic.
- All topics of similar importance should use the same level of heading.
- Do not use underlining or any “fancy” formatting; italics are used only for some levels.
- Most commonly, nursing papers use two or three levels of headings: Levels 1 and 2, or Levels 1, 2, and 3; all three of these levels are in bold font.
- Level one is highest level of heading.
- Introduction does not get a heading because the first part of a manuscript is assumed to be the introduction - it is the first paragraph/section.
- Highest level of heading used for next section after the introduction section.
- Font must be same size and type (Times New Roman 12pt) as the rest of the paper
- Readers should be able to pick up any paper and identify the main sections simply by looking at the headings – centred, uppercase and lowercase, bold (in typical three level paper).
- A heading for a subsection of the main section is at the left, bold, uppercase and lowercase.
- A heading for a subsection of the subsection is indented, bold, only 1st word is uppercase (rest are lowercase) and ends with a period.

Seriation (pp. 63-65)

- Indicates organization of key points within sections, paragraphs, and sentences.
- Be careful about use of numerals because they can incorrectly connote ordinal positioning.
- Use lowercase letters in parentheses within a paragraph or sentence, e.g., (a), (b), etc.

Writing Style (pp. 65-70)

- Logical flow is important to provide clarity in communication:
 - Need introductory paragraph that says what you’re going to do, why you’re going to do it, main thesis.
 - Ideally, each paragraph should contain one main idea, but no more than two.
 - Need to build an argument for your thesis.
 - Conclusion should say what you’ve done and what your main point was; do not introduce new material in the conclusion section.
- Use punctuation carefully to cue the reader to continuity and flow.
- Do not use superfluous words; use 1-2 words rather than 5 if you can.
- Keep language simple but scholarly - it is possible!
- Avoid jargon and colloquialisms.
- Do not contract words, e.g., do not write *don’t* in a scholarly paper, you write *do not*.
- One sentence is not a paragraph.
- Do not have long, run-on sentences or paragraphs that are too long.
- Do not make a paragraph longer than one double-spaced manuscript page.
- Make referent for pronoun obvious, e.g., *this test* instead of *this* will avoid confusion.

- You do not have to use the third person when you write in APA (e.g., *This author believes that ...*). You can write in the first person and you should use first person when it makes sense to do so. For example, if discussing your own values and beliefs you could say something like, *I entered nursing with the expectation that I would be able to ...*
- Avoid anthropomorphism, e.g., *This paper discusses....* An inanimate source cannot “do” anything or have human characteristics. Use an appropriate noun or pronoun instead, e.g., in your introduction you would most likely say, *In this paper, I will discuss*
- Avoid the *editorial we*, i.e., only use *we* when referring to yourself and co-authors, not when you mean something broader such as *nurses*.
- Make your point and support with a reference, e.g., *According to Parse (2006), quality of life is ...*, would be better as *Quality of life is ... (Parse, 2006).*; much more effective way of writing and less boring than reading the same start to multiple sentences.

Reducing Bias in Language (pp. 70-77)

- Goal is to be respectful, accurate, and unbiased.
- Be specific in your writing; choose words that describe a person or persons in the most accurate, clear, and unbiased way, e.g., *man* as a reference to all human beings is inaccurate and misses a large portion of the population.
- Use gender neutral language; do not always use *she* for nurse for example.
- Avoid labelling, e.g., *the elderly*; call people by their preferred designation.
- Acknowledge participants by using descriptive rather than objective terms.

Grammar and Usage (pp. 77-86)

- Use active voice wherever possible; passive voice is difficult to follow.
- Be consistent with tenses, especially within one paragraph.
- Use past tense for events in the past, including published material, e.g., when synthesizing publications for a literature review.
- Subject and verb must agree in number; may be easier to stick to plural.
- Pronouns must agree with antecedent in number and gender.
- Use *who* for human beings and *that* or *which* for nonhuman animals and for things, e.g., *Nurse who did ...* not *Nurse that did*
- Avoid misplaced and dangling modifiers.
- Use *since* to refer only to time; otherwise, replace with *because*.
- Use parallel construction to facilitate the reader’s understanding.

Chapter Four: The Mechanics of Style (pp. 87-124)

Punctuation (pp. 87-96)

- Tells the reader where to pause, stop, or take a detour, so read sentence out loud to see if punctuation makes sense.
- Some writers use commas too frequently and the resulting sentence does not make as much sense as it should, e.g., noun and verb are separated; read aloud to determine if pauses caused by commas disrupt flow.
- Insert 1 space between words and after most punctuation marks, but be careful about exceptions, especially after a period.
- Leave 2 spaces between sentences (N.B. changed from 5th edition).
- Be careful with use of comma in series of three or more items that have *and* or *or* before the last item, e.g., *Rose, Laura, and Nikki; height, weight, or BMI.*
- Pay attention to correct use of double quotation marks.

Spelling (pp. 96-100)

- Even though APA requires American English, students should use Canadian, not American English for spelling in manuscripts.
- Accuracy is very important.
- Always use spell check, but also check visually as word can be spelled correctly but does not fit context.
- Learn and use the plural form of common words, e.g., *appendix-appendices*, *datum-data*, *matrix-matrices*, and *phenomenon-phenomena*.
- Generally, and even when a name ends in *s*, add an apostrophe and another *s* to make the possessive form of a singular name, e.g., *the book of James* becomes *James's book*.

Capitalization (pp. 101-104)

- In headings and in titles of books and articles within the body of a paper: capitalize any word four letters or more, all verbs, nouns, adverbs, pronouns, adjectives, first letter for both words in a hyphenated compound, first word after a colon or dash.
- In reference list: capitalize only the first word in the title of books and articles and the first word after a colon or dash, proper nouns, and only the first word not the second in a hyphenated compound.
- Do not capitalize nouns that denote common parts of books followed by numerals or letters, e.g., chapter 3, appendix D.

Italics (pp. 104-106)

- Use infrequently.
- Mostly for some levels of headings, and for titles of books or periodicals.
- Also used instead of double quotation marks for anchors of a scale, in linguistic examples, and for technical or key terms (p. 91).

Abbreviations (pp. 106-111)

- Use sparingly.
- Use can hinder reading comprehension, so do not overuse or underuse.
- Generally, students will spell out a given expression the first time it's used and follow it by the abbreviation in parentheses; subsequent appearances will use the abbreviation.
- Where possible, avoid starting a sentence with an abbreviation; if must do so then begin with a capitalized abbreviation or acronym, never a lowercase abbreviation.
- Learn and use the more common abbreviations: *e.g.*, = for example; *i.e.*, = that is; *etc.* = and so forth; *vs.* = versus, against; *et al.* = and others, when used in references and in text.
- Do not abbreviate these units of time: *day*, *week*, *month*, or *year*.

Numbers (pp. 111-114)

- Numbers from one to nine are generally written in full, i.e., in words.
- Number 10 and over are generally numerical.
- Multiple exceptions; more commonly used ones for students include:
 - comparison between numbers where one is ≥ 10 , e.g., 3 out of 21;
 - unit of measurement, e.g., 5-mg dose;
 - time, e.g., 2 years ago;
 - dates, e.g., January 21, 2009;
 - statistical functions, decimals, percentages, e.g., 5%;
 - ages, e.g., 4-year-olds;
 - exact sums of money, e.g., \$100;
 - sample size, e.g., 8 participants;
 - scores and points on a scale, e.g., scored 3 on a 5-point scale;
 - each number in a list of four or more numbers; and

- parts of books or tables, e.g., chapter 6.
- For readability, e.g., when there are back-to-back modifiers, you may need to express numbers in a way that is not in accordance with the general rules, e.g., *twenty 6-year-olds, 3 million men*.
- All numbers in an abstract should be written numerically.
- Zero and one are often written in words.
- If you need to begin a sentence with a number (try to reword the sentence instead), then the number must be in words, e.g., *Thirty-five percent of the sample ...*
- Ordinal numbers should be treated as you would treat cardinal numbers, e.g., *Students in the third and fourth groups ...; Students in the 2nd and 11th rows ...*
- Use a zero before the decimal point when numbers are <1, except if the number cannot be greater than 1, such as correlations or levels of statistical significance, e.g., where $p < .05$.
- Generally, round to two decimal places.
- Report exact p values, e.g., $p = .021$, to two or three decimal places; but when p is less than .001, report as $p < .001$.
- When forming plurals of numbers, whether in words or figures, add *s* or *es* but no apostrophe, e.g., 1990s not 1990's, threes and fives.

Chapter Five: Displaying Results (pp. 125-167)

- Tables and figures can be an effective way of communicating large amounts of information.
- Generally, tables and figures are more common in graduate students' work, rather than at the undergraduate level.
- Table layout can be flexible for student work, e.g., tables that separate rows and columns by visible lines or *rules* (i.e., in "boxes" or *cells*) may be easier to read in a student manuscript even though a published paper requires a different layout.
- Tables can be single spaced (p. 229); typically single spaced to save space in students' work.

Chapter Six: Crediting Sources (pp. 169-192)

Quoting and Paraphrasing (pp. 170-174)

- It is important that you do not plagiarize; "I didn't know" is not an excuse.
- It is always necessary to quote if someone's actual words are being used.
- Work needs to be cited/referenced whenever directly quoting or paraphrasing.
- Use of direct quotes should be very limited; may indicate lack of reflection and/or of understanding on your part.
- A paper with lots of direct quotes (and little else) cannot be an excellent paper because you need to show critical thinking and application to your own situation.
- Block quotes are seldom acceptable in a student paper because they take up too much space and rarely add value to a paper; instead, learn how to paraphrase and add your own analysis.
- Block quotes are acceptable in a thesis, i.e., when quotes are from participants in your study.
- Quotations < 40 words are incorporated into the text and enclosed by double quotation marks (i.e., in " ").
- Block quotes are used when 40 or more words; no quotation marks (p. 92); block separated off into separate paragraph; indent 0.5 inches.
- Block quotes are typically double spaced; but professors may allow single spaced, especially in a graduate thesis where multiple quotes from study participants are included.
- Must provide author and year in text when quoting or paraphrasing.
- Must provide a specific page or paragraph number when quoting.
- Providing a page or paragraph number when paraphrasing is now encouraged (p. 171).
- Many electronic sources do not provide page numbers, so in addition to the author and year, you should include the paragraph number instead where possible (see p. 172 for cases where neither page nor paragraph numbers are visible).
- If quote in text and at end of a sentence, put page number and other required reference information in parentheses after the quote and before the period that ends the sentence.

- If block quote, put page number and other required reference information in parentheses after the period that ends the quote; no period after the page number, i.e., page number in parentheses stands alone after the quote is finished.
- Ensure accuracy in direct quotes.
- Use 3 ellipsis points (...) to indicate omitted material in a quote; use 4 points (....) if omission occurs between 2 sentences.
- If there are citations in the material you are quoting, i.e., original author was writing about other published material, you must not omit those citations; generally, do not include them in your reference list though as you will not have read them; only if you use such citations elsewhere in your paper would you then of course include them in your reference list.

Citing References in Text (pp. 174-179)

- Generally, references in text must also be in reference list and vice versa.
- Major classical works, e.g., ancient Greek works or classical religious works such as the Qur'an, are documented in text but are not included in the reference list.
- Personal communications can be used in text, but are not included in the reference list because they do not provide recoverable material, e.g., As one professional noted recently (R. Steele, personal communication, August 14, 2009),; course lectures and course kits are not recoverable material (someone cannot go to CINAHL for example and find the information) and should be treated as personal communication, but better to not use at all.
- Authors' names and year go in text, but style depends on whether or not the name is part of the narrative, e.g., Smith (2008) noted that ... vs. In a recent study (Smith, 2008),
- Always give year as well as author throughout paper unless second or more *nonparenthetical* citation in the same paragraph, e.g., In a recent study (Smith, 2008), women reported Smith also Results also indicated ... (Smith, 2008).
- When only 2 authors, always give both names.
- If fewer than 6 authors, then must give all names the first time mentioned in the text; after that should use first author et al. if 3 or more authors (note period after *al.* and no italics).
- So, when 3-5 authors, cite all names the first time, but only first author and then *et al.* in subsequent citations, e.g., Smith, Field, and Down (2008), then later Smith et al. (2008).
- If 6 or more authors, use first author et al. from first citation.
- Exception when two references with same year shorten to same form, e.g., Smith, Field, Jerrard, and Down (2008) and Smith, Down, Field, and Jerrard (2008) would both be Smith et al. (2008); need to give as many authors' names as needed to ensure references are distinguished, so Smith, Field, et al. (2008) and Smith, Down, et al. (2008); note comma before *et al.*
- If authors with same surname in text, use first initial to distinguish even if year differs, e.g., B. Smith, (2007); A. Smith (2008).
- If \geq two works by same author in same parentheses, earliest comes first and use comma to separate, e.g., (Smith, 1998, 2004, in press).
- If \geq two works by different authors in same parentheses, cite by alphabetical order; separate citations with semicolons, e.g., (Aberdeen et al., 2007; Smith, 1998; Wallace & Burns, 2004).
- If no author, use first few words of title and include the year, note the double quotation marks around the title of an article or chapter, e.g., ... on free care ("New Study Finds," 2008).
- Only use *Anonymous* when labelled that way.
- Need to label as *a* or *b* etc. when same author and same year; suffixes are assigned based on reference list, not on order of appearance in the text; ordered alphabetically in reference list by title (not including *A* or *The*), e.g., Several studies (Smith, 2007a, 2007b, in press-a, in press-b).
- Secondary source: name of author in text and citation of source you read in parentheses, e.g., Childress (as cited in McCain, 2006); do not give year of secondary source unless there could be confusion because of multiple references to same author in source you read.

- In a sentence, *and* is used between last two authors' names, e.g., Smith, Down, and Field (2009) noted that ...; Welling and Grace (2009)
- In the reference in text in parentheses and in reference list, & is used instead of *and*, e.g., In a recent study (Smith, Down, & Field, 2009),
- Note placement of comma when using the various references.
- If an organization or group author can be readily identified by its abbreviation, then cite full name the first time and place abbreviation in square brackets, e.g., (Registered Nurses of Ontario [RNAO], 2007); use abbreviation in further citations, e.g., (RNAO, 2007).
- Title of article or book chapter mentioned in text, e.g., Nurses who read the article, "The Shifting Perspectives Model of Chronic Illness",
- Title of book mentioned in text, e.g., In Parker's (2006) edited text, *Nursing Theories & Nursing Practice* (2nd ed.),
- Electronic references follow the same guidelines as above and are dependent on whether an author is named in the source or if the title must be used.
- Some sources, e.g., e-mail or electronic discussion boards, may be cited as personal communication, but be careful when using a source such as the Internet because typically it is too casual and not scholarly enough to have a place in a student manuscript, let alone one for publication.

Reference List and Components (pp. 180-187)

- Purpose is to provide a way for the reader to find a particular article/book etc., therefore, references must be complete and accurate.
- An inaccurate or incomplete reference list diminishes your credibility and may call into question how much effort you have made in your paper.
- Reference list and not bibliography: all references in text must also be in reference list and vice versa; nothing else should be added and nothing should be left out.
- Use hanging indent, not tabs or spaces, to indent lines beyond first one.
- Learn and use APA style for reference lists: abbreviations (words, e.g., revised edition; US states), publishers' locations, and arabic numerals.
- Alphabetical order by surname of first author; "nothing precedes something," e.g., *Brown comes before Browning*; alphabetize prefixes M', Mc, and Mac literally but disregard the apostrophe, e.g., *MacDonald comes before McAdams*.
- When two or more references to same author(s), the oldest reference is listed first.
- When same author(s) and same year, suffixes *a* or *b* etc. are assigned alphabetically by title (not including *A* or *The*).
- Single author comes before that author with colleagues, regardless of publication year.
- When references have same first author but different second author, then alphabetize first by 1st author, then by 2nd; continue to 3rd and so on if necessary.
- Works by different authors with same surname are arranged alphabetically by first initial.
- Group authors, e.g., Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, should be alphabetized by first significant word of the name; name should be written out in full.
- If no author, do not relabel as *Anonymous*; move title to author position; if work is actually signed *Anonymous* then alphabetize as if a real name, i.e., by *A*.
- Use & instead of *and*.
- Invert authors' names; give all surnames and initials when 7 or fewer names.
- When 8 or more authors, give the first 6 names, insert three ellipses, and then add last author's name.
- Page numbers come at the end of the reference to a journal, but different for a book.
- Note, capitalization and italicizing are not the same for journal and book, nor are they the same as headings.
- Note that a journal is italicized along with its volume, but a book's title is italicized.
- Secondary source: name in text, e.g., Childress (as cited in McCain, 2006); cited source is what goes in reference list, so would be by McCain.

- Always give volume number, but issue number is supposed to be provided only when each issue begins on page 1; however, I have found that including the issue number makes it easier to find a reference for someone who is searching manually, but it makes no difference in an electronic search, e.g., using CINAHL; I recommend providing issue number, but consistency is important across references so do not provide for some issues of a journal and not for other issues of the same journal.
- Give only necessary information about the publisher's name; omit terms such as *Publishers, Co.,* and *Inc.*; keep words such as *Books* and *Press*.
- Publisher's location will be the first location listed when multiple locations are provided, or the publisher's home office if known.
- Note how to include editor (Ed.) vs. edition (ed.).
- Need to determine who wrote a book chapter in an edited book. Unless the editor wrote a chapter, then the author of the chapter is more likely to be someone else - you would then reference as per the Corbin and Strauss reference below; it would be incorrect to give Woog's name as the author of chapters that were written by varied people, plus you would be taking away credit from the actual authors.

Electronic References (pp. 187-192)

- Cite the appropriate version of sources electronically; if possible, use the archival version which has been peer-reviewed (p. 181).
- Online references must appear in full in reference list; give as much information as possible so reader can access them; provide source.
- Preferably, provide same elements, in same order, as fixed-media source, i.e., author, year, title, journal/book, city/publisher.
- Need at least a document title or description, date, and address, i.e., URL.
- If possible, provide the address to a document, such as a pdf format, that will not change, rather than to a site that may move, close down, or change in some way, thus rendering the reference unavailable.
- Note, there is no period after the URL address.
- Ensure that URL addresses work.
- DOI system: developed as a way of tracking electronic content and directing readers to that content regardless of where the article resides.
- Each article, book, and report in the system is given a unique identifier that is a persistent link to the content's location on the Internet.
- If DOI available for a book, then do not provide location and publisher information.
- Some articles are published electronically before they appear in print.
- If a DOI is available, then include it for both print and electronic sources, regardless of which way you obtained the article.
- If reference obtained online and no DOI assigned, give the URL of the journal home page or the home page of the book or report publisher as appropriate; you may need to do a quick web search to locate the appropriate URL.
- Note that many publishers are adding a DOI to new materials, but older materials may still not have the DOI.
- Always check for each reference; do not assume that a specific journal does not assign DOI numbers because you didn't find one for an older article; they may do so for current material.
- Publishers are adding a DOI to older material in a systematic way; over time, a reference that did not have a DOI may be assigned one.
- Whether you retrieve a source electronically via the library or another web-based source (e.g., Google Scholar), you should reference only one of: (a) the DOI (preferable), (b) the journal home page, or (c) the home page of the book or report publisher as appropriate.
- Do not include database or aggregator information; e.g., even though you may retrieve an article through EBSCO or ProQuest, you do not put that information in your reference list.
- Note that the term *Retrieved from* is not used when a DOI is available.
- Do not include the date of when you accessed or retrieved a source.
- See the APA website for updates on referencing of electronic materials: www.apastyle.org/

See **Chapter Seven: Reference Examples (pp. 193-224)** for excellent examples of multiple types of references, including materials retrieved from online sources.