

Psychology Department Writing Policy (revised January 2025)

The Psychology Department has seven learning goals for its majors. Goal # 5 is that students who complete the major will be able to effectively communicate with clear, grammatically-correct writing that conforms to APA style. APA style characterizes effective scholarly writing as having good continuity and flow, and conciseness and clarity. To help reach this goal, the Psychology professors have agreed to implement a common writing policy in all PSYC courses at the 200- and 300-level; the portion of the policy concerning APA format only applies to PSYC 282 and 300-level classes, unless otherwise announced by your professor. This policy will apply to all graded written papers/essays; it will not apply to in-class writing assignments, to ungraded written assignments, or to written essays that occur as part of exams. It applies equally to majors and non-majors in relevant classes.

When a professor finds one of the following mistakes in your paper, s/he will indicate the type of mistake by writing (or typing) a code nearby the mistake. S/he will write WM if it is a writing mistake, P if it is a punctuation mistake, T if it is a typographical error, and APA if it is an APA error. S/he will then write a # (and perhaps a small letter as well) to let you know which type of mistake was made. So, for example, WM2b signifies a problem with subject-verb agreement, P2a signifies a problem with a colon, and APA6 signifies a problem with line spacing. If you see one of these types of marks, you can then refer to this policy in order to know what mistake you made and how to avoid making that mistake again in the future; if you do not understand how to fix the mistake even after you have read this document, talk with your professor.

Writing Mistakes (WMs) are penalized at .5% per mistake; one freebie is allowed, and there is a 20% cap on the amount of points a student can lose due to WMs. Punctuation mistakes (Ps) are penalized at .5% per mistake; 1 freebie is allowed per 250 words of paper length, and there is a 20% cap on the amount of points a student can lose due to Ps. Typos (Ts) are penalized at .5% per mistake; 1 freebie is allowed per 250 words of paper length, and there is a 20% cap on the amount of points a student can lose due to Ts. APA mistakes (APAs) are penalized at .5% per mistake; 2 freebies are allowed per paper and there is a 20% cap on the amount of points a student can lose due to APAs.

The total amount of points that a student can lose on a single paper due to mistakes s/he made relevant to this writing policy (i.e., summed across the four categories of WMs, Ps, Ts, & APAs) is capped at 25% for 200-level classes and 40% for PSYC 282 and 300-level classes.

In courses for which the APA portion applies, a student can earn the 2% Extra Credit points if a paper has 0 WMs and so few Ts, Ps, and APAs that the student was not penalized for these types of mistakes (i.e., only freebie errors occurred).

Writing Mistakes

These mistakes include problems with grammar, clarity, and proper use of words.

1. Sentence Structure.

- a. **Fragmented sentences** occur when a sentence is not an independent clause, i.e., when it lacks either a subject or verb, or when a sentence is actually a phrase masquerading as a sentence. Fragmented sentences are always incomplete thoughts. For example "Near the printer on my desk" has neither a subject nor a verb. "Twenty seven females and ten males" has no verb. "Went willingly to the room" has no subject. All necessary parts of speech must be within a particular sentence. So "The stapler sits near the printer on my desk" adds a subject (i.e., stapler) and verb (i.e., sits). "Twenty seven females and ten males participated in the study" adds a verb (i.e., participated). "She went willingly into the room" adds a subject (i.e., She). Sometimes a fragmented sentence does have an action and an actor, as in "Bill, running down the corridor." The problem here is that the thought is incomplete. "Bill ran down the corridor" is a complete thought, as is, "Bill, running down the corridor, smashed head first into Dean."
- b. **Run-on sentences** occur when two clauses that could stand independently as sentences are smashed together into one seeming sentence, sometimes with a comma between them, although not always. "Measures of depression are commonly used, they really work" is a run-on sentence because "Measures of depression are commonly used" stands alone as a sentence, and "they really work" stands alone as a sentence (i.e., each has a subject and a verb). One way of fixing a run-on sentence is to make it two different sentences, as in "Measures of depression are commonly used. They really work." Another solution is to separate the two sentences with a semi-colon, as in "Measures of depression are commonly used; they really work." Although it is less common in scientific writing, a dash can also be used, as in "Measures of depression are commonly used – they really work." Sometimes the best solution is to connect the two sentences with a comma and a type of conjunction, as in "Measures of depression are commonly used, and they really work." With this solution, the run-on is fixed and a transition is provided.

2. Problems with verbs.

- a. **Consistent verb tense.** Students sometimes switch verb tenses within a single idea, moving between past and present tense within the same sentence or paragraph, as in "Subjects complete a measure of depression; then they were randomly assigned to condition." This problem can be solved by identifying the verb tense that makes the most sense for the idea you are expressing and using it throughout the idea unless there is a valid reason to switch. Thus, the better sentence would

be "Subjects first completed a measure of depression; then they were randomly assigned to condition."

- b. **Subject-verb agreement.** The verb form one uses in a sentence depends upon whether the subject is singular or plural **and** whether the subject is first, second, or third person (e.g., I am, you are, we are, she is, they are). Mistakes in subject-verb agreement increase when the subject and verb are not directly next to each other in a sentence or when the verb precedes the subject. For example, the sentence "There were very few students who did not do well on that assignment" is correct because "students" is the subject, and therefore "were" is the correct verb form.
- i. Note that "Data" is a plural term; "datum", which is rarely used, is the singular. As such, "These data are interesting" is correct.
 - ii. Words that are "collective nouns," like "set," "class," "audience," and "couple" represent a unit, and therefore are almost always treated as singular. Thus, while one would correctly write, "These findings are interesting," one would also correctly write, "This set of findings is interesting."

3. Pronoun problems.

- a. **Unclear references.** This problem typically occurs when a pronoun refers to an earlier word (the antecedent) but it is not clear exactly what word the pronoun refers to. For example, "Lane told Joe that he had failed the course" could mean that Lane had failed the course or that Joe had failed the course. The reader has no way of knowing. This is easily solved by being clear and writing "Lane told Joe, 'You failed the course.'" Another type of unclear reference sometimes occurs with "which," as in "She avoided using slang, which greatly improved her speech." Here the reader cannot tell whether the avoidance of slang or the slang itself improved her speech. It would be clearer in this case to write, "By avoiding slang, she improved her speech."
- b. **Pronoun-antecedent agreement.** This problem often occurs when an earlier word in the sentence (the antecedent) is singular but the pronoun is plural, e.g., "The bird is in their cage." The problem is that "the bird" is singular but "their" is plural. This problem can be fixed by making the antecedent singular, "The bird is in its cage." Note: The Psychology department recognizes "they" as a singular pronoun for a person.
- c. **I and me; he/she and him/her; we and us; they and them.** "I," "he/she," "we" and "they" are words that function as subjects (i.e., who the sentence is about). "Me", "him/her," "us," and "them" function as objects (i.e., the receiver of the action associated with the verb). Thus, "Larry likes Hank more than me," means that Larry likes Hank more than Larry likes me. "Larry likes Hank more than I" means that Larry likes Hank more than I like Hank. This latter sentence would be clearer by adding a verb, as in, "Larry likes Hank more than I do."
- d. **Who vs. that.** Generally, "who" is used to refer to people and "that" is used to refer to animals or nonliving objects. For example, it would be

correct to write, "The individual who was responsible for sending the hateful message was not available for comment." While the Psychology Department recognizes that many people, and some authors, use "who" and "that" interchangeably when referring to people, we believe it is important to 'humanize' people through the use of "who" rather than "that."

4. Parallel construction is necessary for clarity and involves making sure that lists of things are expressed with the same grammatical forms. So, in the case of "Joe went shopping, drank two beers, and one martini," there is a problem in grammar with the "and one martini" just hanging at the end of the sentence. In this case, the sentence could be fixed by writing "Joe shopped, and then he drank two beers and one martini" so that "shopped" and "drank" are parallel, and so it is clear what happened with the one martini. Another option would be to write, "Joe shopped, drank two beers, and downed one martini" to add a parallel verb form that explains what happened to the martini. Parallel construction problems also occur in sentences like "Many professors work hard, taking no vacation." In this case "work" is not parallel to "taking." The sentence can be fixed by rewriting it as "Many professors work hard and take no vacation" or as "Many professors are working hard and taking no vacation."

5. Know the difference between the following.

- a. **Then vs. Than.** "Then" refers to comparisons in time, as in "First she ran, and then she swam," and to causal statements, as in "If I drop this, then it will hit the ground." "Than" is used for comparisons, as in "Daniel is taller than Frank."
- b. **Effect vs. Affect.** When discussing causality, "affect" is a verb whereas "effect" is a noun. As such, the following is correct usage: "Joe's statement affected Helen's self-esteem; this, in turn, had drastic effects on her performance on the test." "Affect" can occasionally be a noun, referring to emotion, as in "The researchers measured levels of positive affect." "Effect" can occasionally be used as a verb meaning "to bring about," as in "The earthquake effected great change in the highway system." Your best rule of thumb is to use "effect" as a noun and "affect" as a verb, except for the two exceptions above.
- c. **There vs. Their vs. They're.** "There" is an adverb that indicates place (e.g., "I want to go there on spring break") or it is an expletive (a "stand in" for a subject or verb in a sentence; e.g., "There are many places I want to visit on spring break"). "Their" is a possessive pronoun (e.g., "Their spring break plans have changed"). "They're" is a contraction that means "They are" (e.g., "They're not going to New Orleans on spring break").
- d. **Lay vs. Lie.** "Lie" means to recline or rest on a surface whereas "lay" means to put or place something. "Lie" does not have a direct object (someone or something that did the lying) whereas "lay" does. "The laptops lie on the desk" and "Lay the laptop on the desk" are both correct. To make it more complicated, keep in mind that the past tense of "lie" is "lay" and the past tense of "lay" is "laid."

- e. **Too vs. Two vs. To.** “To” is a preposition, as in “He is going to France.” “Two” is a number, as in “She has two dogs.” “Too” is an adverb, as in “I have too many pimples.”
- f. **Your vs. You’re.** “Your” is a possessive, as in “The baby has your eyes.” “You’re” is a conjunction of “you” and “are,” as in “You’re wonderful.”
- g. **Loose vs. Lose.** “Loose” is an adjective, as in “That knot is loose.” “Lose” is a verb, as in “I bet she will lose her tooth tonight.”
- h. **i.e. vs. e.g.** These abbreviations are usually, although not always, used within parentheses. Both “i.e.” and “e.g.” should be typed in lower-case, should have periods after each letter, and should be followed by a comma in normal usage. “i.e.,” is a stand-in for “that is” and is used to express an idea in another way, as in “The driver stopped at the red light (i.e., he followed the law).” “e.g.” is a stand-in for “for example” and is used to introduce possible examples, as in “The zoo has many animals (e.g., elephants, aardvarks, giraffes, etc.).”

6. **Proper use of articles (a, an and the).** An article signals that a noun is about to appear (although the noun does not need to directly follow the article). Generally, “a” or “an” means “one among many” and either word is used to refer to a noun that is not specific or specified but is “countable.” “A” is used before a consonant sound; “an” is used before a vowel sound (e.g., “She wanted me to read a book” or “She wanted me to read an interesting book”). “The” is used with a noun whose identity is known (e.g., “She wanted me to read the book that the professor mentioned in class yesterday”). Non-count nouns (entities that cannot be counted, like energy, food, and advice) do not take an article (e.g., “She wanted me to read classic literature”).

7. **Avoid overstatements.**

- a. **Absolute statements.** Using such words as “always” and “never” (and related words or phrases such as “constantly,” “continually,” “forever,” “endlessly,” “at no time,” and “not in any way”) should be avoided. Many students write sentences such as “She never smiles” or “He is always a hard grader.” Both of these are almost certainly overstatements and misuses of the words “never” and “always.” “People never run faster than the speed of light” and “People always die eventually,” are examples of proper uses of these two words. The earlier sentences can be fixed by choosing more moderate words, as in “She rarely smiles” or “He is usually a hard grader.”
- b. **Prove.** Scientists very rarely claim that they have “proven” anything, although some form of this word is used by lay people with frequency. The use of any form of this word typically overstates results (which are usually probabilistic). Thus, rather than writing “These results prove that...” more appropriate statements are “These results support the idea that...” or “These results are consistent with the idea that...”

- 8. Making comparisons.** The sentence “The experimental group scored higher in aggression” makes it impossible for the reader to know to whom or what the experimental group’s aggression scores are being compared. When comparison words like “higher” or “lower” or “more” or “less” are used, it is crucial to include the comparator. So, for example, a correct sentence would be, “The experimental group scored higher in aggression than did either of the two control groups.”
- 9. Dangling and awkwardly placed modifiers.** Words, phrases, and clauses are often used to modify (or further describe) some other word. Sometimes, however, writers place these modifiers in locations in the sentence that make it difficult to understand what the modifiers are modifying or that actually change the meaning of the sentence. For example, in the sentence, “The professor had two plants in her office that needed to be watered,” the phrase “that needed to be watered” is meant to modify “two plants,” but its location in the sentence actually makes it modify “her office”; obviously, her office does not need to be watered. Writing, “The professor had two plants that needed to be watered in her office,” solves the problem. This points to the clear solution for modifiers --- place them next to the word they are modifying. A similar problem can happen for “limiting modifiers,” which are words like “only”, “not”, “even” and “almost”. These words should be placed in front of a verb if they modify the verb; if they modify some other word, they should be placed in front of that other word. So, for example, “In the study, all subjects were asked not to place their hands in ice water” has a different meaning from “In the study, not all subjects were asked to place their hands in ice water.” In the first sentence “not” modifies the verb “to place,” and the sentence means that no one put his/her hand in the ice water. In the second sentence, “not” modifies “all subjects,” and the sentence means that some, but not all, subjects placed their hand in the ice water.
- 10. Point of view consistency.** A particular sentence should usually stay with the same point of view in terms of person and number. So, for example, the following sentence drifts from one view to another: “Our class had to complete two assignments. You had to write an essay and take an exam.” Here, the author changes from the “we” point of view to the “you” point of view. The latter is incorrect, because “you” refers to the reader, when actually the reader was probably not part of “our class.” As such, it would be best to keep the point of view the same throughout the sentence by writing “We had to write an essay and take an exam.”

Punctuation

Although there are many forms of punctuation, the Psychology Department Writing Policy only concerns itself with some of the forms. Because the Psychology Department recognizes that punctuation errors occur occasionally even in the papers of careful writers, students are allowed one un-penalized punctuation error for every 250 words in the paper.

1. **End punctuation.** Most sentences should end with a period, although if a sentence asks a question it should end with a question mark. Exclamation marks can also end sentences, but they are used very rarely in scientific writing.
2. **Internal punctuation.** Internal punctuation occurs within the context of a sentence and affects how the reader reads that sentence.
 - a. **The colon.** Colons are most often used to draw attention to a list or to a quotation. They can only be used after an independent clause. Thus, one might write "There are four main sections to a research paper: introduction, methods, results, and discussion" because the portion of the sentence before the colon is an independent clause. However, one would not say "The four sections of a research paper are: introduction, methods, results, and discussion" because the portion of the sentence before the colon is not a full independent clause.
 - b. **The comma.** Unlike end punctuation or a colon, each of which signals a strong pause, a comma indicates a slight pause, allowing the reader to better follow the flow of thought and to clarify meaning within a sentence. For example, "After taking her nap my mother wanted me to help with dinner" can be clarified by adding a comma after "nap." Commas are also often used to set off a phrase. As a general rule, to determine if commas should be used for this purpose, ask yourself whether the information is essential to the meaning of the sentence. Information essential to the meaning of the sentence is rarely enclosed with commas. For example, in the sentence "Musicians who are just starting out rarely make money," the kinds of musicians who "rarely make money" are the ones who are "just starting out." As such, the phrase "who are just starting out" is **not** set off by commas. In contrast, information that is not essential to the meaning of a sentence is almost always enclosed by commas. "Professors, who often wear ugly ties, spend much of their time grading," illustrates this rule, as professors spend much time grading regardless of their tie preferences; the information about the ties is extra. Commas are also used to separate independent clauses when conjunctions are used (see WM 1b); place the comma before the conjunction, as in, "My cat is usually distressed during the day, but when I come home she seems to calm down." In addition, commas should separate all items in a series of three or more words, phrases or clauses. For example, "Lori worked in the yard, showered, did the laundry, and then cooked dinner."
 - c. **The semi-colon.** As noted in the section on run-on sentences, a semi-colon is used to separate two independent clauses; failure to use a semi-colon in that context is considered a WM1b, not a P2c. Students will lose points for a P2c in cases when they use a semi-colon when they should actually use a comma or colon.
3. **The apostrophe.** Apostrophes are used for possessives, as in "Joe's candy is tasty" and "One's health is important." There are a couple of exceptions where an apostrophe is not used for the possessive. The first is in the case of "Its," as in "The paint can fell off the table and landed on its lid." The second is in the case

of “whose,” as in “I have no idea whose paper this is.” The third is in the case of “yours,” as in “Is that pogo stick mine or yours?” Apostrophes are also sometimes used to make a plural, as with numbers and symbols. For example, it is correct to say “The poker player held three 7’s in his hand” but it is not correct to say “The chips and the poker player’s sat on the table.” An apostrophe is also used for contractions such as “It’s” (when referring to “it is”), “who’s” (when referring to “who is” or “who has”) and “can’t,” (when referring to “can not”), but such contractions are too informal for the writing in most psychology classes and should generally be avoided.

Typographical Errors

There are several possible typographical errors one might make to a sentence like “I went to the circus.” The first is the misspelling of a word, as in “I went to the circsu.” Second is a mis-keying of a word so that a different word is typed (other than words that are often confused – see WM5), as in “I went to the circle.” Third is the capitalization of a word that should not be capitalized, as in “I Went to the circus.” Fourth is the failure to capitalize a word that should be capitalized, as in “i went to the circus. Fifth is the omission of a word that needs to be present in the sentence (other than articles – see WM6), as in “I went the circus.” Sixth is the repetition of a word that doesn’t need to be repeated, as in “I went went to the circus.”

Because the Psychology Department recognizes that typographical errors occur occasionally even in the papers of careful writers, students are allowed one un-penalized typographical error for every 250 words in the paper.

APA format (7th edition)

There are many features of APA format, and the Psychology Department Writing Policy focuses on only some of them. That is, although we encourage all students to carefully format all aspects of their papers in APA format, only the following errors will count on this APA policy (unless your professor tells you otherwise). Because the Psychology Department recognizes that APA format errors occur occasionally even in the papers of careful writers, students are allowed two un-penalized mistakes per paper. The information below provides page numbers from the 7th edition of the *APA Publication Manual* for how to follow certain aspects of APA format.

1. Correct format of in-text citations. All citations mentioned in the text have a particular format that they should follow; this format depends on the number of authors and where in the sentence the citation is mentioned. Pages 261-269 of the APA manual provide substantial useful information; Table 8.1 on p. 266 is particularly helpful.

- a. **Authors.** For work with one or two authors, both names are included in each citation. When citing a work with three or more authors use the first author plus et al. This includes the first time that paper is cited. Somewhat different rules are followed depending on where in the sentence the work is cited. If the work is cited in the main body of the sentence, one uses the word “and” to separate two

authors, as in “Smith and Brown (2013) found that...” If the work is cited inside a set of parentheses, one uses an ampersand (i.e., &) as in “Studies have found that depressed people are sad (Smith & Brown, 2013).” Only very rarely are first initials provided for in-text citations; the vast majority of the time, initials are not given. As such, it would be extremely rare to write “J.J. Smith (2016) found...”; usually it would just be “Smith (2016) found...” See section 8.20 on pp. 267-268 of the APA manual for the exceptions and how to handle them.

- b. **Year.** The year goes after the last author in the list; it is NOT put at the end of the sentence (as apparently is the case in MLA format). So one would write “Smith (2013) found that depressed people are sad” NOT “Smith found that depressed people are sad (2013).” Somewhat different rules are followed depending on where in the sentence the work is cited. If the work is cited in the body of the sentence itself, the year is set off with parentheses, as in “Smith and Brown (2013) found that...” If the work cited is inside a set of parentheses, then a comma is placed between the name of the last author and the year, as in “Depressed people are sad (Smith & Brown, 2013).”
- c. **et al.** First, note that it is “et al.” --- there is no period after “et” and there is a period after “al.” Second, note that one never uses et al. for works that have one or two authors.
- d. **Alphabetization.** Within a particular work, the authors’ names should be listed in the same order as they were in the publication; that is, do NOT alphabetize them. For instance, if Smith and Francis wrote an article, you list them in that order, NOT as “Francis and Smith (2013).” If multiple works are cited within a set of parentheses, alphabetize them by the first author’s last name, separating works with semi-colons. So it would be “Depressed people are sad (Jones et al., 2013; Smith & Francis, 2011) NOT “Depressed people are sad (Smith & Francis, 2011; Jones et al., 2013). If multiple works are cited within the main body of a sentence, they can be put in any sensible order (e.g., chronologically, relevance).
- e. **Quotations.** Whenever a direct quote is used, the page number of the quote must also be provided, usually at the end of the quote but outside of the quotation marks. Table 8.2 on p. 272 provides examples. So, the following is correct:

Jones and Smith (2013) believe “it is rare to find a white rat that doesn’t like food” (p. 23).

2. Correct format of citations in the reference section. All citations in the reference section have a particular format that they should follow; this format depends on whether the citation is from a journal, a book chapter, a book, etc. See pp. 281-309 of the APA Manual; the reference section of the sample papers on pp. 58-59 and 66-67 are also a good general guide. The PSYC department will focus on citations of journal articles, books, and chapters in books, as these three types of citations together form the vast majority of types of works students cite.

- a. **Authors.** The first item in any citation is the author(s). The standard format is LastName, First Initial. Second Initial., as in McAndrew, F. T. If there are multiple authors, separate authors’ names from each other with commas, and

put an ampersand (&) before the last author, as in McAndrew, F. T., Smith, J.J., & Jones, H. L. Note that there is a space after periods and commas i.e., NOT McAndrew, F.T. Note also that if the author does not use a middle initial, as in Kasser, T., you do not need to include it. If there are more than 20 authors see section 9.8 on p. 286 for what to do in this case.

- b. **Year.** The second item in any citation is the year of publication. This is put in parentheses after the last author in the author list and is followed by a period, as in McAndrew, F. T., Smith, J.J., & Jones, H. L. (2013).
- c. **Journal articles.** If the citation is a journal article, the next six pieces of information are the article title, the journal title, the volume #, (the issue #), the page #s, and the doi. The article title should be in normal print (i.e., not italicized, etc). Only the first word of the title and of the sub-title should be capitalized, as should any proper nouns (e.g., names of people, nations, or theories), as in “An investigation of depression in Western nations: A test of Cognitive-behavioral Theory.” Put a period at the end of the article title. Next comes the journal title, which should be italicized with the “big” words capitalized, as in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Spell out all the words of the title; do NOT put, e.g., *J Person Soc Psych*. After the journal title, type a comma and a space, and then put the volume # in italics. If there is an issue # place that immediately after the volume number and enclose it in parenthesis, do not italicize. Then type a comma and a space and the page numbers in normal print, and then a period. Finally, include the doi by using the hyperlink. So, a typical set of information would be “An investigation of depression in Western nations: A test of Cognitive-behavioral Theory. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 63(2), 122-133. <https://doi.org/10.1077/pspa347a88>.”
- d. **Books.** If the citation is a book, the two other pieces of information used are the book title and the publisher. The title should be italicized. The first word of the title and the sub-title should each be capitalized, as should any proper nouns, and the title should end with a period, as in “*The problem of autonomy: An investigation in China, Japan, and Bhutan.*” So, a typical arrangement would be “*The problem of autonomy: An investigation in China, Japan, and Bhutan.* East-west Publishers.”
- e. **Chapters in Books.** If the citation is a chapter in a book, the last five pieces of information are the chapter title, the Editors of the book, the title of the book, the page #s of the chapter, and the publisher. The chapter title follows the same rules as for an article in a journal with regard to capitalization, not being italicized, and ending with a period. After the article title, list the names of the editors after the word “In” and put either (Ed.) or (Eds.) at the end of the list of names. Unlike for author names, the initials of editor names are placed before the surname, not after it. For one editor, this section would read “In J. Adams (Ed.)”; for two editors, this section would read “In J. Adams & F. C. Smith (Eds.)”; for three editors, this section would read “In J. Adams, F. C. Smith, & L. Jones (Eds.)” Next, put a comma after the closed parentheses and then the name of the book, following the rules for book titles mentioned above. Close this section with the page numbers after

the initials “pp.” and put that information in parentheses; finish with a period. Finally, provide the information about the publisher, following the rules for books above. So, it might read “Sadness and depression: A review of the literature. In J. Adams, F. C. Smith, & L. Jones (Eds.), *Emotions and Mental Health* (pp. 147-178). Hogrefe Publishers.”

- f. **Alphabetization.** When listing the citations in the reference section, the citations should be put in alphabetical order by the first author’s last name. For example, an article by Jones (1991) is placed earlier in the list than an article by Jupiter (1989). If there are two or more articles by the same first author and the list of authors for the two citations is exactly the same, the article published earlier in time is listed earlier in the reference list; for example, Jones & McGraw (1991) precedes Jones & McGraw (1993). If there are two or more articles by the same first author and the author list is not exactly the same, the order depends on the second author; for example, Jones & McGraw (1991) precedes Jones & Smith (1989). If there are two or more articles by different authors who share the same last name, the order depends on the authors’ initials; for example, Jones, F. L. (1991) precedes Jones, R. S. (1989).

3. Match between in-text citations and citations in the reference section. All citations in the text should be in the reference section, and the reference section should contain only those citations mentioned in the text. Further, the information needs to match up, i.e., the year of publication needs to be the same in both the reference section and the text, and the order and spelling of authors’ names also needs to match. Check to make sure all of this information matches before turning in your paper.

4. Statistics. There are standard ways of reporting statistical findings that depend on the results and the statistics utilized. Useful statistical sentences are in the APA manual on pgs. 181-188; sections 6.43 and 6.44 are particularly helpful. This writing policy only focuses on some of the most common statistics.

- a. **Sample Size, Means, and Standard Deviations.** A sample size is represented with *N*, a mean with *M*, and a Standard Deviation with *SD*. Each of these should be italicized and capitalized. If the value for the mean or standard deviation is less than |1|, place a 0 before the decimal place (i.e., 0.80, NOT .80). Make sure to put spaces on both sides of the equal sign, so it reads “*M* = 1.32” not “*M*=1.32.”
- b. **t-tests and F-tests.** *ts* are not capitalized, but *Fs* are capitalized; both are italicized. If the value is less than |1|, place a 0 before the decimal place (i.e., -0.80, not -.80). Make sure to put spaces on both sides of the equal sign, and place the degrees of freedom in parentheses immediately after the *t* or *F*, as in “*t*(28) = 0.08” and “*F*(3,58) = 3.22.”
- c. **Correlation coefficients, b-weights, and Betas.** *rs* and *b*-weights are not capitalized; they are italicized. The Greek symbol β is used for Beta-weights; capitalization is irrelevant, and it is not italicized. If the value of the *b*-weight is less than |1|, place a 0 before the decimal place (i.e., 0.80, not .80). Because the value of *rs* and βs should be less than |1|, do NOT place a 0 before the

decimal place (i.e., .80, not 0.80). Make sure to put spaces on both sides of the equal sign, so it reads “ $r = .80$ ” not “ $r=.80$.” Degrees of freedom are generally not reported in the text for these tests.

- d. **p values.** *ps* are not capitalized; they are italicized. *ps* do NOT need a 0 before the decimal (i.e., $p = .044$, not $p = 0.044$) because they should always be less than 1.00. Report exact p values to three decimal places in the text. Never report $p = .000$; instead, report $p < .001$. *ps* are typically placed after a comma after the value of the statistical test has been reported, as in “ $r = .43$, $p = .033$ ” or “ $t(73) = 2.34$, $p = .021$.”

5. Indentation and headings. The placement of new paragraphs and headings depends on a number of variables. See the APA Manual for information on correct indentation (p. 45) and correct use of headings (pp. 47-49; Tables 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 are particularly helpful). The sample papers on pages 50-67 are also very helpful.

- a. **Indentations.** The first line of every paragraph and the first line of every footnote should be indented. It is best to use the tab key so that indentations are of the same amount throughout the paper. The typical amount is 5-7 spaces or ½ inch.
- b. **Headings.** Headings vary in where they are placed on the page, whether they are boldfaced or not, which words are capitalized, and whether a period follows the heading.
 - i. **Centered headings.** Headings for the Abstract, the title of the paper (on the first page of the introduction), the Methods, Results, Discussion and References sections, and Footnotes should all be centered on the page. All of these headings should be in boldface. Capitalize all “big words” in the heading, as in “**Brief Discussion of Study 1.**” Do NOT place a period after the heading. Begin the first sentence of the section on the next line, after indenting.
 - ii. **Flush-left headings.** If you have sub-sections within any of the main sections of the paper (e.g., a sub-section in the introduction; the Measures section of the Methods), place the heading flush left. Type the heading in Boldface and capitalize all the big words, as in “**Experimental Manipulation of Sexual Desire.**” Do NOT place a period after the heading. Begin the first sentence of the sub-section on the next line, after indenting. There are two levels of Flush-left headings; the first (level 2) is not italicized and the second (level 3) is italicized.
 - iii. **Indented headings.** If you have further sub-sections beyond level 3 headings, indent the heading. Type it in Boldface and capitalize all the big words, as in “**Testing Self-Concept in Chinese and American Students.**” Place a period after the heading and continue with the first sentence of this sub-sub-section on the same line as the period (i.e., do NOT indent or start on a new line). There are two levels of indented headings; the first (level 4) that is not italicized and the second (level 5) that is italicized.

6. Line Spacing. The entire document should be double-spaced, with no extra spaces between any lines (e.g., no extra line space between paragraphs, between headings, or between citations (see p. 45 section 2.21). The reference section should be double-spaced as well. There are a few exceptions to the double spacing rule that are described on p. 45.

7. Font. The entire manuscript should be in the same font and of the same size. See page 44 section 2.19 for recommendations.

8. Tables. Tables should be correctly labeled, formatted and placed within the paper. See the APA Manual for guidance, especially pp.199-206. Samples are provided on pp. 206-224.

- a. **Placement in manuscript.** There are two options for the placement of tables; they can be placed after the Reference and Footnotes sections or they can be embedded in the text after their first call out.
- b. **Refer readers to the Table.**
Somewhere in the body of the manuscript the reader must be referred to each Table, as in "See Table 2 for correlations." Tables should be numbered in the order that they are referenced in the paper.
- c. **Captions.** The first line should be "Table #" (with # being 1, 2, 3, etc.); type this in regular typeface (i.e., no italics or bold). Then start a new line with the title of the table, italicized, flush left, with all of the "big words" capitalized. Then begin the table on the next line.
- d. **Style.** Never paste a table from SPSS directly into the manuscript. It will most likely not be in the proper font, style, etc..
- e. **Orderly rows and columns.** The purpose of a table is to clearly present information. This means that all rows and columns need to be labeled. Further, numbers presented down a column should be typed so that the decimal points align looking down the column.

9. Figures. Figures should be correctly labeled, formatted and placed within the paper. See the APA Manual for guidance, especially pp. 225-232. Sample figures are provided on pp. 233-250.

- a. **Placement in manuscript.** There are two options for the placement of figures; they can be placed after the Reference and Footnotes sections or they can be embedded in the text after their first call out.
- b. **Refer readers to the figures.** Somewhere in the body of the manuscript the reader must be referred to each figure, as in "As can be seen in Figure 3, the form of the interaction was such that..." Figures should be numbered in the order that they are referenced in the paper.
- c. **Captions.** First place the figure on the page, and then below it put "*Figure #.*" (with # being 1, 2, 3, etc.); type this in italics. After the period, starting on the same line, type the title of the figure in regular typeface, capitalizing only the first word of the sentence and proper nouns.
- d. **Style.** Never paste a figure from SPSS directly into the manuscript. It will most likely not be in the proper font, style, etc.

- e. **Labeling within figures.** All elements of a figure need to be adequately labeled, including the axes of graphs.