

Psych 1106 – More Advice on Writing a Term Paper

Conformity to APA Format

- Use APA 6th Edition format for references, citations, margins, fonts, headings, page numbers, headers and title page. Examples are on the lab web page – check them out!
- Do not mix up the order of the authors! Their order is meaningful and important (i.e., the first author did the work; the last author is usually the supervisor) and any changes in the order of the names implies a reference to a different article.
- Use the same font for the entire paper – title page, headers, the reference page, the body of the paper.
- Do not italicize, except with proper Latin or foreign terms and when giving the title of a journal or a book on the reference page.
- Do not use bold or larger fonts for emphasis.

Technical quality of presentation (i.e., spelling, punctuation, grammar)

- Use proper Canadian English spelling; e.g., behaviour, not behavior
- Use proper English grammar and punctuation. (Note: exclamation marks are not appropriate in a science paper.)
- Do not use contractions.
- Learn the 3 proper uses of a semicolon.
- Use the past tense when discussing studies that were conducted in the past.
- Avoid the passive voice. It is a wordy and weak style. In fact, avoid wordiness in any form. Do not use 10 words, when 5 will suffice; e.g., drop the phrase "in order to" – it's just filler.
- Use the possessive correctly. For example: its, not it's; your, not you're.
- Avoid using colloquialisms and melodramatic, judgmental or inflammatory language – this is science, not a soapbox.
- Try to avoid using the first person pronoun, singular or plural. Occasional use is not prohibited if it avoids a stilted style.
- Do not try to sound smart by using big words or long complicated sentences. Keep your writing simple. Trying to write smart just reads stupid.
- Do not put information, other than citations, in parentheses. Brackets imply the information is not important – if it is worth saying at all, then work it into the text.
- Do not use "since" when you mean "because" they are not synonyms.
- Spell our names correctly (or fail!): Ken Stange and Stephanie Hevenor

Quality of body of report (i.e., how clear and informative it is)

- Every idea and piece of information not your own must be clearly and accurately referenced.
- All citations that appear in the text must be listed in the reference page, and all references listed must appear in the text. Failure on any of these counts is plagiarism!

- Use only scholarly peer reviewed journal articles -- the internet, videos, Wikipedia, magazines, movies and television are not appropriate sources. To limit your search to appropriate journals, the library's on-line resources have a button available on the advanced search window – it is even labeled “scholarly (peer reviewed) journals”.
- Only infrequently use direct quotations -- paraphrase instead. Direct quotations should only be used if you are critiquing the wording of the quotation. The articles you select provide the information and ideas; your contribution to this paper is the language and the organization used to present those ideas and information. Quotations disrupt the flow of the paper, making it difficult to read. Paraphrasing keeps the language in a consistent voice or style, and makes it clear that you understand the information you are presenting.
- All general statements must be followed by scientific evidence -- describe the studies from your articles. Each paragraph of the body should make one general point, followed by a description of the study and results that support (or refute) that point. Unsupported information is nothing more than opinion. Anecdotal evidence is not scientific.
- Write only the number of pages requested: 5 pages of text, double-spaced, 2.54 cm margins, Times New Roman 12 pt font. This does not include the title and reference pages.
- Keep your language simple, precise and clear. Do not try to sound smart by using big words or long complicated sentences – keep your writing simple. Trying to write smart just reads stupid.
- Do not overstate correlational data. Correlation does not equal causation.