

**Dean's Office Ruminations on Proposals**  
**(or Common Writing Problems in Advanced Writers)**

**3/21/2021**

**Organization**

- Best practice for developing a literature review:
  - Before you begin writing, read as much literature in the field as you can, especially original reports of empirical research
  - Write a brief summary of each article/study that you have read
  - Then, before you begin writing, build an outline of your argument for the literature review and decide which articles support each of your arguments
- Start new sections with a sentence that summarizes the section (topic sentence).
  - Consider: In a well-written paper, the reader should be able to read only the first sentence(s) of each section and know the entire purpose of the paper
- Best practice in writing is to think about the idea that you are writing, summarize the idea in your own words, and then, at the end of the paragraph where you expound your idea, cite every author whose work helped you develop that idea

**Content**

Types of sources –

- Please avoid unpublished and informally published works (Section 10.8 details these)
- Use sparingly gray literature (government reports, conference sessions, dissertations, reviews)
- Aim for 100% original research reports, preferably of empirical research, and book chapters/books

Quotes –

- Avoid overuse of quotations – don't quote trivial words/sentences; APA 7.0 discourages direct quotation altogether
- Avoid quotations unless the author's wording is really important for the meaning such that the original words need to be preserved

Research questions –

- Make sure there is a relationship between the research question(s) and the instrument(s) you are using to study that question
- Make sure you can clearly state what you are studying –
  - What is the effect of X on Y. Define clearly what X and Y are before you start writing
  - Does X matter? For whom? In what context? Be clear.

## Style

### General –

- Paragraphs should have *more than* three sentences but, at the same time, should not exceed much more than *one page* (at most)
- Double space (DS) everything within your document; chapter one on 4<sup>th</sup> DS line from the bottom of page #, title of chapter one on 6<sup>th</sup> DS line from bottom of page #

### Numbers –

- Use numerals for any number 10 or over
- Write out numbers between zero and nine
  - In this study, I will conduct **eight to 10** interviews depending on the number of participants I am able to secure.--**this is right**
  - In this study, I will conduct **eight to ten** interviews depending on the number of participants I am able to secure. --**this is wrong**

### Lists –

- Read the sections on Lists (6.49, 5.40, 6.51, 6.52)—just over two pages to familiarize yourself with the guidelines on lists of all kinds—narrative, numbered, bulleted. In a paragraph you need to use commas (or semi-colons if a single item has commas) or letters in parentheses. Lists can be bulleted or numbered.

### Tables and Figures –

- Chapter 7 is your friend when it comes to Tables and Figures. Whole books have been written, but this 38-page chapter should be sufficient.

### Grammar –

- Common advanced writing mistakes
  - Split infinitives:
    - The goal of this study is **to define clearly** the effect of X on Y.—**this is right**
    - The goal of this study is **to clearly define** the effect of X on Y.—**this is wrong**
  - Comma placement:
    - The girl walked her **dog and** they went to the store.—**this is wrong**
    - The girl walked her **dog, and they went to the store.** –**this is right** (both halves are sentences in their own right)
  - Lack of parallelism:
    - Teaching is this teacher’s way of **building the community and inspiring** the class to foster the growth and success of society (Ladson-Billings, 2005).—**this is right**
    - Teaching is this teacher’s way of **building** the community and **inspires** the class to foster the growth and success of society (Ladson-Billings, 2005).—**this is wrong**
  - Lack of subject-verb agreement
    - The participants in the study who each received one dollar for attending a seminar and completing the survey **are** asked to return after one week.—**this is right**
    - The participants in the study who each received one dollar for attending a seminar and completing the survey **is** asked to return after one week.—**this is wrong**
    - Why? The governing noun in both sentences is “participants”

## References

### Reference list citations –

- URL or <https://doi.org/> references are best practice for every reference citation and there should be no period following a URL
- Big difference between peer-reviewed (journal articles, books/book chapters, magazine/newspaper articles, newspaper articles, dictionary entries) and non-peer-reviewed literature (institutional reports, government reports, task force reports, policy briefs, press releases, dissertations, conference papers, reviews, gray literature)
  - Peer-Reviewed – italics on the *source*; Non-Peer-Reviewed– italics on the *title*
- ONLY journal titles, magazine titles, and newspaper titles have every word capitalized in Peer-Reviewed sources, book titles do not get title case
- Alphabetize
  - Alphabetize by letters
  - If exact same author or authors, order by year, oldest first (2000 before 2002)
  - Add a and b if same author and same year (Smith, 2018a; Smith, 2018b)
- Make sure the first author and year are accurate – these will be used throughout the document whenever you cite that source
- Indent and double-space everything
- All of the references in the text must be listed in the references and all of the citations in the references must be found in the text. As one of your last activities, check from the references to the manuscript and from the manuscript to the references
- Basic citation:
  - Author. (Year). Title. Source. <https://doi.org/> OR url
- Commas
  - No italics on commas in APA 7.0
  - Periods instead of commas in between the four sections of any reference citation:  
Author. (Year). Title. Source. <https://doi.org/> OR url

### In-text citations –

- Within a paragraph, do not cite the same source twice as long as it is clear whose ideas provided the source of your inspiration
  - Only cite Author A, Year once in a paragraph if the whole paragraph is about Author A's ideas. The cite should follow the first sentence that you wish to attribute to Author A. The next time you cite an author in the paragraph should be either a direct quotation (of Author A, Year) or an attribution to Author B, Year. If Author A is attributable following Author B, Year's attribution in the paragraph, you may re-cite Author A, Year again in a parenthetical citation. Please read Section 8.1.
- Quotations have to have page numbers, and every quotation (whether parenthetical or narrative) must present the author, year, and page number within the sentence where the direct quotation resides
  - Parenthetical Citation: Principals are “tier 5 leaders” (Smith, 2005, p. 28).
  - Narrative Citation: Smith (2005) stated that principals are “tier 5 leaders” (p. 28). Note that the year stays with the author.
- Blocked quotes – required for every direct quotation that is 40 words or longer; indent the whole block 5 spaces; the citation can be parenthetical and it falls outside the period closing the block. If you introduce the blocked quotation with the author's name, add the year there and only list the page number at the end of the blocked quote (outside the period closing the quotation). No quotation *marks* should appear in a blocked quote