



# The Writing Process

For Academic Excellence

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# Planning the Project Timeline

- What is the due date (“zero date”) and the current date?
- Zero date minus two days equals date for peer review
- Zero date minus four days equals date for proof reading and review
  - AI, Grammarly, MS Word Review, ReciteWorks, and Passive Voice Detector
- Develop calendar of time and days between today and Zero minus four to create project plan with milestones for planning, researching, drafting, revising, editing and proofing
  - Mark dates for each chunk of work with plenty of time set aside early in the process

# Organize (First Week of the Term)

- Set up a file on your computer for correspondence and notes about the assignment
- Set up a reference management software (RMS) system such as Zotero (see list of RMSs - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_reference\\_management\\_software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software))
- Access the library or libraries to learn scope of collection and search techniques
- Create bookmarks for
  - Google Scholar
  - Grammarly Premium
  - Passive Voice Detector
  - ReciteWorks.com for in-text and reference citation checking
  - CrossRef.org to access doi information
  - Research Gate and JSTOR are also excellent sources
- Set your version of MS Word preferences to include ALL spelling and grammar rules

# PREWORK

- Schedule 90 minutes per week starting in week one for this project
  - Mark sessions on your calendar
- Study and know the rules of the required style (APA 7th)
- Watch videos and learn writing organizational tools, experimenting with a sample topic that interests you
- Determine the requirements of the assignment: have a precise understanding of what is requested
- Use the Writing Tutor (university services) to work with a mentor on improving your writing

# Planning the Content

- Pick a general topic
  - Chapters in the text
  - Course competencies
- Brainstorm or mind map ideas about what you might want to include as subpoints
- Pre-research of topic (gathering and organizing)
  - Narrow the topic focus as you go
- Create a file of vocabulary related to the topic
- Determine the thesis
  - What is your perspective
  - Points in support
  - Points against
  - Consider using a couple of Internet apps for thesis development (<https://awc.ashford.edu/writing-tools-thesis-generator.html>; <https://johnmgarvey.com/apworld/student/thesiscreator.html>)
- Set up alerts in Google Scholar to email new literature on your topic
  - You may have several alerts with variant combinations of words. Set alerts to pull materials published in the last two years that are academic, sometimes called peer-reviewed
- Outline your paper
  - Introduction
  - Body
  - Determine the order of paragraphs remembering each paragraph has one point
  - Conclusion
  - References
  - If an Abstract is required, write it at the very last step after all content has been developed

# Researching & Finding Resources

- Research academic (peer-reviewed) resources (Library databases and Google Scholar)
  - Read but do not use Wikipedia. Reading “W” will jump-start your thinking  
Just because the college library site calls something “academic,” it may not be scholarly (peer-reviewed)
- Pull journal articles and perhaps SOME books into Zotero
  - Recency matters – most of your citations should be from the last 2 – 3 years
- In general, avoid citing general publications
  - Or, if you use some, find the research the authors of the articles consulted - learn the discipline that avoids the use of fake news
- Read the material and add Notes in Zotero, capturing your summary of the ideas in an item (use your words)
  - Add another Note in Zotero if you find a quote you may want to recall
- Using the outline of your paper, put the research references in the order you intend to use them

# Prewriting: The Rough Draft

- Compose the first draft using the outline of points that you developed
- For every statement, include the reference of a researcher who stated it
  - There is nothing new under the sun.
  - Nothing qualifies as common knowledge.
  - Cite it!
- Avoid (at this point) stating your opinion
- Avoid a surplus of quotes - describe the research in *your* own words instead of borrowing others' statements

# Writing

- Using the MEAL\* plan, develop a paragraph for every point
- Paragraphs should include at least 4 sentences
- Sentences should be concise
- Paragraphs should be 1/3 to a 1/2 page in length (rough estimate of longest length)

\*MEAL – Sentence order **M** = main topic as introduction; **E** = evidence has references; **A** = your analysis of the referenced material; **L** = lead-out that ties this paragraph to the next

# Citing Sources

- In-text
  - Students wrote better reports when following a plan (Smith, 2017; Smythe, Homer, & Jones, 2019).
  - Smith (2017) noted...
    - Always use past tense because the source was published in the past
  - Brown (n.d.) suggested that students made better grades when creating a project plan for writing research papers.
  - Quotes require page numbers
    - According to Jones (1998), “Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time” (p. 199).
  - Long quotes of 40+ words are placed in a free-standing block, but date and page remain the same
  - Paraphrasing rather than quoting STILL requires the author, date, and sometimes page number
- References
  - Styles differ with the number of authors
  - Every reference must have an in-text companion, and every in-text citation must have a reference
  - Every format has its own reference style – see APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Balance – every reference must have an in-text citation and vice versa!!!

# Proofreading

- **General (check the style manual such as the APA 7th Edition)**

- Your name or contact details as needed
- Title
- Page numbers
- Formatting
  - Font and size
  - Line spacing
  - Margins
- Word count
- Have you used bullet point lists correctly – should any lists be added or removed?
- Have you written a suitable introduction?
- Does each paragraph contain only one main idea and supporting points?
- Did you use the MEAL plan for paragraph construction?
- Do you have a suitable conclusion?
- Is the reference section complete?

- **Spelling**

- Check special terminology
- Check for typos – form/from, on/of, you/your
- Is the correct word used – to/too/two
- Correct usage – effect/affect, there/their
- Contractions used appropriately
- Have all abbreviations been defined?

- **Anthropomorphisms**

- Books and studies can't talk – authors can!

- **Punctuation**

- Apostrophes
- Commas
- Colons
- Semicolons
- Quotation marks
- Full stops
- Question marks
- Capital letters

- **Grammar**

- Complete sentences with correct use of subjects (nouns or pronouns) and verbs
- Subject and verb agreement e.g. singular subject + singular verb
- Correct verb tense is used
- Sentence length – not too long, but with some variation
- Included all prepositions which are needed

- **Vocabulary**

- You know the meaning of all the words you've used and they're used correctly
- Has the same word been used too often – find an alternative
- Your language is appropriate – use of slang or colloquialisms (avoid)

- **Numbers and Formulae**

- All numbers are correct – decimal point in the right place, do they make sense with the rest of the text
- Used numerals or words correctly – 10, 21 etc. or one, eight etc.
- All formulae are correct – any symbols used will print correctly

# Revising & Editing

- Backwards outlining - write an outline based on the first sentence of each paragraph - check for logical order
- If your opinion is sought as part of the assignment, write it now - but relate it to the research you have read
- Ask a peer or AI to read it with the intention of assessing the logical flow and/or the weak points that require more content
- Develop drafts 2+, saving each successive copy. Good tool: each day you write, create a new copy by entering the date at the end of the file name (e.g., SmithJ-Topic of Paper-20191010.docx)
- Run the almost-final copy through MS Word Review, Grammarly, ReciteWorks, and use CrossRef for finding doi numbers to modernize and simplify your reference citations
  - CoPilot and ChatGPT might be helpful but you must learn how to set up your request for help
- If you have Grammarly Premium, use the plagiarism checker - your university will use one such as TurnItIn or SafeAssign – avoid unintended mistakes and AI-written items

# Quality Review

- Reread the assignment or instructions
- Read your document from the end to the beginning ALOUD
- Read your document from the beginning to the end ALOUD
- Read Reference List for punctuation and capitalizations
- Did ReciteWorks alert you to errors?

# Submitting/Posting/Publishing

- Check visually for margins, page breaks, other formatting
- Submit a day before the deadline

# Following Up

- Read the feedback impartially – it is a gift, not a punishment
- Revise your document, whether or not the instructor will accept a revised copy
  - Open the document in MS Word Review to see edits and comments
  - Watch videos to become proficient in MS Word Review
- Run your revised copy through Grammarly, ReciteWorks, and other tools such as SlickWrite to determine how you have improved
- Apply the skills you have improved!

# Resources

- American Psychological Association. (2020). Anthropomorphism. *APA Style Blog*. <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/grammar/anthropomorphism>
- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>
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- Buchler, A., & Willen Brown, S. (2013, March 22). *Using Zotero* [Video file]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP5AzJHXfIA>
- *Google Scholar search tips*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2021, from <https://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/help.html>
- Mandernach, B., Zafonte, M., & Taylor, C. (2016). Instructional strategies to improve college students' APA style writing. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 27(3), 407–412. <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/>
- Owens, T. (n.d.). *Zotero user guide*. Zotero. [https://www.zotero.org/static/download/zotero\\_user\\_guide.pdf](https://www.zotero.org/static/download/zotero_user_guide.pdf)
- Puckett, J. (2011). *Zotero: A guide for librarians, researchers, and educators*. Association of College and Research Libraries.

Wild Card  
(add something  
that is missing)



What is your best or favorite tip?