

# Writing Handbook

## For the Social and Behavioral Sciences



Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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## **Section I: Quick Guide to Writing a Research Paper or Report**

### I. Develop your thesis.

- a. Research a general topic that interests you.
- b. Develop a strong thesis statement (if a research paper), or research question.

### II. Researching.

- a. Observation.
- b. Experiments.
- c. Interviews (also may be primary written source).
- d. Written sources.
  1. Secondary sources.
    - i. Books, including monographs.
    - ii. Periodicals (including scholarly journals).
    - iii. Unpublished manuscripts (including dissertations).
    - iv. Other (pamphlets, encyclopedia, dictionary, etc.).
  2. Primary sources.

### III. Evaluation of Research.

- a. Evaluation of date (for quality, relevance, bias or point of view).
- b. Select pertinent data.
- c. Analyze and interpret data.
- d. Utilize data as part of a written paper or report.

### IV. Writing up your research.

- a. Writing up your research in the form of a paper or report.
- b. Choose appropriate style of documentation (citations).
  1. APA style.
  2. Chicago style.
  3. MLA style.
- c. Thoroughly document throughout your paper.
  1. Be consistent—use only one style of documentation in your paper.

<p>Use the APA style (American Psychological Association) for Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work papers. Political Scientists and Historians use the Chicago style (notes). And always use the style that your professor instructs you to use.</p>
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## **Section II: Writing Your Paper**

### **Introduction**

This handbook is designed to help you write a research paper or report in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. It includes a brief discussion of all of the basic elements in writing a good paper. This handbook will focus on the basic writing and documentation of a research paper.

### **Developing Your Thesis**

A research paper requires you to develop a thesis or main idea, which is to be supported with well organized evidence (your research). A good paper is also analytical and creating a thesis in the form of a question (or a comparison) may make it easier to develop your analysis.

The first step is to decide upon a general idea or issue (let's call it your general topic) that you will develop into your thesis. It is usually best to pick a topic that interests you since you will be spending time and effort working on it. Your preliminary research should allow you to form a tentative thesis—a one or two sentence statement of your central idea. This thesis statement will be a reasoned answer to the central research question or expression of your main idea. The clearer and stronger your thesis statement is, the easier it will be to write a good paper.

### **Researching**

Research in the Social Sciences can take many forms: Direct observation, experiments (very common in Sociology and Psychology), interviews, and the study of written sources (very common for Historians). Historians often divide written sources into two categories: Primary (first hand records and accounts) and Secondary sources (written after the events or era, often by other historians), although these categories may not be used by all disciplines within the Social Sciences. Research is a very large and complex topic, and beyond the scope of this short handbook. Your professor will discuss the research approach appropriate to the specific academic discipline in which you are working.

### **Evaluation of Research**

The evaluation of research is at least as important as the research itself, and probably more difficult. You should evaluate all of your data as objectively as possible for quality and its relevance for your thesis. It should also be carefully examined for its bias and point of view. The evaluation process is essential, because the quality of your paper and your conclusions will be very strongly affected by the quality of the research data you have collected.

The most difficult (and most important) part of this process is the analysis—the interpretation and use of your data to support your thesis (answering your question or proving your thesis). The process of analysis will depend upon many factors, including the discipline you are working in, your methods, approach, and subject. Your professor should be able to assist you in developing your analysis of the data.

### **Developing Your Writing Skills:**

#### **Important Instructions:**

All work should: have either a cover sheet or a header on the first page of text with your name, class & section, campus, and date.

Body of paper should be double spaced, in a standard font, something similar to Courier, Arial, or Times Roman, sized between 10 and 12 points (your word processor default settings should be fine). Left and right margins should **not** exceed 1.25 inches (word processor default settings should be OK). Your professor will tell you if you need a separate title page or if you should put your basic information (described in the first paragraph above) at the top of the first page. If there is a topic or a question (as in a reaction or response paper), put that either as a title or incorporate it into your introductory paragraph. If there are citations such as footnotes or a bibliography, format appropriately for the documentation style you chose (APA, Chicago, or MLA).

All papers should be typed on a word processor or typewriter—handwritten papers will not be accepted. Staple the pages (do not use clips, or tape, etc), and do not use any kind of binder, plastic cover, or cover sheet. The instructor is not responsible for lost or damaged papers due to failure to follow the above rules.

College students are expected to be able to write a well organized essay on any given topic. So it is important for you to develop your own writing skills as much as possible. Just as with any other skill, your writing will improve with practice, and with good feedback to help guide you. The objective of all of the writing you will do in this course is to be persuasive—to make your case, or argument, as effectively as possible. All of the writing will be non-fiction, which means that it is based in reality, and even if the specific assignment does not demand footnotes or other citations, you should be prepared to illustrate your answer with specific examples taken from sources.

An effective essay requires that the writer pay attention to grammar and organization as well as to content. You need to construct grammatically correct sentences in order to express your ideas in a way that your reader can easily understand. Along with grammar, organization is central to writing an effective essay. All essays should have three main elements—the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction lays out your argument or thesis, and may also give a general idea of how you are going to prove it. The body of the essay lays out that argument, and the specific facts and evidence that support your argument or thesis. If there is contradictory evidence you must not ignore it, but describe it in the body and then explain why it does not nullify your argument and your conclusions. The conclusion of the essay should state just that—the conclusions you have drawn from your evidence. You can also restate your thesis, but it is important that you specifically restate what you have proven in the body of the paper.

Remember, the best way to become an effective writer is by regular practice. These guidelines and suggestions may help to sharpen your writing skills, but the best way to develop those skills is to exercise them as often as possible. And always be sure to read through a good style manual for additional guidelines and tips (several are suggested at the bottom of this document).

### **Miscellaneous tips:**

Avoid basic grammar errors. For example, avoid the use of contractions in a formal paper (for example, “don’t” or “won’t”). Avoid using “I” extensively in a formal paper, and the use of slang.

Always write several drafts of a paper. Multiple drafts let you discover misspellings and other basic grammar errors as well as errors of content. Most of all this technique will help you to root out poorly worded passages with unclear meanings. Other techniques that can help improve the clarity of your writing are reading aloud to yourself and having someone else read it. If a section, paragraph, or sentence does not make sense to you or your reader, then chances are it will not make sense to your professor either.

### **Key points to remember:**

Always adhere to any length limits set for each assignment (minimum and maximum number of pages).

All papers should be typed on a typewriter or word processor (handwritten papers will NOT be accepted). The format instructions above must be followed (margins, font type, etc).

PROOFREAD your papers. All papers must be logically organized, free of grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and typographical errors. If using a word processor, use the spelling and grammar check feature to root out any errors or typos.

### **Advanced Writing Tips:**

#### ***The parts of an essay:***

The introduction can be as little as a paragraph or two, and should clearly present the central theme of the paper. The body of the paper should make up the bulk of the essay, and should expand, explain, and analyze the central theme. Often the best way to do this is to break it down into several sub-themes to be discussed and proven separately. The conclusion should be a more explicit summation of what you have already presented in the body.

#### ***Organizing your writing:***

The organization of paragraphs and sentences is just as important as the overall organization of the paper. A well-written paper will have paragraphs of manageable length. There should be a logical thread of continuity between paragraphs that ties them together in some fashion. Beware of choppy and abrupt endings in paragraphs—they are usually an indicator that you have not developed an adequate paragraph transition.

## **Documentation: Citations and References/Bibliographies**

For a research paper and most reports you must provide documentation describing where you found the information you are providing as evidence to prove your thesis. This documentation, also known as citations and a references list or bibliography, must be done properly or you risk committing plagiarism (taking the words or ideas of another and passing them off as your own work). It is therefore very important that you understand how to cite properly to avoid committing plagiarism.

### **Citing Sources:**

Any words, ideas, or concepts which are not your own should be properly cited using a recognized citation format, even if you have rewritten the passage in your own words. The most important formats include the APA, MLA, and Chicago styles. Most Social Scientists (Sociologists, Psychologists, and Social Workers) use the APA style (American Psychological Association). Historians rely upon the Chicago style, although many accept the MLA style as well. Always use the documentation style specifically assigned by your professor. You will find information on all three documentation styles in section III of this handbook.

### **References List and Bibliographies:**

Both of these come at the end of your paper, and consist of a list of the research materials (sources) you used. There are no major differences between a references list and a bibliography. You will find information on both in the third section of this handbook—How to Document Your Paper.

Remember, **ignorance is never an excuse**, so it is up to you to make sure you understand how to cite properly and avoid plagiarism. So carefully read through all of the following information about plagiarism.

## **Avoiding Plagiarism (getting your footnotes right):**

To avoid plagiarism, always do your own work in your own words. **Any concepts or ideas which are not your own should be properly documented as such using a recognized citation format, even if you have rewritten the passage.** Direct quotes must always be cited. Be sure to use quotation

marks (“ “) to delineate the quote, or use a block quotation if the quote runs six or more lines. And always document your quotes, and all other research, using one of the three documentation styles.

### **Defining Plagiarism**

Plagiarism occurs when an author appropriates and passes off the ideas or words of another as her or his own without crediting the source. The Diné College institutional definition of plagiarism as posted in the catalog is as follows: “**The use of another author’s work or ideas (such as those taken from a magazine, newspaper, web site, book, or other source) and submits it without giving that person or source proper credit.**”(Diné College 2010-2011 Course Catalog, 71) Plagiarism is the gravest of all academic crimes. Thankfully, no central authority judges the authenticity of scholarly work; scholars must police their own and each others' work. To retain the credibility of those who work in a given field, academia has very high standards for ensuring that all unoriginal work is properly acknowledged as such.

Unless you use proper styles and standards of citation, plagiarism can easily occur unintentionally, in which case it is still a grievous crime. Here is a good guide to check for accidental plagiarism: When paraphrasing material from a source, if you find yourself copying three or more words directly, it is best to either rework your sentence or place the material in quotations. The easiest way to avoid accidental plagiarism is to scrupulously cite your sources, and to quote correctly. Make certain that paraphrased material is written in your own style and diction. Do not simply rearrange sentence patterns.

### **Three examples of plagiarism (Note that none of these include citations).**

Original text is from Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery*:

*The main image in Othello is that of animals in action, preying upon one another, mischievous, lascivious, cruel or suffering, and through these, the general sense of pain and unpleasantness is much increased and kept constantly before us.*

*More than half the animal images in the play are Iago's, and all these are contemptuous or repellent: a plague of flies, a quarrelsome dog, the recurrent image of bird-snaring, leading asses by the nose, a spider catching a fly, beating an offenseless dog, wild cats, wolves, goats and monkeys.*

#### **First example:**

*The majority of the animal images in the play are Iago's, and all of these are contemptuous or repellent. He refers to a plague of flies, a quarrelsome dog, bird-snaring, leading asses by the nose, a spider catching a fly, beating an offenseless dog, wild cats, goats and monkeys. Through these images the general sense of pain and unpleasantness is increased and kept constantly before us.*

This is outright plagiarism. Phrases like "beating an offenseless dog" and "kept constantly before us" come direct from the original text. Moreover, the author has made no mention of Spurgeon's book; the author is presenting Spurgeon's ideas as the author's own.

#### **Second Example**

*I believe that the main image in Shakespeare's tragedy, Othello, is that of animals. These creatures are constantly in action, preying upon one another, and they are depicted as mischievous, wanton, cruel or suffering. By Shakespeare's ingenious use of these animal images, the general sense of pain and unpleasantness that pervades the entire story is much increased and kept constantly before the reader.*

This is "mosaic" plagiarism. The author still lifts words directly from Spurgeon's book, like "the general sense of pain and unpleasantness," yet to a lesser degree. Still, the author uses words like "action" in the same sense as in the original, and has failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas. In fact, "I believe" suggests ownership of the original idea.

### **Third Example:**

*In Othello Shakespeare makes frequent use of animal imagery. The specific images he uses are generally distasteful and convey to the reader a constant impression of conflict and misery.*

Despite that there are almost no words taken directly from Spurgeon's book, this is still clear plagiarism, known as "echo" plagiarism. In this case, text is not stolen, yet ideas clearly are. The author needs to simply convey the source of the idea, as in: *As Caroline Spurgeon has noted in Shakespeare's Imagery, in Othello Shakespeare makes frequent use. . . ."*

#### **Rules for correct acknowledgement of sources:**

Enclose within quotation marks all quoted materials.

Make certain that paraphrased material is written in your own style and diction. Do not simply rearrange sentence patterns.

Provide a footnote for every quotation and every paraphrase which is not common knowledge.

Provide a bibliographical entry for every source which appears in the footnote.

## **Section III: Documentation Styles**

The following is intended as a brief overview of the rules for citing sources. It is always best to rely upon a good published writing handbook or manual, or the websites of the APA and MLA. These are listed at the end of this handbook.

### **IMPORTANT!**

Remember you are expected to give credit for ALL direct quotations and paraphrases of fact or opinion which are not common knowledge. Such notes are necessary; the facts, ideas, and words of another belong to him or her. It is dishonest (and plagiarism) to use such materials without acknowledgment of the source. Citations help to give a paper its validity. They are proof that an author has not misused her sources; they indicate accuracy, honesty, and thoroughness.

## **APA Style**

APA recommends the author-date style of citations. When quoting or paraphrasing a reference source you simply include the author's last name and the page number where you found the quote. For example: One expert contends that "all mentally ill people have sexual problems" (Berne, p. 57). The entire citation of the reference should then be included in your reference/bibliography page found at the end of your paper. If you cite two or more works by the same author, provide the year of publication as a way to tell them apart, for example (Beme 1997, p. 57) Examples of complete citations are included below and can also be found at [apastyle.org](http://apastyle.org). Another acceptable and alternative method to citations is to include the entire name of the author as well as the source from which you have gathered the information. For example, John Doe, in his book Primates Live Longer Lives, he states that "diet is the most important element in predicting longevity among bonobos."

The APA style of citing sources within the body of the paper does not include footnotes or endnotes and does include a bibliography or reference page.

### **Examples of APA Style:**

For your reference list: Alphabetize entries in the list of references by authors' last names (or title if there is no author). If you included the date in your text reference, then put it in parentheses after the author name (or title). Examples:

Beme, Alfred.

Beme Alfred. (1997).

Below are a few examples of APA style citations. Please be aware that this is not a comprehensive list on how to cite all sources. See *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* for a complete list of citation examples.

#### **Book:**

Shoemaker, Donald J. (2009). *Juvenile Delinquency*. Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

#### **Newspaper Article:**

Shebala, Marley. (2010, September 9). ONLR to probe removal of hospital CEO. *The Navajo Times*, pp. A1, A9.

#### **Website:**

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2010). *Fight Stigma*. Retrieved from [http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=fight\\_stigma](http://www.nami.org/template.cfm?section=fight_stigma)

#### **Encyclopedia Article:**

Smith, A. J. (2001). Child development. In B. Strickland (Ed.), *The Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*

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## **Chicago Style: Footnotes/Endnotes**

The Chicago style uses footnotes or endnotes for all citations, both of which are known as notes. Notes consist of superscript numbers (slightly raised numbers) in the text of the paper that refer readers to notes with corresponding numbers either at the foot of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the paper (endnotes). Number your notes in consecutive order throughout the paper. The actual note should include author, title, and a brief version of the publication information. If you use the same source in several successive notes, provide a complete note the first time, and an abbreviated note thereafter, consisting of the author's last name and the page number of the reference. If you have more than one source by the same author, provide a shortened version of the title of each source so the reader knows which source is the basis for that note. Many word processing programs will automatically format your paper for either footnotes or endnotes (including the popular programs MS Word, Word Perfect, and Open Office). When listing your notes, be sure to follow a few basic rules: a) Double-space between footnotes (endnotes) and single space within each note; b) Be sure to include all of the necessary information and separate each piece of information with correct punctuation.

Because the publication information is included in the notes, the Chicago style does not require either a bibliography or a references list (although professors often require one of these in addition to the notes).

### **Examples of Chicago Style:**

Notes: An actual note in the text would appear as a number at the end of the sentence, like this.<sup>1</sup> The second one would appear like this.<sup>2</sup> The corresponding note entry would look like

these samples (and if at the bottom of the page it would be a footnote, and at the end of the paper an endnote):

1. Peter Burchard, *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and His Brave Black Regiment* (New York: St. Martin's, 1965), 85.
2. Burchard, *One Gallant Rush*, 31.

Below are a few examples of Chicago Style citations. Please be aware that this is not a comprehensive list on how to cite all sources. See *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian's *Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* for a complete list of citation examples.

**Print Book:**

William H. Rehnquist, *The Supreme Court: A History* (New York: Knopf, 2001), 204.

**Online Book:**

Heinz, Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Press, 2000), 85, <http://brookings.nap.edu/books/0815750234/html/R1.html>.

**Online Newspaper Article:**

Phil Willon, "Ready or Not," *Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 2001, <http://www.latimes.com/news/la-foster-special.special>.

**Book Review in a Journal:**

Nancy Gablin, review of the *Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment*, by Susan M. Hartman, *Journal of Women's History* 12, no.3 (2000): 230.

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## MLA Style

The MLA style (Modern Language Association) is more commonly used in English and the Humanities, but because it is very widely taught, it is usually also acceptable in the Social Sciences (but always check with your professor, who may have an individual preference). MLA recommends a system of in-text citations. The source is introduced in the text by a signal phrase that names its author. The material being cited is followed by a page number in parentheses. At the end of the paper there should be a reference list (usually called Works Cited) with all of the works arranged alphabetically by authors' last names and with complete publication information for each.

**Examples of MLA Style:**

Below are a few examples of MLA style citations. Please be aware that this is not a comprehensive list on how to cite all sources. See *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for a complete list of citation examples.

**Print Book:**

Tan, Amy. *Saving Fish from Drowning*. New York: Putnam, 2005.

**Edited Book:**

Craig, Patricia, ed. *The Oxford Book of Travel Stories*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

**Article in a Magazine:**

Fay, J. Michael. "Land of the Surfing Hippos." *National Geographic* Aug. 2004: 100+.

**Article in a Journal:**

Ryan, Katy. "Revolutionary Suicide in Toni Morrison's Fiction." *African American Review* 34

## **References:**

*Some of the examples, including those listed for the MLA and Chicago style, were taken from Hacker, Diana, A Pocket Style Manual, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008.*

*A portion of Section II, including the plagiarism examples was adapted by David A. Sicko from a document created by Betty Dessants at Florida State University in 2001.*

*Diné College 2010-2011 Course Catalog.*

## **Additional Resources:**

There is no substitute for a published style manual, many of which also offer excellent advice on writing and grammar. These are just a sampling of the many that are available.

### **Printed style manuals covering multiple documentation styles:**

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2004.

Lipson, Charles. *Doing Honest Work in College*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

*Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

### **Printed style manuals focusing on a single documentation style:**

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2010.

*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. New York: Modern Language Association, 2009.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L. *Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2004.

### **Websites for the APA and MLA:**

**Guide to APA style of research paper citations**

<http://www.apastyle.org>

**Information on the MLA style manual**

<http://www.mla.org/style>

### **College websites that offer additional information and examples of documentation:**

**Diné College library web-page resources:**

<http://library.dinecollege.edu/dcl-students.htm>

**Indiana University writing tutorial services (various useful pamphlets):**

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>

**Perdue University Owl online writing guide:**

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

**Guide to citing on-line resources (Bedford/St Martin's Press):**

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/index.html>