

THE RESEARCH PAPER
THE FINISHING TOUCHES

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from

STYLE MANUAL
FOR THE PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF REPORTS
AT OLDS COLLEGE

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The Research Paper – The Finishing Touches

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
Writing	5
• The Second Draft and Beyond	
• Clarity	
• Revision	
• Editing	
PLAGIARISM	9
THE APA METHOD FOR CITING SOURCES	9
 Parenthetical References	
 Reference List	10
CONCLUSION	14
REFERENCES	15
APPENDICES	16
 Revision Checklist	17
 Editing Checklist	18
 Bibliography	19

Introduction

This booklet is designed to help the student who has written at least one draft of their research report and is now moving into the later stages of their assignment.

When the guidelines presented herein differ from those of your instructor, follow the instructor's specifications. For instructional purposes, the requirements of the instructor take precedence.

Writing

The Second Draft and Beyond

Now that your ideas are down on paper, it is time to work towards perfection and excellence. Areas of weakness and errors that you ignored previously need to be addressed. As you write subsequent drafts, keep the working bibliography updated.

Ask yourself:

- “Does my beginning engage the reader’s attention, lead them toward the central idea or thesis and give them clear sense of direction?”
- Is my hypothesis or thesis statement clearly stated and cover specifically what my paper is about?
- Does my conclusion leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction that the research question has been thoroughly answered?”
- Are the tone and style expressed in my paper consistent and appropriate? Remember, a formal tone is preferred for most technical writing.

Be prepared to write as many as three to five drafts, revising after each one.

Clarity

Additional questions to ask yourself:

- Is my paper clear?
- Is it well organized and supported so that the readers can easily understand my points?
- Is it unified (focused and on track)?
- Is the thesis statement fully proven in the body of a paper?
- Are all points and facts presented related to the thesis? (Any information that does not develop the thesis does not belong in the paper.) It may be necessary to adapt the thesis and the outline as you go to keep unity.

In addition to maintaining unity within the whole of the paper, it is also necessary to maintain unity within each paragraph:

- Does each paragraph have a central idea? Is this central idea expressed in a topic sentence and supported with specific details?
- Do all of the details in the paragraph relate specifically to the topic sentence of the paragraph?

- Are my paragraphs coherent?
- Are the sentences within each paragraph placed in an order that enhances the supporting details?
- How are they ordered: chronological, climactic order, logical, or cause and effect?
- Or, do they move from a general statement toward specific details, or alternatively, from the specific to the general?
- Do I use spatial order for visual descriptions, especially for explaining the appearance or types of equipment?
- Are the details arranged effectively to show how they are connected in a way that shows their relation to one another?
- Do I use transitional words effectively to help ideas flow smoothly from one to the next and show a clear relationship between ideas?
- Have you used good words or diction?
- Is my choice of language concrete?
- Are the words chosen specific, realistic and colourful?
- Have I avoided generalization?
- Have I avoided wordiness and redundancy?
- Is my writing concise?
- Is my sentence pattern straightforward or, in a misguided effort to impress, have I chosen convoluted sentence patterns filled with embellishments and ornate, poetic descriptions?
- Through my need to impress with lengthy, verbose sentences, have I diluted the very message I am trying to convey?

The following list is helpful in eliminating unnecessary words from your writing:

- Avoid unnecessary words such as very, extremely, and just.
- Reduce phrases to single words: “at this point in time” can be changed to “now”; “for the fact that” can be changed to “because”, “the person who does my typing” can be changed to “my assistant”, “in the event that” can be changed to “if”.
- Eliminate irrelevant details, empty phrases, unnecessary explanations and excuses.
- Eliminate redundant phrases. Redundancy occurs when repetition occurs within a phrase. Following are some commonly used redundant phrases that would be more concisely expressed by the underlined portion of the phrase only.

<u>cooperate</u> together	<u>advance</u> forward	<u>small</u> in size	absolutely <u>nothing</u>
basic <u>essentials</u>	<u>continue</u> on	<u>few</u> in number	<u>could</u> possibly
<u>circled</u> around	<u>refer</u> back	<u>disappear</u> from view	true <u>fact</u>

Do not overuse jargon or technical terminology. Jargon refers to the technical words that are specific to an area of study. These technical words are suitable for writing in specialized areas when the readers are sure to know the meanings; however, an overuse hinders the clarity of writing.

The Research Paper – The Finishing Touches

Revision

Once you have prepared your early drafts, you must begin the process of revision. Revision, which means re-visioning the expression of your ideas, involves major rewriting and reworking to improve the paper. In order to revise effectively, you may need to add, delete, substitute or re-order information. This should be done on three different levels: the overall essay, whole paragraphs, and individual sentences. Keep in mind the purpose of your paper and make changes that further that purpose. Areas to consider for revision include content, organization, and clarity. Use the Revision Checklist included in the appendix to ensure your draft is ready for editing.

Editing

Once the content of your report reflects exactly what you want to say in a well-organized fashion, it is almost ready for the final draft. First, however, it must be edited to meet certain conventions of style. Editing refers to the rewriting to correct grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation. To prepare your final draft, use the Editing Checklist, which appears in the appendix.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offence that is often accompanied by severe penalties. Plagiarism refers to the act of passing off someone else's work or ideas as your own. It can be deliberate, or can occur unintentionally through careless, inaccurate documentation. Documentation is the acknowledgement of the sources that were used in the preparation of your report. The APA guidelines for documenting sources are very straightforward and easy to implement.

You must document all material that you borrow from your sources, whether you quote directly, paraphrase, or summarize. You must also document tables, graphs, and charts that you borrow from a source. Finally, you also must quote ideas, opinions or original insights that are attributed to someone else. You do not need to document anything that is generally accepted as fact or common knowledge. For example, anything that can be found in several books does not need documentation. In addition, statistical information that is accepted as fact and that appears in a journal can be used without acknowledgement. Sometimes the decision of whether to document or not is a matter of judgement. If you are in doubt, document the source. This will prevent claims of plagiarism.

The APA Method for Citing Sources

As you researched and developed your report, you should have kept an accurate record of the sources that were consulted and the information that was borrowed. If this was attended to with care, acknowledgement of sources will be simple.

Parenthetical References

(in the body of the report)

When information is quoted, paraphrased or summarized from a source, and inserted into the text of your paper, the source is acknowledged in parentheses. The APA recommended method of citing sources within text uses the author-date method of citation. The surname of the author and the year of publication are inserted into the text at the appropriate point. These sources are then fully acknowledged in a reference list that follows the paper.

For example:

One Work by One Author

Recent discussions of ISO 9000 registrations (Lamprecht, 1992) indicate

or

Lamprecht (1992) discussed ISO 9000 registration in European countries.

In the last example, the author's name appears as part of the text and therefore is not inserted in the parenthetical reference. If both the author's name and the date appear in the text, it is not necessary to use a parenthetical reference. Also, for subsequent references to the same source within one paragraph, only the author's name appears in the parentheses.

(Lamprecht)

One Work by Two Authors

If there are two authors for one work, simply site the surnames of both authors each time.

(Fernandez & Whitaker, 1975)

One Work by Three to Five Authors

Cite all authors for the first time that you cite the source. Thereafter, cite the first author's name followed by et al.

(Kirkland, Dilworth & Bizzaro, 1985)

(Kirkland et al.)

One Work by Six or More Authors

Cite the last name of the first author followed by et al.

(Heath et al., 1995)

Groups as Authors

(Alberta Agriculture, 1980)

Works with no author

(Roundup Herbicide, 1995)

Authors with the same surname

If you are citing two authors with the same surnames, you must use their initials to distinguish between them.

(Smith, K., 1978)

(Smith, I., 1992)

Personal Communications

Personal communications are cited within the text.

(Greene, personal communication, September 6, 1998)

Personal communication is not cited in the reference list as it cannot be retrieved.

Reference List

(at the end of the report)

A reference list is required at the end of a report to reveal full information regarding the sources specifically used in the preparation of the paper. Reference lists differ from bibliographies in that bibliographies list all sources that were consulted, including those that were useful only in providing background information or those that may be recommended for further reading. The reference list cites only those sources that were referenced in the text of the paper. The elements of a bibliographical citation and a reference list are identical. According to APA guidelines, when preparing manuscripts for publication, a reference list is always required. It is the responsibility of the student to determine the individual instructor's preference.

A reference list should be typed, double-spaced. Each entry is indented either with a paragraph indentation or a hanging indentation. Entries are placed in alphabetical order, using the last names of the first author listed. Subsequent authors' names are also inverted. Commas are used between lists of several authors with an ampersand (&) before the last in the list. The publisher's location is given by city and state for cities in the United States and city and countries for those outside the United States. The names of states can be abbreviated to their two letter codes. If a city is large and well known, it can be listed without a state abbreviation or a country.

Nonperiodicals (these include books, reports, brochures, AV material)

General Pattern:

Name, A. A. (2004) . *Title*. Location: Publisher.

A book with one author

Vergara, C.J. (2005). *The New American Ghetto*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

If there is more than one entry by the same author, the entries should be placed chronologically, with earlier entries preceding later ones.

A book with two or more authors

Fernandez, J.E., & Whitacker, R.D. (1995). *An Introduction to Chemical Principles*. New York: MacMillan.

A book with a group author (government agency or corporation)

Health and Welfare Canada. (1999) . The Canadian Mother and Child. Ottawa: Author.

If the author is the same as the publisher, as in the above example, simply use the word “Author” rather than writing out the name again for the publisher.

A work with an editor

Plant, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Healing the wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Chapter in an edited book

Erikson, E. (2005). Once more the inner space. In J.H. Williams (Ed.), *Psychology of Women: Selected Readings* (pp. 71-84). New York: Norton.

Review of a book

Lackner, H. (2008). [Review of the book *Inauthentic Culture and its Philosophical Critics*]. *Books in Canada*, 4, 30-31.

The review itself, in this case, is not titled. For titled reviews, place the title between the date and the bracketed material.

Encyclopedia or dictionary

Friel, S. (Ed.) . (2004). *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (25th ed.) . Toronto: W.B. Saunders.

Brochure, corporate author

Monsanto. (2005) . Roundup Herbicide Preharvest Guide. [Brochure] . Author.

Periodicals (these include journals, magazines, newsletters)

General Pattern:

Name, A. A. , Name, B. B. , & Name, C. C. (1994) . Article title. *Periodical Name*, Volume and page number.

An article in a journal with continuous pagination

Hajek, A.E., & Shimazu, M. (2006). Types of spores produced by *Entomophaga maimaiga* infecting the gypsy moth *lymantria dispar* . *Canadian Journal of Botany* 74. 708-715.

An article in a journal paginated by issue

Becker, L. , & Seligman, C. (2001). Welcome to the Energy Crisis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37 (2), 1-7.

A magazine article

Hierta, E. (2004, November/December). Rescuing the Reef. *National Parks*, 68, 32-37.

The Research Paper – The Finishing Touches

Newspaper article

Suharto's Successor Faces Same Problems. (2008, May 22). *Calgary Herald*, p. A4.

Electronic Media and On-line sources

Although the APA has not yet set stringent guidelines for the referencing of on-line information, the suggested standards are similar to those of non-periodicals and periodicals. The author of the source and the location of the information must be identified. As technology changes rapidly, the requirements for documenting electronic media may adapt as well.

Note: Use caution when relying on from the Internet. Remember that anyone, regardless of his or her qualifications, can publish information on the World Wide Web.

General Pattern:

Name, A. A. (2008) . Article title. *Periodical Name* [On-line] , xx. Available: Specify path [Date accessed].

Do not end this citation with a period as it may be misinterpreted as part of the site address.

Individual Work on CD-ROM

Kanamine, L. (2003). Farm Belt Sinking into Debt. *USA Today*, [CD-ROM]. 2 Available: con.text systems [2008, May 12].

Article from Online encyclopedia

Titanic. (2004-2008). In Britannica online [Online]. Available: <http://titanic.eb.com/> [2008, May 31].

Newspaper Article on Internet

McFarland, J. (2006, February 22). Are Companies Immoral – or do They just make Bad Choices? 16 paragraphs. *The Globe and Mail*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.kellogg.nwu.edu/ext-rel/clippinng/9622gam.htm> [2008, May 21].

The Research Paper – The Finishing Touches

Journal Article on Internet

Rollin, B. (2007). Send in the Clones - Don't Bother They're Here. *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* [Online] 10, 1. Available: <http://www.wkap.nl/sampletoc.htm?0893-4282+10+1+1997> [2008, June 13].

Abstract on Internet

Kudlicka, K., Lee, J.H., & Brown, R.M. Jr. (2006). A comparative analysis of invitro cellulose synthesis from cell-free extracts of mung bean (*vigna radiata*, Fabaceae) and cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*, Malvaceae). [Online]. *American Journal of Botany*, 83. Abstract no. 174. Available: <http://bluebonnet.pai.utexas.edu/facstaff/facpages/mbrown/papers/170.htm> [May 29, 2008].

Individual Work Online

Bartlett, J. (2001). Familiar quotations (9th ed.). [Online]. Available: <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/bartlett/bart100.html> [2008, June 1].

Discussion Lists, Electronic Bulletin Boards, and e-mail

Since these items are generally not retrievable, they are cited as personal communication in your parenthetical references within the text. They are not cited in your reference list.

(M. Smith, personal communication, May 16, 1998)

Conclusion

This booklet provides guidance and direction once the first draft of a report has been written. It helps the student progress through the revision and editing of several more drafts towards the finished product. In addition, clear guidelines are presented for the consistent documentation and format of papers at Olds College.

References

In addition to the following Reference List, a reference list has been included in the appendices in which several references are mentioned as suggested further reading. Those who experience difficulties in writing would do well to refer to the writing handbooks and the University of Victoria's online writer's guide.

The Research Paper – The Finishing Touches

References

American Psychological Association. (1994). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Thomas, L. (1988). Altruism. In S. Norton & N. Waldman (Eds.), *Canadian Content* (pp. 249-253). Toronto: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Trudeau, P.E.(1988). The ascetic in a canoe. In S. Norton & N. Waldman (Eds.), *Canadian Content* (pp. 271-274). Toronto: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

APPENDICES

Revision Checklist

Content and Organization

1. The document is addressed to a specific audience.
2. The subject is significant.
3. The topic is of an appropriate scope (neither too broad, nor too narrow).
4. The topic is stated in a clear, supportable thesis.
5. Nothing should be added, cut out or moved.

Paragraphs

1. The main point of each paragraph develops and supports the thesis.
2. Each paragraph has no more than one main idea.
3. Each paragraph has a topic sentence, adequate supporting details, and a conclusion.
4. The best order has been chosen for the main points.

Sentences

1. Sentences are clearly worded.
2. Transitional words are used to connect ideas.
3. The tone is appropriate.
4. There is not an overuse of jargon.
5. More words than necessary are not used to express thoughts.
6. There are no redundancies.
7. Colloquialisms do not appear in the report.

Editing Checklist

Sentence Structure

- 1. There are no sentence fragments.**
- 2. There are no comma splices.**
- 3. There are no run on sentences.**
- 4. There are no modifier errors.**
- 5. There are no errors in parallelism.**

Grammar

- 1. All verbs agree with their subjects.**
- 2. All pronouns agree with their antecedents.**
- 3. There are no shifts in verb tense or person.**

Punctuation

- 1. Each sentence ends with an appropriate end mark.**
- 2. Commas, colons, and semicolons are used correctly.**
- 3. Dashes, parentheses, and slashes are not overused and are used correctly.**
- 4. Quotation marks are used correctly.**
- 5. Apostrophes are used properly.**

Spelling

- 1. All words are spelled correctly.**
- 2. Words that sound alike are used correctly.**
- 3. Contractions are not used in formal work.**

Format

- 1. Numbers, formulas, and equations are used properly.**
- 2. References are documented according to APA standards.**
- 3. Document is formatted properly according to instructor and APA guidelines.**

References

American Psychological Association. (1994). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Hacker, D. (1990). *A Canadian Writer's Reference*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada.

Lunsford A., Connors, R., & Segal J. (1991). *The St. Martin's Handbook for Canadians*. Scarborough: Nelson Canada.

Department of English. (August 25, 1977). The University of Victoria hypertext writer's guide. [Online] Available:
<http://webserver.maclab.comp.uvic.ca/writersguide/welcome.html> (June 12, 1998).