

Writing Style and Formatting

Writing Tips

1. You may find it easier to begin writing by creating a detailed outline first. Expand the outline to formulate the first draft of your paper. This will help you to organize your ideas.
2. Be sure that you cite each reference used within the text in the reference list. Also check that you have used in the text each reference appearing in the final list. If you are unsure about how to cite a reference, include all possible information that may be needed. It can be useful to compile reference information on index cards or in an electronic reference manager to keep track of them. It is better to have the information on hand than to have to go back and track down the information when you are ready to compile your reference list. Include all authors' names; title of article or book chapter; title of book or periodical containing the article; year of publication; publisher; pages of article or chapter.
3. All references should be in alphabetical order, using the surname of the first author.
4. Once you have written the first draft of your manuscript, put it away for a few days. Review it after you have taken a break from working on it. It will be easier for you to identify areas that are not stated the way you wanted or that are missing.
5. After you have written the second draft and are comfortable with it (or don't know where to go next), select a few people to read your manuscript for a constructive critique. Select someone whom you feel will give you an honest and objective opinion. Be prepared for the reviewer to suggest a lot of changes. If the person suggests no changes, choose another reviewer.
6. Avoid wordiness and redundancy. Saying something in different ways in different sentences and in different paragraphs will not help to get your point across.
7. Avoid using "we" or "you" collectively to address the reader. Using "I" or "we" is acceptable when referring to yourself as the author(s), but this should be used sparingly.
8. Spell out what an abbreviation stands for the first time it is used in the text and include the abbreviation in parentheses after it. Thereafter, use the acronym on its own. For example: "American Nurses Association (ANA)" on first reference; "ANA" on subsequent references. If a term is used only once in the chapter text, do not use an abbreviation at all. Judicious use of abbreviations is recommended to enhance readability of the text.
9. Use a final serial comma (i.e., place a comma after the next-to-last object, action, etc., in a series; Oxford comma). In addition, a comma should precede and, but, or, nor, for, so, although, yet, and other connectives when they link independent clauses (i.e., clauses that could be written separately).
10. For direct quotations in the text, specify the exact page number for the quote and use "p." if one page of the publication is noted; use "pp." if more than one is noted.

11. For specific questions not addressed in this tip sheet, see *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020; 7th ed.) and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2017; 17th ed.).

ONS Style Guide Selections

These select entries from the ONS style guide are intended to help with writing style and word choice.

above Avoid using in the following way: “The discussion above addressed the different reasons for . . .” Often, the text being referred to does not actually appear “above” in a layout.

below Avoid using in the following way: “The discussion below addresses the different reasons for . . .” Often, the text being referred to does not actually appear “below” in a layout.

cancer/oncology patient Do not use “cancer patient” or “oncology patient”—refer to either as a “patient with cancer.” The same holds for “patient with AIDS,” “patient with leukemia,” “patient undergoing BMT,” etc. Put the patient, not the disease first. However, symptoms or descriptions may appear first; for example, “older adult patients,” “terminally ill patients,” “neutropenic patients with cancer,” and “hospitalized patients” are fine.

due to This should only be used as an adjective, not an adverb. Replace with “because of” or something equally suitable, if possible.

elderly Use “older adult” instead.

geriatric Only use when referring to a geriatric population or geriatric nursing. When referring to patients, rewrite to older adult.

grade Not “Grade.” Typically use Arabic numerals (grade 1, 2, 3).

he/she, his/her Avoid; use plural pronouns. “He or she” and “his or her” should be used sparingly. Make sure that pronouns used match the pronouns of the people being described. See APA § 5.5.

impact, impactful Guidance from Chicago Manual of Style (§ 5.250): “Resist using impact as a verb. Try affect or influence instead. Besides being hyperbolic, impact is still considered a solecism by traditionalists (though it is gaining ground). Avoid impactful, which is jargon (replacements include “influential” and “powerful”).

Institute of Medicine In March 2016, IOM changed its name to the Health and Medicine Division of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Reports issued prior to June 30, 2015, will continue to be cited as IOM reports in perpetuity. Also, ONS style will be to cite by the report’s individual authors/editors (if listed), rather than IOM as the author.

Oncology Nursing Foundation Note the name change; new URL of www.onfgivesback.org. When shortening the name on subsequent mentions, use “Foundation” rather than ONF (to avoid confusion with *Oncology Nursing Forum*).

opioid Use instead of “opiate.” Opioid is the broader term, whereas opiate is limited to drugs derived directly from the poppy plant.

over With numbers, use “more than.”

pronouns Do not refer to the pronouns that transgender and gender-nonconforming people use as “preferred pronouns” because this implies a choice about one’s gender. Use the terms “identified pronouns,” “self-identified pronouns,” or “pronouns” instead. See APA § 5.5.

race/ethnicity In general, defer to author’s wording and query for clarification as needed. Be sure that the racial and ethnic categories you use are as clear and specific as possible. Capitalize Black/White if used. See APA § 5.7 for a general discussion and treatment of specific terms.

singular they/their The use of the singular “they” is inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender. Use the singular “they” to refer to a person who uses “they” as their pronoun. Also use “they” as a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context of the usage. See APA § 4.18. Example: “Each participant turned in their questionnaire,” “Jamie shared their experiences as a genderqueer person,” “A child should learn to play by themselves [or themselves] as well as with friends,” “Rowan, a transgender person, helped themselves [or themselves] to the free coffee.”

United States/U.S. Use United States as the noun and U.S. as the modifier. Example: in the United States; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Do not use “United States of America”; “USA”; “U.S.A.”; “US”; etc.

zeros Do not use double zeros after numbers denoting a time or a monetary amount (Yes: \$25, \$100, 3 pm, 6 am; No: \$25.00, \$100.00, 3:00 pm, 6:00 am). Do not use trailing zeros (Yes: 1, 1.5; No: 1.0, 1.50). Do use a leading zero before a decimal (Yes: 0.59; No: .59).

Text Formatting

Identifying headings and subheadings:

- First-level headings are bold and centered.
- Second-level headings are bold and flush left.
- Third-level headings are italicized and flush left.

In-text citations are included for all statistics, dosages, and references made to the work of or reported by another author. Use primary references whenever possible. These should match the reference list.

Use of generic drug names is preferred. If a brand name is required, it should appear in parentheses (with applicable TM or ®) after the generic name.

Indicate the placement of tables and figures with a callout (**See Table 3-1**) in the text. Do not place the table or figure in the text at that point. Tables and figures should appear separately after the references.

Tables and Figures

For tables and figures with information from references but not directly reprinted, include “*Note*. Based on information from [references].” at the bottom of the table/figure.

For figures with photographs or graphics, digital images must be high resolution (300 dpi or higher) in TIFF, EPS, or JPEG format. Image files should be included separately, not only placed in the Word file. Captions should reflect the source: “Image courtesy of [person or organization]. Used with permission.” Include any specific information required in permission letters.

Place all tables and figures at the end of the document **after the references**. Indicate the number of the table or figure and number them consecutively throughout the chapter. Tables and figures are numbered separately (Figure 1-1; Table 1-1). Please make sure the numbers correspond to the callouts in the text.