Writing Style Errors
for papers submitted in Dr. Doverspike’s graduate classes
Academic Year 2018-2019
(Revised 10-23-19)

Listed by the numbers as they appear on the APA Style Checklist, these errors are the most common style errors made on graduate students’ papers. Based on the Top 10 errors on graduate school papers for each of three semesters, these errors account for more than 95% of text edits and style errors. None of the errors are unique to APA style, but all of them are addressed in most American English style guides, such as Plain English handbook (Walsh & Walsh, 1959), English Grammar and Composition (Warriner et al., 1977), Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press, 2002), and Elements of Style (Strunk & White, 2009).

14. A term to be abbreviated must, on its first appearance, be written out completely and followed immediately by its abbreviation in parentheses (or, if already in parentheses, in brackets). Thereafter, use the abbreviation (APA, 2010, p. 173; APA, 2020, p. 173).
17. Use a comma, which is known as the Oxford comma or serial comma, between elements (including a comma before the conjunction “and” and “or”) in a series of three or more items (APA, 2010, p. 89; APA, 2020, p. 155).
20. Use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction (APA, 2010, p. 89; APA, 2020, p. 155).
27. Each pronoun should refer clearly to its antecedent and should agree with the antecedent in number and gender (APA, 2010, p. 79; APA, 2020, p. 120).
28. Verify noun-pronoun agreement so that nouns and pronouns agree in number. For example, use a singular pronoun when referring to an antecedent singular noun (APA, 2010, p. 79). As of October 1, 2019, APA (2020, pp. 120–121) endorses the singular use of “they” in some circumstances. See APA Style website for details.
32. Write the word for any number below 10, and use numerals for any number 10 or above. If beginning a sentence with a number, always spell out the number with a word (APA, 2010, pp. 111–112; APA, 2020, pp. 178–179).
40. In text citations, use ampersand (&) inside parentheses and use conjunction (i.e., and) outside of parentheses (APA, 2010, p. 175; APA, 2020, p. 266).
43. Direct quotations must be accurate (APA, 2010, p. 172; APA, 2020, p. 274), or square brackets (not parentheses) must be used to enclose material such as an addition or explanation inserted in a quotation (APA, 2010, p. 94; APA, 2020, p. 275).
46. All quotes require that the page number (or paragraph number if there is no pagination) of the quote be specified (APA, 2010, pp. 92, 171; APA, 2020, p. 270).
51. All text citations in the text should also be included as reference entries, and vice versa (APA, 2010, p. 174; APA, 2020, p. 257).
55. Titles of books and periodicals are italicized. Within the body of a paper, use non-italicized sentence case for titles of books and journals (APA, 2010, p. 101; APA, 2020, p. 294). In references, use italicized sentence case for titles of books and use italicized title case for titles of journals (APA, 2010, p. 185; APA, 2020, p. 270). Use non-italicized sentence case for titles of articles. See the examples below:

This sentence is written in non-italicized sentence case.
This sentence is written in italicized sentence case.
This Sentence is Written in Italicized Title Case.

References

References for the above citations are contained in the APA Style Checklist.