

HOW TO BE A BETTER WRITER:

William Doverspike, Ph.D.

Drdoverspike.com

770-913-0506

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA; 2020, p. 126) contains three basic strategies for achieving professional and effective communication: (1) write from an outline, (2) put aside the first draft, then reread it later, and (3) ask a colleague to review and critique the draft for you. In addition to these recommendations, the list below contains some other strategies that help good writers become better.

Begin writing something the first day. Even if it is no more than a thought, writing at least one sentence or line will get a writing task started. Starting with a title is fine, even if your final title is something entirely different.

Practice good time management. It has been said that procrastination is the thief of time. Most people over-estimate how much they can write in a short period of time and they grossly under-estimate how much they can write over a long period of time.

Begin in the middle of the paper. Many novice writers assume they must start a paper at the beginning. However, good writers begin their writing by simply starting somewhere, and this writing eventually ends up being placed somewhere in the middle of the paper. It is one of the biggest advantages of using modern text editors rather than old typewriters of the past.

Practice task management. Any task is easier when it is broken down into its component elements. Break down your writing into smaller units and working on some part of the article or paper each day.

Write a reference page first. One way to get started is to begin making a list of the references that you read. This practice gets you started with something. It allows you to have more time to proof-read references each time the paper is reviewed.

Check your writing using SCOPE. Ask yourself these questions: (1) **Spelling:** Are my words spelled correctly? (2) **Capitalization:** Have I capitalized all appropriate words? (3) **Order of words:** Is my word order correct? (4) **Punctuation:** Did I use punctuation? (5) **Expression of complete thoughts:** Is my sentence a complete thought?

Use another set of eyes. Even the best writers desensitize to minor errors that can be seen by someone else. Good writers always have their writing proof read and edited by a better writer.

Use a self-imposed deadline. Good writers set self-imposed deadlines that are dated before the actual deadline. By doing so, they avoid the inevitable *deadline crisis* that typically occurs with procrastinators. A *deadline crisis* is an unforeseen event that occurs on the day the assignment is due.

References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

Documentation

Correct Citation for Reference Entry

The reference entry correct citation styles for this document are illustrated below. Students should defer to the style preferences of their individual course instructors to determine whether the course instructor has preferences that are more specific than those shown below:

American Psychological Association

Doverspike, W. F. (2016, August 19). *How to be a better writer*. <https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

Chicago Manual of Style / Kate Turabian

Doverspike, William, "How to be a Better Writer," August 19, 2016. <https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

Note: According to the Chicago Manual of Style, blog posts are typically not included in bibliographies, but can be cited in the running text and/or notes. However, if a blog is cited frequently, you may include it in the bibliography.

Modern Language Association

Doverspike, William F. "How to be a Better Writer" August 19, 2016 [Date accessed]

Note: MLA guidelines assume that readers can track down most online sources by entering the author, title, or other identifying information in a search engine or a database. Consequently, MLA does not require a URL in citations for online sources such as websites. However, some instructors still ask for it, so check with your instructor to determine his or her preference.

This document is cross-referenced to a portable document file (PDF) published from this Word document file: How to Be a Better Reader.doc

Server path:

https://drwilliamdoverspike.com/files/how_to_be_a_better_writer.pdf

Server file name:

how_to_be_a_better_writer.pdf

Website tab: Practice

Link name: How to Be a Better Writer

Workshop Presentation Deck: N/A

Webinar Presentation Deck: N/A

Workshop Handouts: N/A

Published August 19, 2016 | Updated Jan. 01, 2025

Copyright © 2016 by William F. Doverspike, Ph.D.

The correct citation for this article is Doverspike, W. F. (2016, August 19). *How to be a better writer*. <http://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>