

Writing Tips for MM 350

Appearance and Readability

Use a proportional serif typeface such as Bookman, Palatino, or Baskerville for body text. Don't use several typefaces—one or two should be sufficient. Select a type size of 12 or 14. Margins should be one to 1.25 inches (this document has 1-1/4 " margins).

Make section headers distinct by using bold or italic style or by using a slightly larger size.

Spelling and Grammar

Use the spell-checker with care. Spell checkers can only guess what to suggest for an unrecognizable word. If you reflexively accept suggested changes your writing may become gibberish. For example, MS-Word suggests "rusted" for "Rumsfeld" and "drum" for "cd-rom." If you don't know how to spell something, don't be afraid to look it up (in a bound dictionary).

On the subject of looking things up, use caution with the Thesaurus. The words listed in a thesaurus entry are *near-synonyms*, but may be very inappropriate for your context. Never apply a substitution unless you genuinely understand it, or you may accidentally say something absurd. The thesaurus lists "idiom" as a synonym for "term," but it would be idiotic to call your work an "idiom paper."

Read your work (or have someone else read it) to detect words that are spelled correctly but are still wrong—for instance "cart" instead of "cast."

Make sure verbs and subjects agree (in other words, don't write "Make sure that verbs and subjects agrees").

Remember that "their" is a possessive pronoun, "there" is a place and "they're" is the contraction for "they are." Remember also that possessive pronouns do not use apostrophes—its, his, hers, ours, etc. "It's" is the contraction of "it is."

Citing Works

You should support statements you make by citing the authority (author) who presented the idea. Avoid doing this by quoting everything—your writing should be *your* summary of what others have done and said. If you use too many quotations, the cited authors take over and your voice is lost. If you state some finding or idea from another author you need to identify the author and the date of publication. Here are examples of two forms for this:

Some researchers have found evidence that the use of electric shock as feedback in instructional software resulted in increased performance (de Sade & Kinkle, 1983).

Beetlebrow (1991) experimented with chocolate keyboards for labs used by compulsive dieters.

If you do need to quote an author directly, make it clear that it is a quote. If it is short, put it in quotes; if it is a full sentence or more, put it in a block. In either

case, follow it with the date and page number, and the author's name as well if that did not precede the quote. For example:

According to Hufflewist (1989), "Images are no more important in a multimedia product than are odors" (p. 32)

Opinions concerning bandwidth problems range widely, even as far as the startling statement that "the primary cause of lengthy download times for web pages can frequently be attributed to the action of goblins pinching the cables where they pass under streets." (Kiraqpot, 1993, p. 276)

A block quote, which may be used for complete statements, assumes a form that dispenses with quotation marks:

Van der Poot (1997) found that:

Immersing students in great tubs of water while presenting the experimental lesson not only failed to result in the quality of learning that immersion in the material did, but also made them very soggy and invariably resulted in increased drop-out rates. (p. 314)

Once again, remember to limit the use of direct quotation, and to always cite the source for any idea, quoted or not. Failure to cite is plagiarism. It is also plagiarism to paraphrase another author's work, matching the gross structure but replacing key words with synonyms.

One last comment about quotes—sometimes it's tempting to use many quotes to bolster your point. This is not a good idea. Quotations are used in writing like spices in cooking—a little goes a long way. Your voice will get lost in the clamor of all the cited authors if you overdo it. You are the author of your work, so you should introduce the ideas. For this reason, it is generally not a good idea to use a citation or quote to begin a paragraph. Finally, don't give an author the last word by ending a section of your paper with a quotation.

Reference Lists

Each cited source must appear in an alphabetized reference list at the end of the paper. (If this sounds like a pain, think what it was like before word-processing software!) There are different formats to use depending on the source. Each format presents critical information in a standard format. Sources may be articles from publications, chapters from books, books, or web sites (among others).

References include the author(s), the year published, the title, and other information. Names are given last name, initial(s). No personal titles are included. Here is a reference for a journal article. The title of the article is in sentence case, with only the first word and any word following a colon capitalized. The name of the Journal is in title case, and the reference shows publication data and page numbers.

Van der Poot, H. (1997). Hydroimmersive technologies in the middle school classroom: Keeping young learners wet behind the ears. *Journal of Inventive Waste of Grant Dollars* (4) 2. pp. 302—319.

Notice that the journal is shown in italics.

References for book chapters include the editor's name and the publisher of the book. Here is an example:

Grindelhook, R. & Spleenpang, J. (1995). Toward a new theory for dissecting instructional visuals. In D. G. Gloomypaws & R. E. Fangbottom (Eds.), *Social deconstruction of just about everything*, Darkmoor, UK: Firedoom Press.

In this reference, the book title is in italics, but sentence case. The editors's names are listed next, and then the city and state (or nation) of the publishing house, followed by the publisher's name,

The final example here is a book. Book references include the title and publisher information:

Kiraqpot, X. (1993). *Supernatural causation in the technological world: The truth revealed*. Slippery Brains, PA: Weerdnut and Sons, Inc.

Check the reference lists of papers you are reading for additional insights about the citation and reference game. You can also find more info about citation in general, including citing and referencing electronic materials, at:

<http://apastyle.apa.org/>

<http://www.apastyle.org/electref.html>

<http://www.wooster.edu/psychology/apa-crib.html>