

The importance for early mastery of APA: a doctoral journey

Abstract

Scholarly writing is a means to express ourselves in a way that both pushes the threshold of our knowledge while remaining tangible to the knowledge humanity has accrued thus far. Although we may be passionate about our ideas, to be a scholar, our writing must be well grounded. Only when we have presented our theories in such a methodological way, can we indeed call our work academic writing. It is further important for everyone who writes academically to follow specific standardized procedures to assure we are unambiguous in our wording and overall clarity to the point. There must be a level of consistency for knowledge to run smoothly from its roots to upon the shoulders of the giant we stand.

Keywords: English for academic purpose, effective communication, faculty development, students of higher-learning, educational support

Volume 9 Issue 5 - 2018

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Received: February 04, 2018 | **Published:** October 16, 2018

Short communication

Is it possible to write academically with the same passion as a short story? Why are academic papers littered with names and dates? In fact, there are several specific reasons for the way academic papers are organized. Moreover, this organization is not meant to encumber the ability of writers to express them. In fact, with a skilled and mindful approach, writers can meet all the intrinsic needs of articulating their thoughts while following the speculative rules of writing publishable work. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how a technical understanding of scholarly writing can be used to enhance one's rhetoric rather than hindering it.

It is true that a continuous read can be impeded when having academic references throughout, but they serve a distinct and necessary purpose.¹ First, a citation comes within the reading text. The last name of the author and the date of whose idea it is or the research providing evidence for the claim are put in parenthesis. This alone is not enough to give credit to the author. The writer must also give the further identifying characteristics of the resource from where the idea or research came including a book title, journal name, publisher, the digital object identifier, or other necessary information needed to find the source.² In some situations, a writer may choose to take words verbatim in which case the page number or precise location is also needed. This allows the reader to see the origin of these words with the greatest ease. Most students learn early in their education of the significance to honor the thoughts of someone else by giving credit where it is due; however, the true mastery of citation, quotation, and reference use resides in promoting one's own work as credible.

Respect and credibility are crucial in academic writing. The American Psychological Association (APA) provides a method for academia in all social sciences a means to achieve this goal (2010).² Through in-text citations and quotations in combination with a reference list at the end of an academic paper, we can show respect to the originators of our concepts and borrowed ideas while demonstrating our own credibility. It is important to realize the severity of stealing someone's words or data and using them as our own in the academic crime known as plagiarism. However, it is of further importance to understand that without such scholarly support, our findings would hold little weight in the academic world. Therefore, it is both our

ethical responsibility and in our best interest to cite and reference well-established and current research. Citations provide readers with knowing which words or concepts belong to which contributors in the field. The reference list offers a verifiable linkage to the research and theories that have come before us by giving the needed information to look deeper into the connection. Gaining familiarity and momentum in using APA style as a fundamental framework for expressing one's ideas should be in the forefront of all aspiring scholars.

The APA publication manual covers a vast area of academic writing; within its contents, students can learn everything needed for future writing from grammar and style to statistics and results.² Furthermore, they can understand ethical issues, research methods, and the publication process prior to beginning their doctoral journeys.³ Taking on everything at once can quickly become overwhelming. For this reason, it is practical and efficient for learners to get themselves involved with the mechanics of scholarly writing as early as possible.⁴ Due to the laborious nature of learning the intricate, thorough, and strict rules of APA, a wealth of time and effort is needed to be a competent writer. Nevertheless, this is just the beginning. Understanding the mechanics and structure is necessary, but a well-written paper is an artful craft and takes thoughtful attention from the inner workings of the wholesome design including "literature reviews, careful analyses, and precisely worded descriptions of research methods".⁵ A paper must be clear, flow nicely, and be an overall smooth read. It is easy for writers travelling through the formality of the process to lose touch with their readers. Effective writing, even with its most rigorous academic content, should not come at the cost of one's literary facility and eloquent composition. In fact, it is the marrying of one's own natural prose while adhering to APA guidelines that provides the platform for novice writers to redefine themselves as academic scholars. The lifelong process of academic writing should flow continuously from a child's earliest work throughout primary, secondary, and higher education through the terminal degrees in one's field. After all, the development of the ability to write "is a multifaceted process that requires practice and dedication and goes beyond learning correct grammar and punctuation".⁶ When we have reached the honorable position to share our found knowledge, we are obligated to the receptive minds on the other end to give the finest work we can produce. Above all, we owe it to ourselves.

Once we take the time to explore the entirety of what it means to produce publishable work, we can appreciate the harmonious relationship between all its intricate components. This holistic view is needed for understanding the purpose of the seemingly trivial mechanisms at work. When we circumnavigate the academic writing process, we can see the importance of giving credit to the origin of our ideas while using other sources as evident findings to support our otherwise unsubstantiated claims. While abiding by the rigor of our most esteemed scholarship, it remains ever imperative to deliver our thoughts to the readers as clearly and well-crafted as one would write a letter to a loved one, with the utmost care.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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