

Student Guide to Writing a High-Quality Academic Paper

Follow these guidelines when writing academic papers,
including your Case and SLP assignments.

Developing Your Academic Writing Style

- An effective academic writing style is an essential part of a university education.
- Poorly written papers detract from your ability to effectively share your knowledge and ideas with others, including your professors.
- This guide will help you prepare high-quality papers that are:
 - Logically argued
 - Clearly structured and formatted
 - Written in a professional, academic style

The basic structure of an academic paper includes:

Basic Structure of a Well-Written Paper

Basic Structure: 1. Cover Page

1. Cover page 2. Introduction 3. Body of the paper (which may have subsections) 4. Conclusion 5. Reference page

- The cover page of an academic paper should include the:
 - University name
 - Student's name
 - Assignment title
 - Course number and name
 - Professor's name
 - Date
- Note: Some professors recommend adding the assignment instructions (tasks and/or questions) to the bottom of the cover page to help students make sure they have addressed each part of the assignment.

Basic Structure: 1. Cover Page Example

Basic Structure: 2. Introduction

University Name

Student's Name

Module 1 Case Assignment

Course Number: Course Name

Professor's Name

Date

In the introduction, provide a brief, clear overview of:

1. Each problem or issue that you will discuss
2. The solution to the problem(s) or your response to the issue(s)

3. How you will prove or demonstrate that your solution or response is correct

Tip: Try writing the body of your paper first. Then come back and write the introduction once you know what your paper is about.

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

- The body of the paper is where you discuss the solution to the problem(s) or your response to the issue(s) raised in the assignment.
- After you have read the materials related to the assignment, begin by creating a quick outline:
 - ***What are the main points of your argument?*** Jot them down.
 - Depending on the length of the paper, 3–6 main points should be plenty.
 - If a point is complex, it may have 2 or 3 sub-points. Jot those down as well.
 - Now arrange those points in a logical sequence.
 - Which point needs to be made first because it provides a basis for the points that follow?

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

- For example, “Point A leads to point B, which leads to point C, and when A, B, and C are considered together they mean that the solution is point D.”

Example of the structure of a Case Assignment that requires 4 pages of text

(not including the cover page, and not including a reference page for assignments that require one):

Main Sections	Points	Sub-points	Page #	# of Paragraphs
Cover Page				
Introduction			1	1
Body of Paper	Point A		1	1
"	Point B		2	1
"		Sub-point 1	2	1
"		Sub-point 2	3	1

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

"	Point C		3	1
"	Point D		4	2
Conclusion			4	1
Reference Page				

In the body of your paper:

- **Use headings and subheadings** to help your reader follow the points and sub-points in your discussion and to better organize sections and subsections.
- Give each point and sub-point a short name that tells your reader what that section is about. Use those names for your headings.
- Here is a quick “how-to” guide to headings with links to examples and instructions: <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2011/04/how-to-use-fivelevels-of-heading-in-an-apa-style-paper.html>
- Now you are ready to begin writing the body of your paper.

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

- Discuss one point at a time and explain each point clearly.
- Discuss one point or sub-point in each paragraph.
- As you advance to writing more complex papers (e.g., upper-division undergraduate or master's-level assignments), it may take 2 or 3 paragraphs to fully develop and support a point.

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

In the body of your paper:

- Each paragraph should be made up of approximately 3–5 sentences. (Note: A single sentence is not a paragraph. Break long sentences into 2 or 3 shorter ones.)
 - Each paragraph should include:
 - The point or focus of that paragraph in the first sentence
 - Additional sentences in which you explain, elaborate, and *support* your point (see section on Supporting Your Points that begins on the next slide)
 - A conclusion/transition to the next point and paragraph
 - Each point should be supported by citing and referencing the sources that provide the foundation for your solutions and/or responses. How to do this will be discussed on the next slide.

Supporting Your Points

- What makes an academic paper “academic”? How does an academic

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

paper differ from other types of writing—for example, a short story, a blog, a newspaper article, a business letter, or an e-mail message?

- In an academic paper:
 - You must provide support for each idea, statement, or point that you make that is based on someone else's ideas.
 - Support is provided through citations and references. (References are discussed beginning on Slide 17.) Citations appear within the paper itself wherever you draw upon another person's ideas or another source of information. References are listed on a separate page at the end of your paper.
 - Each citation refers to a specific reference so that your reader can look up the sources of your support and read them for himself or herself.
 - Citations are short and usually only include the author's last name and the date of publication of the author's work, for example, "In a study of K–12 education, Jones (2013) found that..."

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

Citation Examples

- You can cite at the beginning or ending of a sentence:
 - According to Jones (2007), a reason for poor student performance is large classroom size.
 - Student performance decreases as classroom size increases (Jones, 2007).
- When multiple sources support your point, cite them together in alphabetical order at the end of the sentence:
 - Educators agree that large classroom size decreases student performance (Adams, 2005; Jones, 2007; Smith, 2008).
- When a source is written by more than one person, give their last names in the citation at the end of the sentence, like this: (Smith, Adams, & Jones, 2006).
- When there is no author and/or no date (e.g., a Web page), see this example:
<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/web-page-no-author.aspx>

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

Do not spell out the titles and publication details of your sources in the body of your paper. Instead, provide a short citation, and add a full reference with the publication details in your reference list. Interested readers can then find the details about the article in your reference list at the end of your paper.

Wrong:

- The first article that will be discussed is called “The Very Separate Worlds of Academic and Practitioner Periodicals in Human Resource Management” written by Sara Rynes, Tamara Giluk, and Kenneth Brown, which was published in the Academy of Management Journal (2007) Vol 50, No.5, 987-1008. They studied the gap between academic and practitioner knowledge.
 - Note: Do not spell out the title and publication details of your sources in the text. **Right**

(two different ways):

1. Rynes, Giluk, and Brown (2007) found a gap between academic and practitioner knowledge.
 - Note: The authors are the subject of the sentence. This is referred to as an “in-text citation” and includes just the authors’ last names and year of publication.

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

2. A gap was found between academic and practitioner knowledge (Rynes, Giluk, & Brown, 2007).
 - Note: The citation is placed at the end of a sentence in parentheses. This is called a “parenthetical citation.” In this type of citation, use an ampersand (&) instead of “and.”

When should you cite a source?

- When you use your own words in referring to the ideas or concepts of others
- When you use the *exact words* that are written in one of the sources that you read
 - Using someone else’s exact words is called a “quotation.”
 - For quotes of less than 40 words, use quotation marks and follow the quote with a parenthetical citation that includes:
 - The name(s) of the author(s)
 - The year of publication
 - The page number the quote was taken from in the original source— for example:

Basic Structure: 3. Body of the Paper

“Academic and practitioner periodicals in human resource management are worlds apart” (Rynes, Giluk, & Brown, 2010, p. 992).

- Any phrase or quote of *40 or more words* should be separated from the text of your report by single spacing and by indenting from the both right and left margin. This is called an “offset quote.”

Provide Support for Each of Your Points

- Scholarly academic work builds on previous knowledge and recognizes the contributions that others have made to knowledge.
- Providing a citation for each source of information that you use is necessary for at least four reasons:
 - To help your reader understand the foundational information that you used to support your points.
 - To give credit to sources of knowledge and the work of others.
 - To protect the source. If you make a good point but don't cite your sources or indicate direct quotes with quotation marks, the reader will attribute it to you by default.

Basic Structure: 4. Conclusion

- To avoid plagiarism. Incorporating material from outside sources (whether direct quotes or paraphrasing) without proper identification or citation is a form of plagiarism. Never represent the work of another as your own.
- Here is an excellent guide to help you understand plagiarism and how to avoid it (students are strongly encouraged to study it carefully):

University Libraries, University of Missouri (n.d.). *Plagiarism Tutorial*. Retrieved March 1, 2013, at <http://lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>
- In your conclusion:
 - Summarize your argument regarding the solutions/responses that you discussed in the body of your paper, including the most important points you made and how they relate to your overall conclusion.

Basic Structure: 5. References

- **Do not** discuss or raise new issues in the conclusion.
- Limit the conclusion to 1 or 2 paragraphs.
- The reference section, found at the end of the paper, is an alphabetical list of the sources that you used to write your paper.
- Center the word “References” at the top of a new page.
- Starting on the same page, enter a full reference for each citation in your paper. Provide only one reference for each source no matter how many times you cite it in your paper.
 - Each reference should include the following information (so readers can find the source):
 - Author’s last name, first initial, middle initial
 - Year of publication
 - Title of the article, book, or Web page

Basic Structure: 5. References

- Title of the publication where the article was found (If the article is from a journal or newspaper, include the volume and issue number, and the pages where the article is located.)

Reference section formats for different types of sources:

- Article on a Web page with no date:
 - Author last name, first initial, middle initial (publication date). *Title of the article*. Retrieved X date from <http://>
 - Example (note that the second line of the reference is indented five spaces):
Dvoretzky, D. P. (n.d.). History: Pavlov Institute of Physiology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Retrieved March 1, 2013, from http://www.infran.ru/history_eng.htm
- Online newspaper article:
 - Author name (year, month, day of publication). Article title. Newspaper Title. Retrieved X date from <http://>
 - Example (note that the second line of the reference is indented five spaces):
Hilts, P. J. (1999, February 16). In forecasting their emotions, most people flunk out. *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 1, 2013, from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Academic Journal Article:
 - Author name, first initial, middle initial (publication year). Article title. *Journal Title*, vol.

Basic Structure: 5. References

#(issue #), page numbers where the article was found.

- Example (note that the second and third lines of the reference are indented five spaces):
Shapiro, D., Kirkman, B., & Courtney, H. (2007). Perceived causes and solutions of the translation problem in management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2), 249-266.
- Book: Author name (publication year). *Book Title*. Location: Publisher.
 - Example: Fitzgerald, S. P. (2002). *Decision Making*. London: Capstone Publishing, Ltd.

Reference Page Example

References

Allen, G. (1998). *Motivating Supervision*. Retrieved March 1, 2013, from:
<http://www.businessballs.com/mcgregoryxytheorydiagrm.pdf>

Chapman, A. (n.d.). *Adam's Equity Theory*. Retrieved March 1, 2013, from:
<http://www.businessballs.com/adamsequitytheory.htm>

Chapman, A. (n.d.). *Herzberg's Motivation Theory*. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from:
<http://www.businessballs.com/herzberg.htm>

Dreyfack, R. (2004, May). Personalizing productivity. *Supervision*, 65(5), 20-22.

Shapiro, D., Kirkman, B., & Courtney, H. (2007). Perceived causes and solutions of the translation problem in management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2), 249-266.

Notes:

- “n.d.” = no date. Use this for the date when there is no publication date available.
- First line of each reference is at the left margin, and each subsequent line in that same reference is indented 5 spaces (one tab stop).
- Arrange references alphabetically based on last name of the first author of each work.

The Basics of “APA Style”

- When professors ask you to “follow APA style” or “use APA format,” they are referring to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*.
- APA is one of several styles that is used for writing academic papers (MLA is another) and includes extensive details about how to format citations and references.
- APA format is *required* for doctoral students and *recommended* for University master’s and undergraduate students.
- APA helps to provide a common, standard format for academic scholars to follow.
- For additional information and guidance on APA style, here are two excellent resources:
 - The APA Style website at <http://www.apastyle.org> (see the links and tutorials at the bottom of the Web page)
 - The *Purdue Online Writing Lab* (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>) contains extensive, detailed guidance not only on APA format, but also on general

The Basics of “APA Style”

writing, job search writing, and research writing (see the tabs at the top of the Web page).

Set up your paper as follows:

- Set 1-inch margins on all four sides.
- Use 12-point type throughout; don't use different type sizes.
- Double-space the text throughout the paper, including the reference page.
- Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or between headings and paragraphs.
- Use *italics* or **bold** for emphasis, but use them *sparingly* or it becomes too distracting for your reader.

Finalizing Your Paper

Before you submit your assignment:

- **Re-read the assignment instructions and make sure you addressed each one in your paper.**
- **Always** run spelling and grammar check in MS Word before submitting your assignment.
- If you struggle with grammar, or have trouble with sentence and paragraph structure, invite a classmate or colleague with strong English writing skills to proofread your work prior to submission. This process will improve your writing skills.
- Also, consult the *Purdue Online Writing Lab* (OWL) for writing guidance and examples.
- Don't expect overnight miracles. Writing and editing are iterative processes that take ongoing practice, feedback, refinement, and attention to detail—

even for the best writers. Your writing *will improve* as you advance through the program!

