Quick Introduction to APA Style
For Use in Speech-Language Pathology

NOTE: All text is taken from:


Writing Style

“The style requirements in the manual are intended to facilitate clear communication:” (p. 23)

Economy of Expression

Say only what needs to be said. The main causes of uneconomical writing are jargon and wordiness. Jargon is the continuous use of a technical vocabulary even in places where that vocabulary is not relevant. Jargon is also the substitution of an euphemistic phrase for a familiar term (e.g., young male for boy) and you should scrupulously avoid using such jargon.

Wordiness can impede the ready grasp of ideas. Change based on the fact to because, at the present time to now, and for the purpose of to simply for or to.

Redundancy: Writers often become redundant in an effort to be emphatic. Use no more words than are necessary to convey your meaning. In the following examples, the italicized words are redundant and should be omitted:

- They were both alike. One and the same
- A total of 68 participants. In close proximity
- Four different groups saw Completely unanimous
- Instructions which were exactly the same as Just exactly
- Absolutely essential Very close to significance
- Has been previously found The reason is because
- Small in size

Precision and Clarity

Colloquial expressions: Avoid colloquial expressions (e.g., write up for report, quite a large part, practically all, very few to express quantities).

Pronouns: Pronouns confuse readers unless the referent for each pronoun is obvious. Simple pronouns are the most troublesome, especially this, that, these, and those when they refer to a previous sentence. Eliminate ambiguity by writing, for example, this test, that trial, these participants, and those reports.
GRAMMAR

Verbs

Prefer the active voice. Example: Instead of *The experiment was designed by Gould (1994)*, say, *Gould (1994) designed the experiment.*

Use the past tense to express an action or a condition that occurred at a specific, definite time in the past, as when discussing another researcher's work and when reporting your results. Example: Instead of *Ramirez (1993) presents the same results*, say, *Ramirez (1993) presented the same results.*

Agreement of Subject and Verbs

The plural form of some nouns for foreign origin may appear to be singular and can cause authors to select a verb that does not agree in number with the noun:

Example:

- Incorrect: *The data indicates that*
  - Correct: *The data indicate that*

- Incorrect: *The criteria was 90%.*
  - Correct: *The criterion was 90%, or The criteria were 90% and 95%, respectively.*

- Incorrect: *Errored productions include s and z.*
  - Correct: *Erred productions include s and z.*

Pronouns

A pronoun must agree in gender (i.e., masculine, feminine, or neuter) with the noun it replaces. Use *who* for human beings; use *that* or *which* for nonhuman animals (unless they have been named) and for things.

*That* versus *Which*

*That* clauses (called restrictive) are essential to the meaning of the sentence: *The animals that performed well in the first experiment were used in the second experiment.*

*Which* clauses merely can add further information (nonrestrictive)[preferred] or be essential to the meaning (restrictive of the sentence [not preferred]). Nonrestrictive: *The test, which consisted of 8 subtests, indicated that the child was two standard deviations below the norm.*
While and Since

Restricting your use of *while* and *since* to their temporal meaning is helpful.

Use *while* to link events occurring simultaneously; *use although, whereas, and, or but* in place of *while*.

- **Imprecise:** Bragg (1965) found that participants performed well, *while* Bohr (1969) found
- **Precise:** Bragg (1965) found that participants performed well, *whereas* Bohr (1969) found

- **Imprecise:** While these findings are unusual, they are not unique.
- **Precise:** Although these findings are unusual, they are not unique or These findings are unusual, but they are not unique.

*Since* is more precise when it is used to refer only to time (to mean “after that”); otherwise, replace with *because*.

- **Imprecise:** Data for 2 participants were incomplete *since* these participants....
- **Precise:** Data for 2 participants were incomplete *because* these participants...

Between and and

- **Incorrect:** between 2.5-4.0 years of age
- **Correct:** between 2.5 and 4.0 years of age

Both and and

- **Incorrect:** The names were both difficult to pronounce and spell.
- **Correct:** The names were both difficult to pronounce and to spell.

When you develop a clear writing style and use correct grammar, you show concern not only for accurately presenting your knowledge and ideas but also for easing the reader's task.

Avoid words with surplus or unintended meaning (e.g., *cop* for police officer, *kid* for child), which may distract if not actually mislead the reader.
EDITORIAL STYLE

“Editorial style concerns uniform use of punctuation and abbreviations, construction of tables, selection of headings, and citation of references, as well as many other elements that are part of every manuscript”

Punctuation

Use a comma

Between elements (including before and and or) in a series of three or more items.

- Example: An articulation test, a language screening test, and an oral mechanism exam were administered.
- Example: The following were administered: an articulation test, a language screening test, and an oral mechanism exam.

To set off a nonessential or nonrestrictive clause, that is, a clause that embellished a sentence but if removed would leave the grammatical structure and meaning of the sentence intact.

- Example: The articulation test, which was administered by direct imitation, indicated that all final consonants were deleted.

To separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction

- Example: The child’s mother was interviewed, and she reported that….

To set off the year in exact dates

- Example: The child was seen on May 6, 2004 for a speech-language evaluation.

To set off a parenthetical expression or phrase such as however, therefore, such as…

Do not use a comma!

Before an essential or restrictive clause, that is, a clause that limits or defines the material it modifies. Removal of such a clause from the sentence would alter the intended meaning.

- Example: The illness that resulted in his hospitalization was meningitis.

Between the two parts of a compound predicate

- Example: The child’s mother was interviewed and reported that…

To separate parts of measurement

- Example: This 4 year 3 month old boy
**Quotation marks and other punctuation**

When a period or comma occurs with closing quotation marks, place the period or comma before the quotation marks. Put other punctuation (e.g., colon, semicolon) outside quotation marks unless it is part of the quoted material.

- At the beginning of each trial, the experimenter said, "This is a new trial."
- After the experimenter said, "This is a new trial," a new trial began.
- Did the experimenter forget to say, "This is a new trial"?

**Brackets**

Do not use brackets if the material can be set off easily with commas without confounding meaning.

- Unnecessary: (as Imai [2003] later concluded)
- Better: (as Imai, 2003, later concluded)

**Parentheses**

- The author stated, "The effect disappeared within minutes" (Lopez, 1993, p. 311), but she did not say which effect.
- Lopez (1993) found that "the effect disappeared within minutes" (p. 311).

- The patterns were significant (see Figure 5).
- (When a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place punctuation in the sentence inside the parentheses, like this.)
- If only part of a sentence is enclosed in parentheses (like this), place punctuation outside the parentheses (like this).
- To set off letters that identify items in a series within a sentence or paragraph, enclose letter in parentheses
  - **Example:**
    The subject areas included (a) synonyms associated with cultural interactions, (b) descriptors for ethnic group membership, and (c) psychological symptoms and outcomes associated with bicultural adaptation.
Grammatical problem areas

- Whenever possible, write in the active voice, avoid passive voice constructions
- Use formal writing style rather than spoken conversational style (e.g., should have (not should've), they examined or studied the problem (instead of they looked at the problem), report (not write up), the results they obtained (not the results they got), orient (not orientate, which is not a word in English)
- Check for tense agreement within a sentence. Keep to one tense in a paragraph
- Check for subject-verb agreement
- Do not use redundant phrases. You can eliminate the bracketed redundant word in the following examples: The reason is (because)...., summarize (briefly), (completely) unanimous
- Do not split infinitives, (e.g., to analyze statistically, not to statistically analyze)

Problem words

- Plurals of Latin source words (e.g., data is plural, datum is singular; phenomena is plural, phenomenon is singular; criteria is plural, criterion is singular)
- There vs. their (e.g., there are many readers vs. their home belongs to them)
- Use the pronoun who to make reference to humans, and that for non-humans and inanimate objects (e.g., those children who were tested (not that))
- Use the word correlate ONLY to refer to a statistical finding
- Principal vs. principle. (principal = first in rank and importance principle = a rule and adherence to such a rule)
- Effect vs. affect. Effect: as a noun means "result"; as a verb it means "to bring about," to "accomplish." (e.g., the effect of nutritional deprivation was...). Affect: as a verb means to "influence"