

General Writing Resources

If you are having trouble locating a specific resource please visit the [search page](#) or the [Site Map](#).

[The Writing Process](#)

These OWL resources will help you with the writing process: pre-writing (invention), developing research questions and outlines, composing thesis statements, and proofreading. While the writing process may be different for each person and for each particular assignment, the resources contained in this section follow the general work flow of pre-writing, organizing, and revising. For resources and examples on specific types of writing assignments, please go to our Common Writing Assignments area.

[Academic Writing](#)

These OWL resources will help you with the types of writing you may encounter while in college. The OWL resources range from rhetorical approaches for writing, to document organization, to sentence level work, such as clarity. For specific examples of writing assignments, please see our Common Writing Assignments area.

[Common Writing Assignments](#)

These OWL resources will help you understand and complete specific types of writing assignments, such as annotated bibliographies, book reports, and research papers. This section also includes resources on writing academic proposals for conference presentations, journal articles, and books.

[Mechanics](#)

These OWL resources will help you with sentence level organization and style. This area includes resources on writing issues, such as active and passive voice, parallel sentence structure, parts of speech, and transitions.

Exercises relating to spelling can be found [here](#).

Exercises relating to numbering can be found [here](#).

Exercises relating to sentence structure can be found [here](#).

Exercises relating to sentence style can be found [here](#).

[Grammar](#)

These OWL resources will help you use correct grammar in your writing. This area includes resources on grammar topics, such as count and noncount nouns, articles (a versus an), subject-verb agreement, and prepositions.

Grammar-related exercises can be found [here](#).

[Punctuation](#)

These OWL resources will help you with punctuation, such as using commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, and hyphens.

[Visual Rhetoric](#)

These OWL resources will help you understand and work with rhetorical theories regarding visual and graphical displays of information. This area includes resources on analyzing and producing visual rhetoric, working with colors, and designing effective slide presentations.

[Undergraduate Applications](#)

The undergraduate application section contains resources to help you through the process of applying to undergraduate institutions. This section contains an overview of applying to undergraduate institutions, words of advice from undergraduate admissions officials from all over the US, and information on writing effective application essays.

[Graduate School Applications](#)

The graduate school application section contains resources to help you through the process of applying to graduate school. This section contains an overview of applying to graduate school, words of advice on writing graduate school profiles to help with your decision making, drafting a graduate school personal statement, and the etiquette of requesting references.

Please note, that these resources focus on applying to graduate studies programs in the United States. The information contained in these resources may or may not be appropriate to other contexts.

[Personal Correspondence](#)

The resources in this section are dedicated to written personal correspondence. This section discusses personal letter writing and newsletter writing.

[Community Engaged Writing](#)

This section includes resources on community engagement as it relates to writing assignments.

[Media File Index](#)

The resources in this section contain links to all the media files found on the Purdue OWL. In this section, you can click on links that will take you to a resource where you can view or download a PowerPoint presentation or workshop, sample paper, sample employment document, vidcast, podcast, or Flash movie.

[General Writing FAQs](#)

The following FAQs address various general issues concerning writing. The entries in this section are based on frequently asked questions about writing that have been sent to our former team of Purdue OWL Mail Tutors. You should also scan the [General Writing section of the Purdue OWL](#) for answers to your questions.

[Writing Center Directory](#)

Can't find what you're looking for on the OWL? Want some one-on-one help with your writing? Do you prefer talking to a live human instead of reading text on your computer? Check out the [Writing Center Directory](#) to find a Writing Center near you! It contains information about Writing Centers all over the world.

The Writing Process

These OWL resources will help you with the writing process: pre-writing (invention), developing research questions and outlines, composing thesis statements, and proofreading. While the writing process may be different for each person and for each particular assignment, the resources contained in this section follow the general work flow of pre-writing, organizing, and revising. For resources and examples on specific types of writing assignments, please go to our Common Writing Assignments area.

[Writing Task Resource List](#)

This resource will help you find OWL material for the many different kinds of writing tasks you may face in school and in the workplace.

Overview

What kind of writing task do you need to complete? The list below will help you pinpoint the OWL's resources that will be most helpful for you according to the kind of writing you need to accomplish.

If you'd like to see a complete list of our resources, please visit the OWL's [main page](#).

When You're Just Beginning Your Writing Task

- [Understanding Writing Assignments](#)

Understanding Writing Assignments

Summary:

This resource describes some steps you can take to better understand the requirements of your writing assignments. This resource works for either in-class, teacher-led discussion or for personal use.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2018-02-14 03:57:12

How to Decipher the Paper Assignment

Many instructors write their assignment prompts differently. By following a few steps, you can better understand the requirements for the assignment. The best way, as always, is to ask the instructor about anything confusing.

1. **Read the prompt the entire way through once.** This gives you an overall view of what is going on.
2. **Underline or circle the portions that you absolutely must know.** This information may include due date, research (source) requirements, page length, and format (MLA, APA, CMS).
3. **Underline or circle important phrases.** You should know your instructor at least a little by now - what phrases do they use in class? Does he repeatedly say a specific word? If these are in the prompt, you know the instructor wants you to use them in the assignment.

4. **Think about how you will address the prompt.** The prompt contains clues on how to write the assignment. Your instructor will often describe the ideas they want discussed either in questions, in bullet points, or in the text of the prompt. Think about each of these sentences and number them so that you can write a paragraph or section of your essay on that portion if necessary.
5. **Rank ideas in descending order, from most important to least important.** Instructors may include more questions or talking points than you can cover in your assignment, so rank them in the order you think is more important. One area of the prompt may be more interesting to you than another.
6. **Ask your instructor questions if you have any.**

After you are finished with these steps, ask yourself the following:

1. **What is the purpose of this assignment?** Is my purpose to provide information without forming an argument, to construct an argument based on research, or analyze a poem and discuss its imagery?
2. **Who is my audience?** Is my instructor my only audience? Who else might read this? Will it be posted online? What are my readers' needs and expectations?
3. **What resources do I need to begin work?** Do I need to conduct literature (hermeneutic or historical) research, or do I need to review important literature on the topic and then conduct empirical research, such as a survey or an observation? How many sources are required?
4. **Who - beyond my instructor - can I contact to help me if I have questions?** Do you have a writing lab or student service center that offers tutorials in writing?

Examples

(Notes on prompts made in blue)

Poster or Song Analysis: Poster or Song? Poster!

Goals: To systematically consider the rhetorical choices made in either a poster or a song. She says that all the time.

Things to Consider: ah- talking points

Poster:

- how the poster addresses its audience and is affected by context I'll do this first - 1.
- general layout, use of color, contours of light and shade, etc.
- use of contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximity C.A.R.P. They say that, too. I'll do this third - 3.
- the point of view the viewer is invited to take, poses of figures in the poster, etc. any text that may be present
- possible cultural ramifications or social issues that have bearing I'll cover this second - 2.

- ethical implications
- how the poster affects us emotionally, or what mood it evokes
- the poster's implicit argument and its effectiveness said that was important in class, so I'll discuss this last - 4.

Song:

- how the song addresses its audience
- lyrics: how they rhyme, repeat, what they say
- use of music, tempo, different instruments
- possible cultural ramifications or social issues that have bearing
- ethical implications
- emotional effects
- the implicit argument and its effectiveness

These thinking points are not a step-by-step guideline on how to write your paper; instead, they are various means through which you can approach the subject. I do expect to see at least a few of them addressed, and there are other aspects that may be pertinent to your choice that have not been included in these lists. You will want to find a central idea and base your argument around that. Additionally, you must include a copy of the poster or song that you are working with. Really important!

I will be your audience. This is a formal paper, and you should use academic conventions throughout.

Length: 4 pages Format: Typed, double-spaced, 10-12 point Times New Roman, 1 inch margins I need to remember the format stuff. I messed this up last time =(

Academic Argument Essay

5-7 pages, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins.

Minimum of five cited sources: 3 must be from academic journals or books

- Design Plan due: Thurs. 10/19
- Rough Draft due: Monday 10/30
- Final Draft due: Thurs. 11/9

Remember this! I missed the deadline last time

The design plan is simply a statement of purpose, as described on pages 40-41 of the book, and an outline. The outline may be formal, as we discussed in class, or a printout of an Open Mind project. It must be a minimum of 1 page typed information, plus 1 page outline.

This project is an expansion of your opinion editorial. While you should avoid repeating any of your exact phrases from Project 2, you may reuse some of the same ideas. Your topic should be similar. You must use research to support your position, and you must also demonstrate a fairly thorough knowledge of any opposing position(s). 2 things to do - my position and the opposite.

Your essay should begin with an introduction that encapsulates your topic and indicates 1 the general trajectory of your argument. You need to have a discernable thesis that appears early in your paper. Your conclusion should restate the thesis in different words, 2 and then draw some additional meaningful analysis out of the developments of your argument. Think of this as a "so what" factor. What are some implications for the future, relating to your topic? What does all this (what you have argued) mean for society, or for the section of it to which your argument pertains? A good conclusion moves outside the topic in the paper and deals with a larger issue.

You should spend at least one paragraph acknowledging and describing the opposing position in a manner that is respectful and honestly representative of the opposition's 3 views. The counterargument does not need to occur in a certain area, but generally begins or ends your argument. Asserting and attempting to prove each aspect of your argument's structure should comprise the majority of your paper. Ask yourself what your argument assumes and what must be proven in order to validate your claims. Then go step-by-step, paragraph-by-paragraph, addressing each facet of your position. Most important part!

Finally, pay attention to readability. Just because this is a research paper does not mean that it has to be boring. Use examples and allow your opinion to show through word choice and tone. Proofread before you turn in the paper. Your audience is generally the academic community and specifically me, as a representative of that community. Ok, They want this to be easy to read, to contain examples I find, and they want it to be grammatically correct. I can visit the tutoring center if I get stuck, or I can email the OWL Email Tutors short questions if I have any more problems.

- [Prewriting \(Invention\)](#)

Introduction to Prewriting (Invention)

Summary:

This section explains the prewriting (invention) stage of the composing process. It includes processes, strategies, and questions to help you begin to write.

Contributors: Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2011-06-08 02:40:36

When you sit down to write...

- Does your mind turn blank?
- Are you sure you have nothing to say?

If so, you're not alone. Many writers experience this at some time or another, but some people have strategies or techniques to get them started. When you are planning to write something, try some of the following suggestions.

You can try the textbook formula:

1. State your thesis.
2. Write an outline.
3. Write the first draft.
4. Revise and polish.

... but that often doesn't work.

Instead, you can try one or more of these strategies:

Ask yourself what your purpose is for writing about the subject.

There are many "correct" things to write about for any subject, but you need to narrow down your choices. For example, your topic might be "dorm food." At this point, you and your potential reader are asking the same question, "So what?" Why should you write about this, and why should anyone read it?

Do you want the reader to pity you because of the intolerable food you have to eat there?

Do you want to analyze large-scale institutional cooking?

Do you want to compare Purdue's dorm food to that served at Indiana University?

Ask yourself how you are going to achieve this purpose.

How, for example, would you achieve your purpose if you wanted to describe some movie as the best you've ever seen? Would you define for yourself a specific means of doing so? Would your comments on the movie go beyond merely telling the reader that you really liked it?

Start the ideas flowing

Brainstorm. Gather as many good and bad ideas, suggestions, examples, sentences, false starts, etc. as you can. Perhaps some friends can join in. Jot down everything that comes to

mind, including material you are sure you will throw out. Be ready to keep adding to the list at odd moments as ideas continue to come to mind.

Talk to your audience, or pretend that you are being interviewed by someone — or by several people, if possible (to give yourself the opportunity of considering a subject from several different points of view). What questions would the other person ask? You might also try to teach the subject to a group or class.

See if you can find a fresh analogy that opens up a new set of ideas. Build your analogy by using the word like. For example, if you are writing about violence on television, is that violence like clowns fighting in a carnival act (that is, we know that no one is really getting hurt)?

Take a rest and let it all percolate.

Summarize your whole idea.

Tell it to someone in three or four sentences.

Diagram your major points somehow.

Make a tree, outline, or whatever helps you to see a schematic representation of what you have. You may discover the need for more material in some places. Write a first draft.

Then, if possible, put it away. Later, read it aloud or to yourself as if you were someone else. Watch especially for the need to clarify or add more information.

You may find yourself jumping back and forth among these various strategies.

You may find that one works better than another. You may find yourself trying several strategies at once. If so, then you are probably doing something right.

- [Writer's Block/Writer's Anxiety](#)

Symptoms and Cures for Writer's Block

Summary:

Help in overcoming writer's block and a short series of exercises to get you writing.

Contributors: Sean M. Conrey, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2011-07-06 10:03:26

Because writers have various ways of writing, a variety of things can cause a writer to experience anxiety, and sometimes this anxiety leads to writer's block. Often a solution can be found by speaking with your instructor (if you are in school), or a writing tutor. There are some common causes of writer's block, however, and when you are blocked, consider these causes and try the strategies that sound most promising:

Symptom

You have attempted to begin a paper without doing any preliminary work such as brainstorming or outlining...

Possible Cures

- Use [invention strategies](#) suggested by a tutor or teacher
- Write down all the primary ideas you'd like to express and then fill in each with the smaller ideas that make up each primary idea. This can easily be converted into an [outline](#)

Symptom

You have chosen or been assigned a topic which bores you....

Possible Cures

- Choose a particular aspect of the topic you are interested in (if the writing situation will allow it...i.e. if the goal of your writing can be adjusted and is not given to you specifically, or if the teacher or project coordinator will allow it)
- Talk to a tutor about how you can personalize a topic to make it more interesting

Symptom

You don't want to spend time writing or don't understand the assignment...

Possible Cures

- Resign yourself to the fact that you have to write
- Find out what is expected of you (consult a teacher, textbook, student, tutor, or project coordinator)
- Look at some of the strategies for writing anxiety listed below

Symptom

You are anxious about writing the paper...

Possible Cures

- Focus your energy by rehearsing the task in your head.
- Consciously stop the non-productive comments running through your head by replacing them with productive ones.
- If you have some "rituals" for writing success (chewing gum, listening to jazz etc.), use them.

Symptom

You are so stressed out you can't seem to put a word on the page...

Possible Cures

- Stretch! If you can't stand up, stretch as many muscle groups as possible while staying seated.
- Try tensing and releasing various muscle groups. Starting from your toes, tense up for perhaps five to ten seconds and then let go. Relax and then go on to another muscle group.
- Breathe deeply. Close your eyes; then, fill your chest cavity slowly by taking four or five short deep breaths. Hold each breath until it hurts, and then let it out slowly.
- Use a calming word or mental image to focus on while relaxing. If you choose a word, be careful not to use an imperative. Don't command yourself to "Calm down!" or "Relax!"

Symptom

You're self-conscious about your writing, you may have trouble getting started. So, if you're preoccupied with the idea that you have to write about a subject and feel you probably won't express yourself well...

Possible Cures

- Talk over the subject with a friend or tutor.
 - assure yourself that the first draft doesn't have to be a work of genius, it is something to work with.
 - Force yourself to write down something, however poorly worded, that approximates your thought (you can revise this later) and go on with the next idea.
 - Break the task up into steps. Meet the general purpose first, and then flesh out the more specific aspects later.
 - Try one of the strategies on the next page of this resource.
-
- [Developing an Outline](#)

Four Main Components for Effective Outlines

Summary:

This resource describes why outlines are useful, what types of outlines exist, suggestions for developing effective outlines, and how outlines can be used as an invention strategy for writing.

Contributors: Elyssa Tardiff, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2018-01-24 02:25:28

Ideally, you should follow the four suggestions presented here to create an effective outline. When creating a topic outline, follow these two rules for capitalization: For first-level heads, present the information using all upper-case letters; and for secondary and tertiary items, use upper and lower-case letters. The examples are taken from the [Sample Outline](#) handout.

Parallelism—How do I accomplish this?

Each heading and subheading should preserve parallel structure. If the first heading is a verb, the second heading should be a verb. Example:

- I. CHOOSE DESIRED COLLEGES
- II. PREPARE APPLICATION

("Choose" and "Prepare" are both verbs. The present tense of the verb is usually the preferred form for an outline.)

Coordination—How do I accomplish this?

All the information contained in Heading 1 should have the same significance as the information contained in Heading 2. The same goes for the subheadings (which should be less significant than the headings). Example:

1. VISIT AND EVALUATE COLLEGE CAMPUSES
2. VISIT AND EVALUATE COLLEGE WEBSITES
 1. Note important statistics
 2. Look for interesting classes

(Campus and websites visits are equally significant. They are part of the main tasks you would need to do. Finding statistics and classes found on college websites are parts of the process involved in carrying out the main heading topics.)

Subordination—How do I accomplish this?

The information in the headings should be more general, while the information in the subheadings should be more specific. Example:

1. DESCRIBE AN INFLUENTIAL PERSON IN YOUR LIFE
 1. Favorite high school teacher
 2. Grandparent

(A favorite teacher and grandparent are specific examples from the generalized category of influential people in your life.)

Division—How do I accomplish this?

Each heading should be divided into 2 or more parts. Example:

1. COMPILE RÉSUMÉ
 1. List relevant coursework
 2. List work experience
 3. List volunteer experience

(The heading "Compile Résumé" is divided into 3 parts.)

Technically, there is no limit to the number of subdivisions for your headings; however, if you seem to have a lot, it may be useful to see if some of the parts can be combined.

- [Audience Analysis](#)

Audience Analysis Overview

Media File: [Audience Analysis Overview](#)

This resource is enhanced by an Acrobat PDF file. [Download the free Acrobat Reader](#)

In order to compose persuasive, user-centered communication, you should gather as much information as possible about the people reading your document. Your audience may consist of people who may have differing needs and expectations. In other words, you may have a complex audience in all the stages of your document's lifecycle—the development stage, the reading stage, and the action stage.

Development stage

- Primary author (you)
- Secondary author (a technical expert within your organization)
- Secondary author (a budget expert within your organization)
- Gatekeeper (your supervisor)

Reading stage

- Primary audience (decision maker, primary point of contact, project lead, etc.)
- Secondary audience (technical expert within audience's organization)
- Shadow audience (others who may read your communication)

Action stage

- Stakeholders (people who may read your communication, but more importantly, those who will be affected by the decisions based on the information you provide)

Keep in mind that documents may not go through a clear, three-step process. Instead, the lifecycle of your communication may consist of overlapping stages of evolution. User-centered writing calls for close cooperation between those who are composing the documents, those who will read and act upon the documents, and those who will be affected by the actions.

When You're Ready to Compose Your Writing Task

For an Abstract:

- [Writing Report Abstracts](#)

Writing Report Abstracts

Summary:

This handout discusses how to write good abstracts for reports. It covers informational and descriptive abstracts and gives pointers for success.

Contributors: Dana Lynn Driscoll

Last Edited: 2013-03-12 09:58:07

Types of abstracts

There are two types of abstracts: informational and descriptive.

Informational abstracts

- Communicate contents of reports
- Include purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions, and recommendations
- Highlight essential points
- Are short—from a paragraph to a page or two, depending upon the length of the report (10% or less of the report)
- Allow readers to decide whether they want to read the report

Descriptive abstracts

- Tell what the report contains
- Include purpose, methods, scope, but NOT results, conclusions, and recommendations
- Are always very short— usually under 100 words
- Introduce subject to readers, who must then read the report to learn study results

Qualities of a good abstract

An effective abstract

- Uses one or more well-developed paragraphs, which are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone
- Uses an introduction-body-conclusion structure in which the parts of the report are discussed in order: purpose, findings, conclusions, recommendations
- Follows strictly the chronology of the report
- Provides logical connections between material included
- Adds no new information but simply summarizes the report
- Is intelligible to a wide audience

Steps for writing effective report abstracts

To write an effective report abstract, follow these four steps.

1. Reread your report with the purpose of abstracting in mind. Look specifically for these main parts: purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions, and recommendations.
2. After you have finished rereading your report, write a rough draft without looking back at your report. Consider the main parts of the abstract listed in step #1. Do not merely copy key sentences from your report. You will put in too much or too little information. Do not summarize information in a new way.

3. Revise your rough draft to
 - Correct weaknesses in organization and coherence,
 - Drop superfluous information,
 - Add important information originally left out,
 - Eliminate wordiness, and
 - Correct errors in grammar and mechanics.
4. Carefully proofread your final copy.

- [Writing Scientific Abstracts Presentation](#)

20071026015924_706

- [Conciseness](#)

Conciseness

Summary:

This resource will help you write clearly by eliminating unnecessary words and rearranging your phrases.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Nick Hurm

Last Edited: 2013-02-27 10:18:41

The goal of concise writing is to use the most effective words. Concise writing does not always have the fewest words, but it always uses the strongest ones. Writers often fill sentences with weak or unnecessary words that can be deleted or replaced. Words and phrases should be deliberately chosen for the work they are doing. Like bad employees, words that don't accomplish enough should be fired. When only the most effective words remain, writing will be far more concise and readable.

This resource contains general conciseness tips followed by very specific strategies for pruning sentences.

1. Replace several vague words with more powerful and specific words.

Often, writers use several small and ambiguous words to express a concept, wasting energy expressing ideas better relayed through fewer specific words. As a general rule, more specific words lead to more concise writing. Because of the variety of nouns, verbs, and adjectives, most things have a closely corresponding description. Brainstorming or searching a thesaurus can lead to the word best suited for a specific instance. Notice that the examples below actually convey more as they drop in word count.

Wordy: The politician talked about several of the merits of after-school programs in his speech

(14 words)

Concise: The politician touted after-school programs in his speech.

(8 words)

Wordy: Suzie believed but could not confirm that Billy had feelings of affection for her.

(14 words)

Concise: Suzie assumed that Billy adored her.

(6 words)

Wordy: Our Web site has made available many of the things you can use for making a decision on the best dentist.

(20 words)

Concise: Our website presents criteria for determining the best dentist.

(9 words)

Wordy: Working as a pupil under someone who develops photos was an experience that really helped me learn a lot.

(20 words)

Concise: Working as a photo technician's apprentice was an educational experience.

(10 words)

2. Interrogate every word in a sentence

Check every word to make sure that it is providing something important and unique to a sentence. If words are dead weight, they can be deleted or replaced. Other sections in this handout cover this concept more specifically, but there are some general examples below containing sentences with words that could be cut.

Wordy: The teacher demonstrated some of the various ways and methods for cutting words from my essay that I had written for class.

(22 words)

Concise: The teacher demonstrated methods for cutting words from my essay.

(10 words)

Wordy: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular.

(66 words)

Concise: Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians' previous popular bands, Cream and Traffic.

(32 words)

Wordy: Many have made the wise observation that when a stone is in motion rolling down a hill or incline that that moving stone is not as likely to be covered all over with the kind of thick green moss that grows on stationary unmoving things and becomes a nuisance and suggests that those things haven't moved in a long time and probably won't move any time soon.

(67 words)

Concise: A rolling stone gathers no moss.

(6 words)

3. Combine Sentences.

Some information does not require a full sentence, and can easily be inserted into another sentence without losing any of its value. To get more strategies for sentence combining, see the handout on [Sentence Variety](#).

Wordy: Ludwig's castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness. By his death, he had commissioned three castles.

(18 words)

Concise: Ludwig's three castles are an astounding marriage of beauty and madness.

(11 words)

Wordy: The supposed crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life. This crash is rumored to have occurred in 1947.

(24 words)

Concise: The supposed 1947 crash of a UFO in Roswell, New Mexico aroused interest in extraterrestrial life.

(16 words)

For an Academic Research Paper:

- [Writing a Research Paper](#)

Writing a Research Paper

Summary:

This handout provides detailed information about how to write research papers including discussing research papers as a genre, choosing topics, and finding sources.

Contributors: Jack Raymond Baker, Allen Brizee, Ashley Velázquez

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The Research Paper

There will come a time in most students' careers when they are assigned a research paper. Such an assignment often creates a great deal of unneeded anxiety in the student, which may result in procrastination and a feeling of confusion and inadequacy. This anxiety frequently stems from the fact that many students are unfamiliar and inexperienced with this genre of writing. Never fear—inexperience and unfamiliarity are situations you can change through practice! Writing a research paper is an essential aspect of academics and should not be avoided on account of one's anxiety. In fact, the process of writing a research paper can be one of the more rewarding experiences one may encounter in academics. What is more, many students will continue to do research throughout their careers, which is one of the reasons this topic is so important.

Becoming an experienced researcher and writer in any field or discipline takes a great deal of practice. There are few individuals for whom this process comes naturally. Remember, even the most seasoned academic veterans have had to learn how to write a research paper

at some point in their career. Therefore, with diligence, organization, practice, a willingness to learn (and to make mistakes!), and, perhaps most important of all, patience, students will find that they can achieve great things through their research and writing.

This handout will include the following sections related to the process of writing a research paper:

- **Genre**- This section will provide an overview for understanding the difference between an analytical and argumentative research paper.
 - **Choosing a Topic**- This section will guide the student through the process of choosing topics, whether the topic be one that is assigned or one that the student chooses himself.
 - **Identifying an Audience**- This section will help the student understand the often times confusing topic of audience by offering some basic guidelines for the process.
 - **Where Do I Begin**- This section concludes the handout by offering several links to resources at Purdue, and also provides an overview of the final stages of writing a research paper.
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- [Evaluating Sources of Information](#)

Evaluating Sources: Overview

Summary:

Evaluating sources of information is an important step in any research activity. This section provides information on evaluating bibliographic citations, aspects of evaluation, reading evaluation, print vs. online sources, and evaluating Internet sources.

Contributors: Dana Lynn Driscoll, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2018-01-24 02:05:54

The world is full of information to be found—however, not all of it is valid, useful, or accurate. Evaluating sources of information that you are considering using in your writing is an important step in any research activity.

The quantity of information available is so staggering that we cannot know everything about a subject. For example, it's estimated that anyone attempting to research what's known about depression would have to read over 100,000 studies on the subject. And there's the problem of trying to decide which studies have produced reliable results.

Similarly, for information on other topics, not only is there a huge quantity available but with a very uneven level of quality. You don't want to rely on the news in the headlines of sensational tabloids near supermarket checkout counters, and it's just as hard to know how

much to accept of what's in all the books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, brochures, Web sites, and various media reports that are available. People want to convince you to buy their products, agree with their opinions, rely on their data, vote for their candidate, consider their perspective, or accept them as experts. In short, you have to sift and make decisions all the time, and you want to make responsible choices that you won't regret.

Evaluating sources is an important skill. It's been called an art as well as work—much of which is detective work. You have to decide where to look, what clues to search for, and what to accept. You may be overwhelmed with too much information or too little. The temptation is to accept whatever you find. But don't be tempted. Learning how to evaluate effectively is a skill you need both for your course papers and for your life.

When writing research papers, you will also be evaluating sources as you search for information. You will need to make decisions about what to search for, where to look, and once you've found material on your topic, if it is a valid or useful source for your writing.

- [Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing](#)

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

Summary:

This handout is intended to help you become more comfortable with the uses of and distinctions among quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. This handout compares and contrasts the three terms, gives some pointers, and includes a short excerpt that you can use to practice these skills.

Contributors: Dana Lynn Driscoll, Allen Brizee

Last Edited: 2013-02-15 09:44:45

This handout is intended to help you become more comfortable with the uses of and distinctions among quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. This handout compares and contrasts the three terms, gives some pointers, and includes a short excerpt that you can use to practice these skills.

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Why use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries?

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries serve many purposes. You might use them to:

- Provide support for claims or add credibility to your writing
- Refer to work that leads up to the work you are now doing
- Give examples of several points of view on a subject
- Call attention to a position that you wish to agree or disagree with
- Highlight a particularly striking phrase, sentence, or passage by quoting the original
- Distance yourself from the original by quoting it in order to cue readers that the words are not your own
- Expand the breadth or depth of your writing

Writers frequently intertwine summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. As part of a summary of an article, a chapter, or a book, a writer might include paraphrases of various key points blended with quotations of striking or suggestive phrases as in the following example:

In his famous and influential work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud argues that dreams are the "royal road to the unconscious" (page #), expressing in coded imagery the dreamer's unfulfilled wishes through a process known as the "dream-work" (page #). According to Freud, actual but unacceptable desires are censored internally and subjected to coding through layers of condensation and displacement before emerging in a kind of rebus puzzle in the dream itself (page #).

How to use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries

Practice summarizing the essay found [here](#), using paraphrases and quotations as you go. It might be helpful to follow these steps:

- Read the entire text, noting the key points and main ideas.

- Summarize in your own words what the single main idea of the essay is.
- Paraphrase important supporting points that come up in the essay.
- Consider any words, phrases, or brief passages that you believe should be quoted directly.

There are several ways to integrate quotations into your text. Often, a short quotation works well when integrated into a sentence. Longer quotations can stand alone. Remember that quoting should be done only sparingly; be sure that you have a good reason to include a direct quotation when you decide to do so. You'll find guidelines for citing sources and punctuating citations at our documentation guide pages.

Style Guides (for citation format):

- [APA](#)

General Format

Summary:

APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. This resource, revised according to the 6th edition, second printing of the APA manual, offers examples for the general format of APA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the reference page. For more information, please consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, (6th ed., 2nd printing).

Contributors: Joshua M. Paiz, Elizabeth Angeli, Jodi Wagner, Elena Lawrick, Kristen Moore, Michael Anderson, Lars Soderlund, Allen Brizee, Russell Keck

Last Edited: 2018-02-21 02:26:13

Please use the example at the bottom of this page to cite the Purdue OWL in APA.

To see a side-by-side comparison of the three most widely used citation styles, including a chart of all APA citation guidelines, see the [Citation Style Chart](#).

You can also watch our [APA vidcast series](#) on the [Purdue OWL YouTube Channel](#).

General APA Guidelines

Your essay should be typed and double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11"), with 1" margins on all sides. You should use a clear font that is highly readable. APA recommends using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Include a **page header** (also known as the "**running head**") at the top of every page. To create a **page header/running head**, insert page numbers flush right. Then type "TITLE OF YOUR PAPER" in the header flush left using all capital letters. The **running head** is a shortened version of your paper's title and cannot exceed 50 characters including spacing and punctuation.

Major Paper Sections

Your essay should include **four** major sections: the **Title Page**, **Abstract**, **Main Body**, and **References**.

Title Page

The title page should contain the **title** of the paper, the **author's name**, and the **institutional affiliation**. Include the page header (described above) flush left with the page number flush right at the top of the page. Please note that on the title page, your page header/running head should look like this:

Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

Pages after the title page should have a running head that looks like this:

TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

After consulting with publication specialists at the APA, OWL staff learned that the APA 6th edition, first printing sample papers have **incorrect** examples of running heads on pages after the title page. This [link](#) will take you to the APA site where you can find a complete list of all the errors in the APA's 6th edition style guide.

Type your **title** in upper and lowercase letters centered in the upper half of the page. APA recommends that your title be no more than 12 words in length and that it should not contain abbreviations or words that serve no purpose. Your title may take up one or two lines. All text on the title page, and throughout your paper, should be double-spaced.

Beneath the title, type the **author's name**: first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Do not use titles (Dr.) or degrees (PhD).

Beneath the author's name, type the **institutional affiliation**, which should indicate the location where the author(s) conducted the research.

The Purdue Online Writing Lab's Sample Title Page:
Following the American Psychological Association's Guidelines
Purdue Pete
Purdue University

Abstract

Begin a new page. Your abstract page should already include the **page header** (described above). On the first line of the abstract page, center the word “Abstract” (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks).

Beginning with the next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research. (Do not indent.) Your abstract should contain at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions. You may also

include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings. Your abstract should be a single paragraph, double-spaced. Your abstract should be between 150 and 250 words.

You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, indent as you would if you were starting a new paragraph, type *Keywords:* (italicized), and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.

Abstract

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Donec non pretium ante. Phasellus tincidunt tristique est vitae tempor. Curabitur eros orci, accumsan vel porttitor vel, dignissim ac sem. Class aptent taciti sociosqu ad litora torquent per conubia nostra, per inceptos himenaeos. Vivamus sagittis mauris eget augue bibendum iaculis. Maecenas rutrum, diam non condimentum convallis, arcu dolor suscipit justo, ultrices tincidunt enim turpis vel felis. Nullam fringilla fermentum orci, at euismod nibh blandit faucibus. Nam ultricies adipiscing orci vitae adipiscing. Cras pretium ipsum vitae orci tincidunt dapibus et nec diam. Nullam in tellus vel turpis sagittis posuere. Nam pellentesque laoreet magna sit amet adipiscing. Pellentesque ante arcu, porta eget dignissim ut, rhoncus eget est. Sed euismod, quam eu viverra pretium, magna velit dignissim lectus, sed dictum nisi mauris a arcu. Curabitur sit amet est aliquet turpis interdum ornare. In placerat vestibulum commodo. Nulla vitae arcu risus. Duis vel urna ut dolor pulvinar placerat. Aliquam sagittis pulvinar ultricies.

Keywords: lorem ipsum, nulla vitae

Please see our [Sample APA Paper](#) resource to see an example of an APA paper. You may also visit our [Additional Resources](#) page for more examples of APA papers.

[How to Cite the Purdue OWL in APA](#)

Individual Resources

Contributors' names and the last edited date can be found in the orange boxes at the top of every page on the OWL.

Contributors' names (Last edited date). *Title of resource*. Retrieved from <http://Web address> for OWL resource

Angeli, E., Wagner, J., Lawrick, E., Moore, K., Anderson, M., Soderlund, L., & Brizee, A. (2010, May 5). *General format*. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

- [MLA](#)

MLA Formatting and Style Guide

Summary:

MLA (Modern Language Association) style is most commonly used to write papers and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities. This resource, updated to reflect the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.), offers examples for the general format of MLA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the Works Cited page.

Contributors: Tony Russell, Allen Brizee, Elizabeth Angeli, Russell Keck, Joshua M. Paiz, Michelle Campbell, Rodrigo Rodríguez-Fuentes, Daniel P. Kenzie, Susan Wegener, Maryam Ghafoor, Purdue OWL Staff

Last Edited: 2017-11-15 10:07:19

The following overview should help you better understand how to cite sources using MLA eighth edition, including the list of works cited and in-text citations.

Please use the example at the bottom of this page to cite the Purdue OWL in MLA. See also our [MLA vidcast series](#) on the [Purdue OWL YouTube Channel](#).

[Creating a Works Cited list using the eighth edition](#)

MLA has turned to a style of documentation that is based on a general method that may be applied to every possible source, to many different types of writing. But since texts have become increasingly mobile, and the same document may be found in several different sources, following a set of fixed rules is no longer sufficient.

The current system is based on a few principles, rather than an extensive list of specific rules. While the handbook still gives examples of how to cite sources, it is organized according to the process of documentation, rather than by the sources themselves. This process teaches writers a flexible method that is universally applicable. Once you are familiar with the method, you can use it to document any type of source, for any type of paper, in any field.

Here is an overview of the process:

When deciding how to cite your source, start by consulting the list of core elements. These are the general pieces of information that MLA suggests including in each Works Cited entry. In your citation, the elements should be listed in the following order:

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Each element should be followed by the punctuation mark shown here. Earlier editions of the handbook included the place of publication, and required punctuation such as journal editions in parentheses, and colons after issue numbers. In the current version, punctuation is simpler (just commas and periods separate the elements), and information about the source is kept to the basics.

Author

Begin the entry with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name, as presented in the work. End this element with a period.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1994.

Title of source

The title of the source should follow the author's name. Depending upon the type of source, it should be listed in italics or quotation marks.

A book should be in italics:

Henley, Patricia. *The Hummingbird House*. MacMurray, 1999.

A website should be in italics:

Lundman, Susan. "How to Make Vegetarian Chili."
eHow, www.ehow.com/how_10727_make-vegetarian-chili.html.*

A periodical (journal, magazine, newspaper) article should be in quotation marks:

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *Bashai Tudu*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.

A song or piece of music on an album should be in quotation marks:

Beyoncé. "Pray You Catch Me." *Lemonade*, Parkwood Entertainment, 2016,
www.beyonce.com/album/lemonade-visual-album/.

*The eighth edition handbook recommends including URLs when citing online sources. For more information, see the "Optional Elements" section below.

Title of container

Unlike earlier versions, the eighth edition refers to containers, which are the larger wholes in which the source is located. For example, if you want to cite a poem that is listed in a collection of poems, the individual poem is the source, while the larger collection is the container. The title of the container is usually italicized and followed by a comma, since the information that follows next describes the container.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*, edited by Tobias Wolff, Vintage, 1994, pp. 306-07.

The container may also be a television series, which is made up of episodes.

"94 Meetings." *Parks and Recreation*, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, performance by Amy Poehler, season 2, episode 21, Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2010.

The container may also be a website, which contains articles, postings, and other works.

Zinkievich, Craig. Interview by Gareth Von Kallenbach. *Skewed & Reviewed*, 27 Apr. 2009, www.arcgames.com/en/games/star-trek-online/news/detail/1056940-skewed-%2526-reviewed-interviews-craig. Accessed 15 Mar. 2009.

In some cases, a container might be within a larger container. You might have read a book of short stories on *Google Books*, or watched a television series on *Netflix*. You might have

found the electronic version of a journal on JSTOR. It is important to cite these containers within containers so that your readers can find the exact source that you used.

“94 Meetings.” *Parks and Recreation*, season 2, episode 21, NBC, 29 Apr. 2010. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/70152031?trackId=200256157&tctx=0%2C20%2C0974d361-27cd-44de-9c2a-2d9d868b9f64-12120962.

Langhamer, Claire. “Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England.” *Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 173-96. *ProQuest*, doi:10.1017/S0018246X06005966. Accessed 27 May 2009.

Other contributors

In addition to the author, there may be other contributors to the source who should be credited, such as editors, illustrators, translators, etc. If their contributions are relevant to your research, or necessary to identify the source, include their names in your documentation.

Note: In the eighth edition, terms like editor, illustrator, translator, etc., are no longer abbreviated.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, Vintage-Random House, 1988.

Woolf, Virginia. *Jacob's Room*. Annotated and with an introduction by Vara Neverow, Harcourt, Inc., 2008.

Version

If a source is listed as an edition or version of a work, include it in your citation.

The Bible. Authorized King James Version, Oxford UP, 1998.

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 3rd ed., Pearson, 2004.

Number

If a source is part of a numbered sequence, such as a multi-volume book, or journal with both volume and issue numbers, those numbers must be listed in your citation.

Dolby, Nadine. “Research in Youth Culture and Policy: Current Conditions and Future Directions.” *Social Work and Society: The International Online-Only Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2008, www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362. Accessed 20 May 2009.

“94 Meetings.” *Parks and Recreation*, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, performance by Amy Poehler, season 2, episode 21, Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2010.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler, vol. 2, Loeb-Harvard UP, 1980.

Publisher

The publisher produces or distributes the source to the public. If there is more than one publisher, and they are all relevant to your research, list them in your citation, separated by a forward slash (/).

Klee, Paul. *Twittering Machine*. 1922. Museum of Modern Art, New York. *The Artchive*, www.artchive.com/artchive/K/klee/twittering_machine.jpg.html. Accessed May 2006.

Women's Health: Problems of the Digestive System. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2006.

Daniels, Greg and Michael Schur, creators. *Parks and Recreation*. Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2015.

Note: the publisher’s name need not be included in the following sources: periodicals, works published by their author or editor, a website whose title is the same name as its publisher, a website that makes works available but does not actually publish them (such as *YouTube*, *WordPress*, or *JSTOR*).

Publication date

The same source may have been published on more than one date, such as an online version of an original source. For example, a television series might have aired on a broadcast network on one date, but released on *Netflix* on a different date. When the source has more than one date, it is sufficient to use the date that is most relevant to your use of it. If you’re unsure about which date to use, go with the date of the source’s original publication.

In the following example, Mutant Enemy is the primary production company, and “Hush” was released in 1999. This is the way to create a general citation for a television episode.

“Hush.” *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, Mutant Enemy, 1999.

However, if you are discussing, for example, the historical context in which the episode originally aired, you should cite the full date. Because you are specifying the date of airing, you would then use WB Television Network (rather than Mutant Enemy), because it was

the network (rather than the production company) that aired the episode on the date you're citing.

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, episode 10, WB Television Network, 14 Dec. 1999.

Location

You should be as specific as possible in identifying a work's location.

An essay in a book, or an article in journal should include page numbers.

Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi. "On Monday of Last Week." *The Thing around Your Neck*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2009, pp. 74-94.

The location of an online work should include a URL.

Wheelis, Mark. "Investigating Disease Outbreaks Under a Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention." *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2000, pp. 595-600, wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/6/6/00-0607_article. Accessed 8 Feb. 2009.

A physical object that you experienced firsthand should identify the place of location.

Matisse, Henri. *The Swimming Pool*. 1952, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Optional elements

The eighth edition is designed to be as streamlined as possible. The author should include any information that helps readers easily identify the source, without including unnecessary information that may be distracting. The following is a list of select optional elements that should be part of a documented source at the writer's discretion.

Date of original publication:

If a source has been published on more than one date, the writer may want to include both dates if it will provide the reader with necessary or helpful information.

Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*. 1984. Perennial-Harper, 1993.

City of publication:

The seventh edition handbook required the city in which a publisher is located, but the eighth edition states that this is only necessary in particular instances, such as in a work published before 1900. Since pre-1900 works were usually associated with the city in

which they were published, your documentation may substitute the city name for the publisher's name.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Excursions*. Boston, 1863.

Date of access:

When you cite an online source, the *MLA Handbook* recommends including a date of access on which you accessed the material, since an online work may change or move at any time.

Bernstein, Mark. "10 Tips on Writing the Living Web." *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites*, 16 Aug. 2002, alistapart.com/article/writeliving. Accessed 4 May 2009.

URLs:

As mentioned above, while the eighth edition recommends including URLs when you cite online sources, you should always check with your instructor or editor and include URLs at their discretion.

DOIs:

A DOI, or digital object identifier, is a series of digits and letters that leads to the location of an online source. Articles in journals are often assigned DOIs to ensure that the source is locatable, even if the URL changes. If your source is listed with a DOI, use that instead of a URL.

Alonso, Alvaro, and Julio A. Camargo. "Toxicity of Nitrite to Three Species of Freshwater Invertebrates." *Environmental Toxicology*, vol. 21, no. 1, 3 Feb. 2006, pp. 90-94. *Wiley Online Library*, doi: 10.1002/tox.20155.

Creating in-text citations using the eighth edition

The in-text citation is a brief reference within your text that indicates the source you consulted. It should properly attribute any ideas, paraphrases, or direct quotations to your source, and should direct readers to the entry in the list of works cited. For the most part, an in-text citation is the **author's name and page number (or just the page number, if the author is named in the sentence) in parentheses**:

Imperialism is "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (Said 9).

or

According to **Edward W. Said**, imperialism is defined by “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (9).

Work Cited

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1994.

When creating in-text citations for media that has a runtime, such as a movie or podcast, include the range of hours, minutes and seconds you plan to reference, like so (00:02:15-00:02:35).

Again, your goal is to attribute your source and provide your reader with a reference without interrupting your text. Your readers should be able to follow the flow of your argument without becoming distracted by extra information.

Final thoughts about the eighth edition

The current MLA guidelines teach you a widely applicable skill. Once you become familiar with the core elements that should be included in each entry in the Works Cited list, you will be able to create documentation for any type of source. While the handbook still includes helpful examples that you may use as guidelines, you will not need to consult it every time you need to figure out how to cite a source you’ve never used before. If you include the core elements, in the proper order, using consistent punctuation, you will be fully equipped to create a list of works cited on your own.

How to Cite the Purdue OWL in MLA

Entire Website

The Purdue OWL. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2016.

Individual Resources

Contributors' names and the last edited date can be found in the orange boxes at the top of every page on the OWL.

Contributors' names. "Title of Resource." *The Purdue OWL*, Purdue U Writing Lab, Last edited date.

Russell, Tony, et al. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*, Purdue U Writing Lab, 2 Aug. 2016.

- [Chicago Manual of Style](#)

Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition

Summary:

This section contains information on *The Chicago Manual of Style* method of document formatting and citation. These resources follow the seventeenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which was issued in 2017.

Contributors: Jessica Clements, Elizabeth Angeli, Karen Schiller, S. C. Gooch, Laurie Pinkert, Allen Brizee, Ryan Murphy, Vanessa Iacocca, Ryan Schnurr

Last Edited: 2018-01-31 02:26:18

Please note that while these resources reflect the most recent updates in the 17th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* concerning documentation practices, you can review a full list of updates concerning usage, technology, professional practice, etc. at [The Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

To see a side-by-side comparison of the three most widely used citation styles, including a chart of all CMOS citation guidelines, see the [Citation Style Chart](#).

Introduction

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) covers a variety of topics from manuscript preparation and publication to grammar, usage, and documentation and has been lovingly called the “editors’ bible.” The material in this resource focuses primarily on one of the two CMOS documentation styles: the Notes-Bibliography System (NB), which is used by those in literature, history, and the arts. The other documentation style, the Author-Date System, is nearly identical in content but slightly different in form and is preferred in the social sciences.

In addition to consulting *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed.) for more information, students may also find it useful to consult Kate L. Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8th ed.). This manual, which presents what is commonly known as the "Turabian" citation style, follows the two CMOS patterns of documentation but offers slight modifications suited to student texts.

Notes and Bibliography (NB) in Chicago style

The Chicago NB system is often used in the humanities and provides writers with a system for referencing their sources through footnote or endnote citation in their writing and through bibliography pages. It also offers writers an outlet for commenting on those cited sources. The NB system is most commonly used in the discipline of history.

The proper use of the NB system can protect writers from accusations of plagiarism, which is the intentional or accidental uncredited use of source material created by others. Most importantly, properly using the NB system builds credibility by demonstrating accountability to source material.

If you are asked to use the Chicago NB format, be sure to consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed.). Students should also refer to *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8th ed.). Both are available in most writing centers and reference libraries and in bookstores.

Introduction to Notes

In the NB system, you should include a note (endnote or footnote) each time you use a source, whether through a direct quote or through a paraphrase or summary. Footnotes will be added at the end of the page on which the source is referenced, and endnotes will be compiled at the end of each chapter or at the end of the entire document.

In either case, a superscript number corresponding to a note with the bibliographic information for that source should be placed in the text following the end of the sentence or clause in which the source is referenced.

If a work includes a bibliography, then it is not necessary to provide full publication details in notes. However, if a bibliography is not included with a work, the first note for each source should include *all* relevant information about the source: author's full name, source title, and facts of publication. If you cite the same source again, or if a bibliography is included in the work, the note need only include the surname of the author, a shortened form of the title (if more than four words), and page number(s). However, in a work that does not include a bibliography, it is recommended that the full citation be repeated when it is first used in a new chapter.

In contrast to earlier editions of CMOS, if you cite the same source two or more times consecutively, CMOS recommends using shortened citations. In a work with a bibliography, the first reference should use a shortened citation which includes the author's name, the source title, and the page number(s), and consecutive references to the same work may omit the source title and simply include the author and page number. Although discouraged by CMOS, if you cite the same source and page number(s) from a single source two or more times consecutively, it is also possible to utilize the word "Ibid.," an abbreviated form of the Latin *ibidem*, which means "in the same place," as the corresponding note. If you use the same source but a different page number, the corresponding note should use "Ibid." followed by a comma and the new page number(s).

In the NB system, the footnote or endnote itself begins with the appropriate full-sized number, followed by a period and then a space.

Introduction to Bibliographies

In the NB system, the bibliography provides an alphabetical list of all sources used in a given work. This page, most often titled Bibliography, is usually placed at the end of the work preceding the index. It should include all sources cited within the work and may sometimes include other relevant sources that were not cited but provide further reading.

Although bibliographic entries for various sources may be formatted differently, all included sources (books, articles, Web sites, etc.) are arranged alphabetically by author's last name. If no author or editor is listed, the title or, as a last resort, a descriptive phrase may be used.

Though useful, a bibliography is not required in works that provide full bibliographic information in the notes.

Common Elements

All entries in the bibliography will include the author (or editor, compiler, translator), title, and publication information.

Author's Names

The author's name is inverted in the bibliography, placing the last name first and separating the last name and first name with a comma; for example, John Smith becomes Smith, John. (If an author is not listed first, this applies to compilers, translators, etc.)

Titles

Titles of books and journals are italicized. Titles of articles, chapters, poems, etc. are placed in quotation marks.

Publication Information

The year of publication is listed after the publisher or journal name.

Punctuation

In a bibliography, all major elements are separated by periods.

For more information and specific examples, see the sections on [Books](#) and [Periodicals](#).

Please note that this OWL resource provides basic information regarding the formatting of entries used in the bibliography. For more information about Selected Bibliographies,

Annotated Bibliographies, and Bibliographic Essays, please consult Chapter 14.61 of *The Chicago Manual of Style (17th ed.)*.

For a Bibliography or Annotated Bibliography:

- [MLA](#)

MLA Formatting and Style Guide

Summary:

MLA (Modern Language Association) style is most commonly used to write papers and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities. This resource, updated to reflect the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.), offers examples for the general format of MLA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the Works Cited page.

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The following overview should help you better understand how to cite sources using MLA eighth edition, including the list of works cited and in-text citations.

Please use the example at the bottom of this page to cite the Purdue OWL in MLA. See also our [MLA vidcast series](#) on the [Purdue OWL YouTube Channel](#).

[Creating a Works Cited list using the eighth edition](#)

MLA has turned to a style of documentation that is based on a general method that may be applied to every possible source, to many different types of writing. But since texts have become increasingly mobile, and the same document may be found in several different sources, following a set of fixed rules is no longer sufficient.

The current system is based on a few principles, rather than an extensive list of specific rules. While the handbook still gives examples of how to cite sources, it is organized according to the process of documentation, rather than by the sources themselves. This process teaches writers a flexible method that is universally applicable. Once you are familiar with the method, you can use it to document any type of source, for any type of paper, in any field.

Here is an overview of the process:

When deciding how to cite your source, start by consulting the list of core elements. These are the general pieces of information that MLA suggests including in each Works Cited entry. In your citation, the elements should be listed in the following order:

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Each element should be followed by the punctuation mark shown here. Earlier editions of the handbook included the place of publication, and required punctuation such as journal editions in parentheses, and colons after issue numbers. In the current version, punctuation is simpler (just commas and periods separate the elements), and information about the source is kept to the basics.

Author

Begin the entry with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name, as presented in the work. End this element with a period.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1994.

Title of source

The title of the source should follow the author's name. Depending upon the type of source, it should be listed in italics or quotation marks.

A book should be in italics:

Henley, Patricia. *The Hummingbird House*. MacMurray, 1999.

A website should be in italics:

Lundman, Susan. "How to Make Vegetarian Chili."
eHow, www.ehow.com/how_10727_make-vegetarian-chili.html.*

A periodical (journal, magazine, newspaper) article should be in quotation marks:

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *Bashai Tudu*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.

A song or piece of music on an album should be in quotation marks:

Beyoncé. "Pray You Catch Me." *Lemonade*, Parkwood Entertainment, 2016, www.beyonce.com/album/lemonade-visual-album/.

*The eighth edition handbook recommends including URLs when citing online sources. For more information, see the "Optional Elements" section below.

Title of container

Unlike earlier versions, the eighth edition refers to containers, which are the larger wholes in which the source is located. For example, if you want to cite a poem that is listed in a collection of poems, the individual poem is the source, while the larger collection is the container. The title of the container is usually italicized and followed by a comma, since the information that follows next describes the container.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*, edited by Tobias Wolff, Vintage, 1994, pp. 306-07.

The container may also be a television series, which is made up of episodes.

"94 Meetings." *Parks and Recreation*, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, performance by Amy Poehler, season 2, episode 21, Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2010.

The container may also be a website, which contains articles, postings, and other works.

Zinkievich, Craig. Interview by Gareth Von Kallenbach. *Skewed & Reviewed*, 27 Apr. 2009, www.arcgames.com/en/games/star-trek-online/news/detail/1056940-skewed-%2526-reviewed-interviews-craig. Accessed 15 Mar. 2009.

In some cases, a container might be within a larger container. You might have read a book of short stories on *Google Books*, or watched a television series on *Netflix*. You might have found the electronic version of a journal on JSTOR. It is important to cite these containers within containers so that your readers can find the exact source that you used.

"94 Meetings." *Parks and Recreation*, season 2, episode 21, NBC, 29 Apr. 2010. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/watch/70152031?trackId=200256157&tctx=0%2C20%2C0974d361-27cd-44de-9c2a-2d9d868b9f64-12120962.

Langhamer, Claire. "Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England." *Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 173-96. *ProQuest*, doi:10.1017/S0018246X06005966. Accessed 27 May 2009.

Other contributors

In addition to the author, there may be other contributors to the source who should be credited, such as editors, illustrators, translators, etc. If their contributions are relevant to your research, or necessary to identify the source, include their names in your documentation.

Note: In the eighth edition, terms like editor, illustrator, translator, etc., are no longer abbreviated.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard, Vintage-Random House, 1988.

Woolf, Virginia. *Jacob's Room*. Annotated and with an introduction by Vara Neverow, Harcourt, Inc., 2008.

Version

If a source is listed as an edition or version of a work, include it in your citation.

The Bible. Authorized King James Version, Oxford UP, 1998.

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 3rd ed., Pearson, 2004.

Number

If a source is part of a numbered sequence, such as a multi-volume book, or journal with both volume and issue numbers, those numbers must be listed in your citation.

Dolby, Nadine. "Research in Youth Culture and Policy: Current Conditions and Future Directions." *Social Work and Society: The International Online-Only Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2008, www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362. Accessed 20 May 2009.

"94 Meetings." *Parks and Recreation*, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur, performance by Amy Poehler, season 2, episode 21, Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2010.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler, vol. 2, Loeb-Harvard UP, 1980.

Publisher

The publisher produces or distributes the source to the public. If there is more than one publisher, and they are all relevant to your research, list them in your citation, separated by a forward slash (/).

Klee, Paul. *Twittering Machine*. 1922. Museum of Modern Art, New York. *The Artchive*, www.artchive.com/artchive/K/klee/twittering_machine.jpg.html. Accessed May 2006.

Women's Health: Problems of the Digestive System. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2006.

Daniels, Greg and Michael Schur, creators. *Parks and Recreation*. Deedle-Dee Productions and Universal Media Studios, 2015.

Note: the publisher's name need not be included in the following sources: periodicals, works published by their author or editor, a website whose title is the same name as its publisher, a website that makes works available but does not actually publish them (such as *YouTube*, *WordPress*, or *JSTOR*).

Publication date

The same source may have been published on more than one date, such as an online version of an original source. For example, a television series might have aired on a broadcast network on one date, but released on *Netflix* on a different date. When the source has more than one date, it is sufficient to use the date that is most relevant to your use of it. If you're unsure about which date to use, go with the date of the source's original publication.

In the following example, *Mutant Enemy* is the primary production company, and "Hush" was released in 1999. This is the way to create a general citation for a television episode.

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, *Mutant Enemy*, 1999.

However, if you are discussing, for example, the historical context in which the episode originally aired, you should cite the full date. Because you are specifying the date of airing, you would then use *WB Television Network* (rather than *Mutant Enemy*), because it was the network (rather than the production company) that aired the episode on the date you're citing.

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, episode 10, *WB Television Network*, 14 Dec. 1999.

Location

You should be as specific as possible in identifying a work's location.

An essay in a book, or an article in journal should include page numbers.

Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi. "On Monday of Last Week." *The Thing around Your Neck*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2009, pp. 74-94.

The location of an online work should include a URL.

Wheelis, Mark. "Investigating Disease Outbreaks Under a Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention." *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2000, pp. 595-600, wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/6/6/00-0607_article. Accessed 8 Feb. 2009.

A physical object that you experienced firsthand should identify the place of location.

Matisse, Henri. *The Swimming Pool*. 1952, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Optional elements

The eighth edition is designed to be as streamlined as possible. The author should include any information that helps readers easily identify the source, without including unnecessary information that may be distracting. The following is a list of select optional elements that should be part of a documented source at the writer's discretion.

Date of original publication:

If a source has been published on more than one date, the writer may want to include both dates if it will provide the reader with necessary or helpful information.

Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*. 1984. Perennial-Harper, 1993.

City of publication:

The seventh edition handbook required the city in which a publisher is located, but the eighth edition states that this is only necessary in particular instances, such as in a work published before 1900. Since pre-1900 works were usually associated with the city in which they were published, your documentation may substitute the city name for the publisher's name.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Excursions*. Boston, 1863.

Date of access:

When you cite an online source, the *MLA Handbook* recommends including a date of access on which you accessed the material, since an online work may change or move at any time.

Bernstein, Mark. "10 Tips on Writing the Living Web." *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites*, 16 Aug. 2002, alistapart.com/article/writeliving. Accessed 4 May 2009.

URLs:

As mentioned above, while the eighth edition recommends including URLs when you cite online sources, you should always check with your instructor or editor and include URLs at their discretion.

DOIs:

A DOI, or digital object identifier, is a series of digits and letters that leads to the location of an online source. Articles in journals are often assigned DOIs to ensure that the source is locatable, even if the URL changes. If your source is listed with a DOI, use that instead of a URL.

Alonso, Alvaro, and Julio A. Camargo. "Toxicity of Nitrite to Three Species of Freshwater Invertebrates." *Environmental Toxicology*, vol. 21, no. 1, 3 Feb. 2006, pp. 90-94. *Wiley Online Library*, doi: 10.1002/tox.20155.

Creating in-text citations using the eighth edition

The in-text citation is a brief reference within your text that indicates the source you consulted. It should properly attribute any ideas, paraphrases, or direct quotations to your source, and should direct readers to the entry in the list of works cited. For the most part, an in-text citation is the **author's name and page number (or just the page number, if the author is named in the sentence) in parentheses**:

Imperialism is "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (Said 9).

or

According to **Edward W. Said**, imperialism is defined by "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (9).

Work Cited

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1994.

When creating in-text citations for media that has a runtime, such as a movie or podcast, include the range of hours, minutes and seconds you plan to reference, like so (00:02:15-00:02:35).

Again, your goal is to attribute your source and provide your reader with a reference without interrupting your text. Your readers should be able to follow the flow of your argument without becoming distracted by extra information.

Final thoughts about the eighth edition

The current MLA guidelines teach you a widely applicable skill. Once you become familiar with the core elements that should be included in each entry in the Works Cited list, you will be able to create documentation for any type of source. While the handbook still includes helpful examples that you may use as guidelines, you will not need to consult it every time you need to figure out how to cite a source you've never used before. If you include the core elements, in the proper order, using consistent punctuation, you will be fully equipped to create a list of works cited on your own.

How to Cite the Purdue OWL in MLA

Entire Website

The Purdue OWL. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2016.

Individual Resources

Contributors' names and the last edited date can be found in the orange boxes at the top of every page on the OWL.

Contributors' names. "Title of Resource." *The Purdue OWL*, Purdue U Writing Lab, Last edited date.

Russell, Tony, et al. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*, Purdue U Writing Lab, 2 Aug. 2016.

- [APA](#)

General Format

Summary:

APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. This resource, revised according to the 6th edition, second printing of the APA manual, offers examples for the general format of APA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the reference page. For more information, please consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, (6th ed., 2nd printing).

Contributors: Joshua M. Paiz, Elizabeth Angeli, Jodi Wagner, Elena Lawrick, Kristen Moore, Michael Anderson, Lars Soderlund, Allen Brizee, Russell Keck

Last Edited: 2018-02-21 02:26:13

Please use the example at the bottom of this page to cite the Purdue OWL in APA.

To see a side-by-side comparison of the three most widely used citation styles, including a chart of all APA citation guidelines, see the [Citation Style Chart](#).

You can also watch our [APA vidcast series](#) on the [Purdue OWL YouTube Channel](#).

General APA Guidelines

Your essay should be typed and double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11"), with 1" margins on all sides. You should use a clear font that is highly readable. APA recommends using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Include a **page header** (also known as the "**running head**") at the top of every page. To create a **page header/running head**, insert page numbers flush right. Then type "TITLE OF YOUR PAPER" in the header flush left using all capital letters. The **running head** is a shortened version of your paper's title and cannot exceed 50 characters including spacing and punctuation.

Major Paper Sections

Your essay should include **four** major sections: the **Title Page**, **Abstract**, **Main Body**, and **References**.

Title Page

The title page should contain the **title** of the paper, the **author's name**, and the **institutional affiliation**. Include the page header (described above) flush left with the page number flush right at the top of the page. Please note that on the title page, your page header/running head should look like this:

Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

Pages after the title page should have a running head that looks like this:

TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

After consulting with publication specialists at the APA, OWL staff learned that the APA 6th edition, first printing sample papers have **incorrect** examples of running heads on pages after the title page. This [link](#) will take you to the APA site where you can find a complete list of all the errors in the APA's 6th edition style guide.

Type your **title** in upper and lowercase letters centered in the upper half of the page. APA recommends that your title be no more than 12 words in length and that it should not contain abbreviations or words that serve no purpose. Your title may take up one or two lines. All text on the title page, and throughout your paper, should be double-spaced.

Beneath the title, type the **author's name**: first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Do not use titles (Dr.) or degrees (PhD).

Beneath the author's name, type the **institutional affiliation**, which should indicate the location where the author(s) conducted the research.

The Purdue Online Writing Lab's Sample Title Page:
Following the American Psychological Association's Guidelines
Purdue Pete
Purdue University

Abstract

Begin a new page. Your abstract page should already include the **page header** (described above). On the first line of the abstract page, center the word “Abstract” (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks).

Beginning with the next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research. (Do not indent.) Your abstract should contain at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions. You may also include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings. Your abstract should be a single paragraph, double-spaced. Your abstract should be between 150 and 250 words.

You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, indent as you would if you were starting a new paragraph, type *Keywords:* (italicized), and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.

Abstract

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Donec non pretium ante. Phasellus tincidunt tristique est vitae tempor. Curabitur eros orci, accumsan vel porttitor vel, dignissim ac sem. Class aptent taciti sociosqu ad litora torquent per conubia nostra, per inceptos himenaeos. Vivamus sagittis mauris eget augue bibendum iaculis. Maecenas rutrum, diam non condimentum convallis, arcu dolor suscipit justo, ultrices tincidunt enim turpis vel felis. Nullam fringilla fermentum orci, at euismod nibb blandit faucibus. Nam ultricies adipiscing orci vitae adipiscing. Cras pretium ipsum vitae orci tincidunt dapibus et nec diam. Nullam in tellus vel turpis sagittis posuere. Nam pellentesque laoreet magna sit amet adipiscing. Pellentesque ante arcu, porta eget dignissim ut, rhoncus eget est. Sed euismod, quam eu viverra pretium, magna velit dignissim lectus, sed dictum nisi mauris a arcu. Curabitur sit amet est aliquet turpis interdum ornare. In placerat vestibulum commodo. Nulla vitae arcu risus. Duis vel urna ut dolor pulvinar placerat. Aliquam sagittis pulvinar ultricies.

Keywords: lorem ipsum, nulla vitae

Please see our [Sample APA Paper](#) resource to see an example of an APA paper. You may also visit our [Additional Resources](#) page for more examples of APA papers.

How to Cite the Purdue OWL in APA

Individual Resources

Contributors' names and the last edited date can be found in the orange boxes at the top of every page on the OWL.

Contributors' names (Last edited date). *Title of resource*. Retrieved from <http://Web address> for OWL resource

Angeli, E., Wagner, J., Lawrick, E., Moore, K., Anderson, M., Soderlund, L., & Brizee, A. (2010, May 5). *General format*. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

- [American Sociological Association](#)

Manuscript Formatting

Summary:

This resource covers American Sociological Association (ASA) style and includes information about manuscript formatting, in-text citations, formatting the references page, and accepted manuscript writing style. The bibliographical format described here is taken from the *American Sociological Association (ASA) Style Guide*, 5th edition.

Contributors: Joshua M. Paiz, Deborah L. Coe, Dana Lynn Driscoll

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Title Page

Include a separate title page with the full title of the manuscript, authors' names and institutions (listed vertically if there are more than one), and a complete word count of the document (which includes footnotes and references).

A title footnote should include the address of the corresponding author (that is – the author who receives correspondence regarding the article), grants/funding, and additional credits and acknowledgements (for papers for sociology classes, this is often not needed).

Abstract

If an abstract is needed, it should be on a separate page, immediately after the title page, with the title of the document as the heading.