



25 Writing Tips

Punctuation

1. Proper comma usage. Refer to the handout on [25 Comma Rules](#).
2. Proper use of the hyphen. Refer to the *Gregg Reference Manual*.
3. Proper use of the apostrophe, particularly NOT with pronouns to show possession.
4. **NEW to APA 6:** Two spaces between sentences.

Capitalization & Spelling

5. Accurate capitalization. Refer to the *Gregg Reference Manual*.
6. **NEW to APA 6:** The word *web* is a common noun and should not be capitalized. The word *website* is written as one word. Also note that *e-mail* is spelled with a hyphen and *online* is spelled without a hyphen. Refer to www.apastyle.org/spelling.html for all electronic words and their spelling guidelines.

Word Usage & Sentence Structure

7. Spell out numbers less than ten.
8. No contractions.
9. No prepositions at the end of a sentence, and no conjunctions at the start of a sentence.
10. Avoid starting a sentence with the word "There" and "It."
11. Omit informal and colloquial expressions. Avoid wordiness and redundancy. Use strict formal, academic writing.
12. Avoid the following informal words: get, like, really, lots, very, a lot.
13. Subjects must agree with verbs, pronouns, and objects. (If your subject is singular, such as 'a teacher' or 'a student,' do not use 'their,' 'they,' or other plural pronouns.)
14. Proper usage of "that" vs. "which." **That** is used with a restrictive clause (the information is necessary to the meaning of the sentence) and does not require a comma. **Which** is used with non-restrictive clauses (the information is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence and could be removed). You must use a comma before a **which**-clause.
15. Proper usage of "that" vs. "who." **That** is used with animals and things (The textbook that). **Who** is used the people (The teacher who....).
16. Clarify referents when using "it," "that," "they," and "this."
17. Avoid gender bias; do not use **he/she** or **s/he** combinations. Where possible, rewrite the sentence to avoid the need for **he** or **she**. You can often change the

subject to a plural subject which accepts **they** and **their** without gender bias. For strict formal writing, avoid the use of **you** and **your**.

18. Paragraphs should contain more than one sentence.
19. Avoid sentence fragments.

APA Formatting Guidelines

20. Include a title page with papers.
21. Title appears again at the top of page two.
22. Include page headers with papers (the title page is page #1). The page header is aligned flush right with the short title, five spaces, and the page number.
23. Double space ALL of the paper, including the title page, reference, and block quotations.
24. **NEW to APA6:** Both bulleted and numbered lists may be used. **Bold** may not be used (except in headings). Instead, use italics for emphasis.
25. For in-text citations: "Direct quotation text goes here" (Author, Date, p. or pp. #).
Notice the quotation mark at the end of the short quotation, one space, opening parenthesis, the author's last name, a comma and one space, the date of publication, a comma and one space, the letter-p to indicate page number (or *pp* to indicate more than one page), a period and one space, the page number, the closing parenthesis, and the period ending the quote's sentence. For electronic sources, use **para.** for the paragraph number when page numbers are not available. **NEW to APA6:** Do not use the pilcrow symbol (¶) to designate a paragraph.

[APA Reference Card](#) (PDF, 60 KB) -- print this back-to-back on nice card stock or heavy photo paper using a color printer. Depending on your version of Adobe Reader, you may need to right-click on this link and "Save Target As..."