

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

NOTE: All text is taken verbatim from:

American Psychological Association (1997). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Fourth Edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association (pp. 26-105). [Text has been digested by quoted exactly. Examples have been edited or added to fit the discipline.]

Writing Style

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

Economy of Expression

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

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

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

They were *both* alike.

A *total of* 68 participants.

Four *different* groups saw

Instructions which were *exactly* the same as

Absolutely essential

Has been *previously* found

Small *in size*

One and the same

In close proximity

Completely unanimous

Just exactly

Very close to significance

The reason is *because*

Precision and Clarity

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

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

GRAMMAR

Verbs

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

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

Agreement of Subject and Verbs

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

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

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

Pronouns

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

That versus Which

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

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

While and Since

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

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

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

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

Imprecise: *While these findings are unusual, they are not unique.*

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

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

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

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

EDITORIAL STYLE

“Editorial style concerns uniform use of punctuation and abbreviations, construction of tables, selection of headings, and citation of references, as well as many other elements that are part of every manuscript” (p. 61)

Punctuation

Comma:

Use a comma

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

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

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

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

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

To separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction

Example: *The child's mother was interviewed, and she reported that....*

To set off the year in exact dates

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

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

Do not use a comma

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

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

Between the two parts of a compound predicate

Example: *The child's mother was interviewed and reported that...*

To separate parts of measurement

Example: *This 4 year 3 month old boy*

Quotation Marks