Academic Writing Reminders and Common Errors to Avoid in Class Assignments

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Is it hard to write?

Too much direct quotation

Over-reliance on long direct quotations. You might as well tell others to read the other work rather than yours.

Clear thinking becomes clear writing; one can’t exist without the other

William Zinsser

Most first drafts can be cut by 50 percent without losing any information or losing the author’s voice.

William Zinsser

- www.writerswrite.co.za
What is Scholarly Writing?

If you are just beginning your graduate studies, much of the next few years of your life will be devoted to scholarly writing. You will be reading, discussing, and producing scholarly writing. You will get feedback from peers, instructors, and the Writing Center staff about how to adapt to the expectations of scholarly writing. You hear about it so much, in fact, that you may hesitate to ask the basic question: "What is scholarly writing?"

Scholarly writing is a type of writing rather than a level of writing (there is no hierarchy in writing genres). Scholarly writing isn't better than journalism, fiction, or poetry; it is just a different category. As with any type of writing, scholarly writing has traditions and expectations that you know about only if you read or write in that style. Because most of us do not use scholarly writing in our daily practice, it can feel unfamiliar and intimidating, but it is a skill that can be learned. The more you are immersed in it, the more you will get a feeling for its hallmarks. Here are a few of the most common characteristics of scholarly writing:

- The wording in scholarly writing is specialized, requiring previous knowledge on the part of the reader. You won't be able to pick up a scholarly journal in another field and easily understand its contents (although you should be able to follow the writing itself). Scholarly authors assume that their audience is familiar with fundamental ideas and terms in their field, and they do not typically define them for the reader.
- Scholarly writing communicates original thought, whether through primary research or analysis that presents a unique perspective on previous research. In a scholarly work, the author is expected to have insights on the issue at hand, but those insights must be grounded in research and analysis rather than personal experience or opinion.
- Scholarly writing includes careful citation of sources and the presence of a bibliography or reference list. The writing is informed by and shows engagement with the larger body of literature on the topic at hand, and all assertions are supported by peer-reviewed, current sources.
- Formal language is expected in scholarly writing, although the definition of formal varies over time and by field. Most current fields agree, however, that colloquialisms, slang, contractions, biased language, rhetorical questions, and second person pronouns should be avoided.

Writing at the Doctoral Level

Writing at the doctoral level can appear to be confusing and intimidating. It can be difficult to determine exactly what the scholarly voice is and how to transition to graduate-level writing. But, there are some elements of writing to consider when writing to a scholarly audience: Word Choice, Tone, and Evidence Usage. If you understand and employ scholarly voice rules, you will master writing at the doctoral level.

Word Choice: When writing for faculty and your peers at Walden, you will be addressing a formal audience and you will want to use scholarly language. This means you should use simple and concise
language, and eliminate unnecessary information. According to APA (2010), "Say only what needs to be said" (p. 67).

- Avoid casual language. Eliminate contractions (can't, won't), metaphors or figures of speech (her writing was as clear as mud), slang expressions or cliché phrases (she'll get over it), and adjectives and qualifiers (very, major).
- Eliminate pronoun usage (you, we, us, our). Generally, you also want to avoid using the personal I in an academic paper unless you are writing a reflection paper or are referring to research that you have conducted.
- Use shorter sentences. Do not use big words for the sake of sounding scholarly. "The individuals utilized their writing utensils in order to complete the learning tools in the learning institution." It would be easier to instead say "The students used pencils to fill out the answers on the test at school."
- Be consistent with your labels. Call people what they want to be called. Use gender inclusive language (policeperson). Avoid placing gender identifiers in front of nouns (male nurse, female doctor).

Tone: You should speak as an objective social scientist. This means that everything you say must be unbiased, scholarly, and supported by evidence. According to APA (2010), "arguments should be presented in a noncombative manner" (p. 66).

- Avoid making broad generalizations (always and never).
- Avoid using over-sweeping adjectives (outstanding, obvious).
- Avoid using adverbs (really, clearly).
- Avoid qualifiers (a little, definitely).
- Avoid emotional language (It is heartbreaking that so many are starving).
- Avoid inflammatory language (Smith's study was terrible, sickening, sad).

Use of evidence: Everything you say must be supported by evidence. When you make an assertion, a citation should be nearby to help prove your assertion.

- Avoid using block quotes, or a lot of direct quotes in your paper. You should have less than 10% direct quotes in your paper. You should paraphrase instead. If you do use a direct quote, you should provide analysis before and after the quote. Do not begin or end a paragraph with a direct quote.
- Paraphrase whenever possible. Paraphrasing demonstrates your critical engagement with the text and strengthens your academic argument. Please visit http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/33.htm for help paraphrasing in your paper.
- Evidence should be from peer-reviewed journals, books, and scholarly websites.

Before you write something, ask yourself the following:

- Is this objective?
- Am I speaking as a social scientist? Am I using the literature to support my assertions?
- Could this be offensive to someone?
- Could this limit my readership?

Employing these rules when writing will help ensure that you are speaking as a social scientist. Your writing will be clear and concise, and this will allow your content to shine through.
A Few Academic Writing Reminders and Some Common Errors to Avoid in your Class Assignments

Robert W. Hill, Ed.D., Associate Professor

- You are in *doctoral* program (not *doctorate* program) as you are earning your doctorate or your doctoral degree.
- The plural of curriculum is not “curriculums” (it is *curricula*). Also, when writing about higher (tertiary) education and not K-12 (primary & secondary education), use college or university (or postsecondary institution) instead of *school*, AND use professor, faculty member, instructor -- instead of *teacher*.
- Unless in a discussion board posting (or peer reply) or specifically stated in an assignment’s directions – in “academic writing” you do not get to voice your own personal opinion as you as supposedly citing current scholarly sources from the experts/gurus to support your claims/ assertions.
- Follow all the directions in terms of the min. number of pages required or sources used, or the use of *current* sources (including utilizing the required course textbooks). Make sure you also are using good academic references/scholarly journals (not *Wikipedia*) or seminal texts. You also need to use outside sources and not only use the required textbooks from your other graduate courses.
- Include both an *Introduction* (an overview with a purpose statement) and Conclusion (which summarizes and does not introduce any new points or information) and they should both be rather general (w/o multiple citations) and balanced in length – yet not identical.
- Make sure that Level I and Level II (III) **headers** match verbatim with what is listed in the *Table of Contents*. Remember at the Fischler College of Education we do **not** use a “running header” that appears on all the pages as in APA.
- Use proper 1” X 1” margins (top/bottom and left/right – except for the *Applied Dissertation*) and pagination (suppress the page number on the title page, but the Table of Contents is actually page 2). Also use upper-right corner for page numbers; and please use only 12-pitch font (*Arial*, Times New Roman, etc..) throughout your paper.
Indent all paragraphs, use double spacing throughout the paper, and do not hit return twice between paragraphs; however, we (Fischler College) use single spacing within all the entries on the Reference Page.

Avoid improper Justification (use left-justification only with ragged right-hand side).

Watch Reference page format (in alphabetical order with the proper capitalization, city & state abbreviation; no live urls or hyperlinks (deactivate that feature), etc. Also, if you have several sources by the same author & the same exact year -- use 2015a 2015b, etc. For periodicals (i.e., *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, etc,) provide the year in parenthesis along with the date 2015, June 5).

Avoid any citations not matching the references listed (misspelled names or incorrect year). Watch *et al. Check APA manual*

Not using the past tense when citing – always use the past tense. For example, Hill (2015) wrote . . .

Too much quoting and relying on someone else’s verbatim words even if you are correctly citing – remember a doctoral paper is not a series of quotes, one after another. Paraphrase more and quote less.

Too much of the same one source cited throughout or repeatedly next to another identical citation.

Make sure all quotes and/or statistics, etc., have a page number (or a paragraph # if from a website) with the citation.

Please do not have any lists of bulleted information or block (over 40 words) quotations. *Synthesize* the material or information and use an *ellipsis* to show either some words ( . . . ) or whole sentences ( . . . . ) were omitted to avoid any block quotes.

Avoid any gender-biased language.

Avoid Pronoun-Antecedent & Subject-Verb Agreement errors (not matching: singular–plural. For example, The college needs to update their *its* strategic plan, etc.). Turn up the original preset or defaulted grammar-checker settings in *MS-Word* on all the computers you use to compose so that you can work smarter, not harder. (Go to *Word Options*, then *Proofing*, then *settings* and toggle down and check *all* the boxes and then click *ok*).

Avoid any sentence errors (fragments & run-ons) and paragraph errors (1-sentence paragraphs, or paragraphs that go on and on for one-two pages).

Turn all rhetorical questions into declarative sentences.

Write out all numbers under 10.
• Watch clichés (“the real world” etc.), the use of apostrophe and possessives; no 1st person pronouns (I, me, my, we, our, us) or 2nd person pronouns (you, your); AND avoid making hasty generalizations (about all colleges/universities or all students or all faculty); or using acronyms that aren’t defined, etc.
• Use transitional devices between paragraphs and not firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, etc.
• Not using specific details and fully explaining what you mean; provide explicit example(s) to help support, illustrate or explain your points.
• Do not use the research suggests or studies have found or the literature stated (avoid all anthropomorphism–personification).
• Avoid all plagiarism – even inadvertent - make sure that your professors cannot write in the margin “According to whom?” or “Where is this from?” or “Is this a quote?” A simple rule of thumb, when in doubt – cite!
• Proofread the “final draft” prior to uploading (assuming that you already thoroughly edited, and then revised the previous versions).
• Do not submit papers “late” without first checking with the faculty member.

R Hill
11/29/2015
A literature review is a review of a collection of published research relevant to a research question(s). All good research and writing is guided by a review of the relevant literature. It is an essential test of the research questions against that which is already known about the subject. In other words, the literature review reveals whether or not a research question(s) has been already been answered by someone else. If it has, often the question needs to be changed or modified, so than an original contribution to the research can be made. *(Always use the past tense).*

Possible Citation Verbs to Use in Literature Review

**Example:** *Hill (2016) wrote*

- Accepted
- accounted
- acknowledged
- added
- admitted
- advised
- advocated
- affirmed
- alleged
- alluded to
- announced
- argued
- asked
- asserted
- assumed
- attached
- attested
- avowed
- cautioned
- championed
- chronicled
- cited
- claimed
- clarified
- commanded
- commented
- conceded
- conceived
- concluded
- confirmed
- contended
- construed
- counseled
- declared
- deduced
- defended
- defined
- demanded
- demonstrated
- depicted
- described
- detailed
- determined
- directed
- divulged
- elucidated
- emphasized
- envisioned
- estimated
- explained
- expounded
- expressed
- hinted
- illuminated
- included
- indicated
- informed
- insisted
- interpreted
- intimated
- maintained
- mentioned
- narrated
- noted
- noticed
- observed
- opined
- pointed out
- portended
- portrayed
- preached
- presented
- proclaimed
- professed
- proffered
- proposed
- proved
- quoted
- rationalized
- regarded
- recognized
- recommended
- recounted
- referred to
- reflected
- remarked
- reported
- resolved
- saw
- showed
- speculated
- stated
- stressed
- submitted
- suggested
- supported
- told
- thought
- uncovered
- upheld
- warned
- wrote
Robert’s Cliché/Idiom “Work” list

24-7-365
800-pound gorilla
A drop in the bucket
A loose cannon
Above and beyond the call of duty
Above board
Against the grain
Ahead of the curve
All in the same boat
Ball is in your court
Back to the drawing board
Back to square one
Back to the salt mines
Backroom deal
Backseat driver
Bad hair day
Ball is in your court
Ballpark number
Be in hot water
Be in the dark
Be on the same page (wavelength)
Be up in arms
Bit off more than you can chew
Bottom line
Burn your bridges
By the book
Call the shots
Calm before the storm
Can’t beat them join them
Can’t see the forest for the trees
Come down like a ton of bricks
Come hell or high water
Curry favor
Cut to the chase
Day late and a dollar short
Dead in the water
Do I look like a turnip that just fell off the turnip truck?
Don’t want to cover old ground
Drink the Kool-Aid
Drive up the wall
Face the music
Fine print
Foam at the mouth
For crying out loud
Game changer
Game plan
Game the system
Gentleman’s agreement
Get off my back
Get your comeuppance
Get your dander up
Gin up
Give a little, take a little
Give the all clear
Given free rein
Gloves are off
Go off the deep end
Go out on a limb
Go the extra mile
Go through the roof
Go viral
Gray area
Ground-breaking
Half a mind
Hands are tied
Haul over the coals
Have an axe to grind
Have a bone to pick
Hindsight is always twenty-twenty
Hit the ground running
Hold sway
Hot off the press
If it ain’t broke – don’t fix it!
In a nutshell
In the offing
In the same boat
In the driver’s seat
Isn’t worth a plugged nickel
It’s Greek to me
Jump down someone’s throat
Keep your ear to the ground
Knee jerk reaction
Learn the ropes
Let sleeping dogs lie
Let your hair down
Low hanging fruit
Make a song and dance
Make no bones about it
Move the needle
Mum’s the word
My plate is full
Neither fish nor fowl
Neither here nor there
No brainer
No strings attached
Not going to fly
Oldest trick in the book
On the off-chance
On the QT
On the up and up
Out of the loop
Pass the buck
Play hardball
Press the panic button
Put that in your pipe and smoke it
Put through their paces
Quaking in one’s boots
Rack one’s brains
Raise eyebrows
Raise the bar
Read between the lines
Red tape
Ruffle someone’s feathers
Run it up the flagpole
Safety in numbers
Salt of the earth
Scream blue murder
See red
Set the record straight
Skin in the game
Split hairs
State of the art
Stoke the flames
Tail wagging the dog
Take a back seat
Take a rain check
Take it to the next level
Take the bull by the horns
Take with a grain of salt
That’s water under the bridge
The elephant in the room
The jury’s out
Think big
Think outside the box
Throw him under the bus
To add fuel to the fire
To be on the fence
To be swamped
To play the devil’s advocate
Top of the food chain
Touch base
Turn a deaf ear
Unchartered waters
Under the table
Until the cows come home
Uphill battle
Up in the air
Up the ante
Up to speed
Waiting in the wings
Want someone’s head on a platter
We are between a rock and a hard place
Win-win situation
Wolf in sheep’s clothing
Yes man
You don’t know the half of it
Your guess is as good as mine

RH
2/14/2016
LIST OF TRANSITIONAL WORDS FOR WRITING ESSAYS
John A. Braithwaite

The following is a list of transition words to help students write more fluent and meaningful essays.

I. Indicating similarity or addition:
   again equally in fact
   also equally important in general
   and for in the same fashion
   another for example likewise
   as for instance moreover
   as if further(more) of course
   as much as in addition similarly
   as though in addition to too
   besides in a like manner

II. Indicating dissimilarity, or contradiction
   although even though on the contrary
   and yet however on the other hand
   another in comparison otherwise
   as if in comparison to still
   away from in place of than
   besides in spite of unfortunately
   but instead unless
   by comparison less important whereas
   conversely neither while
   differing from nevertheless yet
   even if notwithstanding

III. Indicating cause, purpose, consequence, or result
   as for this reason provided that
   accordingly fortunately since
   as a result hence so
   because in any case then
   consequently in fact therefore
   for it began with thus
   finally of course unfortunately

IV. Indicating spatial order or reference
   above behind here
   across below in a corner
   across from beneath in back of
   adjacent beside in front of
TRANSITION WORDS AND PHRASES

For argumentation:
all in all
finally
first, second, third
for example
for instance
for these reasons
however
in addition
in brief
in short
in summary
in conclusion
in other words
nevertheless
on the one hand...on the other
hand
still
thus
therefore
as a result
yet

To contrast:
although
but
conversely
despite
even though
however
in contrast
instead
nevertheless
nonetheless
on the contrary
on the one hand...on the
other hand
still
unlike
whereas
yet

To narrate:
first
second
next
then
later
at the same time
meanwhile
immediately
soon
before
earlier
after
afterward
now
finally
time markers such as three
years later, in 1927, etc.

To show cause and effect:
so
therefore
because
as a result
since
led to
brought
about
caus ed

To describe:
above
adjacent to
at the bottom
at the top
behind
below
beyond
in front of
in the middle
next to
over
under
through
within

To classify and divide:
the first category, the second
category, etc.
one category, the next category,
another...etc.
a more important category, the
most important...etc.

To exemplify
another
for instance
in fact
namely
specifically
that is
thus

Courtesy: Jean Lorscheider-House
**Helpful Writing/APA Resources**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MLxg7dndmQ  
Setting the proofing options in Microsoft Word 2010

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBpKFHOjBv8  
How to Turn Grammar Check and Spell Check on and off in Microsoft® Word 2013

http://nova.campusguides.com/edd9200 searching for articles

http://sharkwrites.nova.edu/

http://apps.fischlerschool.nova.edu/toolbox/apastyle.html

http://education.nova.edu/applied-research/writing-and-preparing-the-dissertation.html

http://education.nova.edu/applied-research/research-and-dissertation-resources.html

http://nova.campusguides.com/writing

http://nova.campusguides.com/apa

http://www.apastyle.org

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_sy4LxaNwo  
APA Format Setup in Word 2010  
UPDATED

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Kt1P9hjU  
Microsoft Word 2010 APA Format Tutorial

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html#error