



Running head: GRADING WRITTEN WORK

## Tips for Assessing Students' Written Work

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Please use whichever parts of this document you find useful and contact the Writing Center ([writingcenter@webster.nl](mailto:writingcenter@webster.nl)) if you have any questions about plagiarism or APA formatting.

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**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Turn-it-in Review.....	3
2.1. Plagiarism .....	4
Direct Quotes .....	4
Reference Entries .....	4
In-text Citations .....	5
3. Using Google .....	5
4. APA Citations and References .....	5
4.1. In-text Citations .....	5
Whether citations are clear and abundant enough .....	6
Secondary and primary citations.....	7
The use of <i>et al.</i> in citations.....	8
4.2. Reference List .....	9
5. Recommended Activities/ Checklist.....	10
<b>References.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Appendix 1: Webster APA Quick Guide.....	11

## 1. Introduction

This document was designed for use in assessing written assignments including essays, research papers, presentation slides or handouts, reports, thesis or grant proposals, and theses. The grading of written works requires adequate attention to the documentation of sources. Instructors are responsible for checking whether students have adequately represented the ideas expressed in previous research (to avoid fabrication), and at the same time, for checking whether the sources students use are correctly documented. Being on top of the current literature in your field already diminishes a lot of the effort required in these regards. However, the APA guidelines themselves can also be a helpful tool for assessing the originality of a student paper. For example, if a student follows the basic guidelines for citations in most places but not in all, deviations can indicate potential signs of plagiarism. Therefore, it is important to have knowledge of the current APA guidelines.

The present document formatting, including citations, References, headings, font, margins, and spacing, follows the specifications outlined in the APA's *Publication Manual* (American Psychological Association, 2010). Complete details (with examples) for formatting APA references and citations can be found in Fowler and Aaron (2016).

## 2. Turn-it-in Review

Before you begin grading an assignment, it is important to check the details of the Turn-it-in review. Simply looking at the similarity score will not tell you much about plagiarism, as the score is a total percentage of the student text that is an exact replication of the text in other papers and online sources. Thus, a score of 50% seems at first glance very high; however, if the document contains an unusually high ratio of references to text, then the score may not indicate

any plagiarism. **It is the instructor's responsibility to check the details of the text** (highlighted in the Turn-it-in review) that appears exactly the same as text in other documents.

### **2.1. Plagiarism**

If any phrases that constitute **more than one specialized term** are found in the student text, reproduced exactly the same as in another document (without indicating that a direct quote was taken), you should highlight or underline this part of the text and indicate it as plagiarism by typing or writing PLAGIARIAM and take the appropriate measures. The following should be focal points while you investigate the Turn-it-in review:

**Direct Quotes:** Direct quotes from articles will likely turn up in the Turn-it-in review; make sure that the student has provided the page or paragraph following the direct quote, as is required by APA specifications (see Appendix 1 for details). Furthermore, for short quotes (fewer than 40 words), make sure the student has indicated the direct quote through the use of quotation marks (double in American English); for long quotes (40 words or more), APA specifies block formatting without quotation marks. Of course, the page or paragraph number must still be included in the citation. If a student fails to provide quotation marks (or special block formatting for long quotes), this is considered a severe form of plagiarism. If a page number is lacking but quotes are indicated, points should be taken off from APA formatting, if that is included in the rubric.

**Reference Entries:** Reference entries, if they are formatted correctly, should show up exactly the same as in other available papers; they will thus be highlighted in the Turn-it-in review. Therefore, you may also check the student's formatting of References by consulting the Turn-it-in review. Be aware, however, that not all available papers use APA style. It is important to use an APA formatting guide if you are not familiar with the conventions.

**In-text Citations:** It is a common form of plagiarism for students to steal citations from other available papers, without having read them. This is considered plagiarism, and there are **specific conventions for indicating secondary sources** (see Section 4 and the APA Quick Guide in Appendix 1). Therefore, always be aware of lists of citations that appear the same as in published (or otherwise available) works; if there are items listed that you do not think the student has access to, investigate further by checking whether these items are readily available in Webster's online library or on Google.

### 3. Using Google

Not all previously written works are available in Turn-it-in databases. There are many other ways in which you can check suspicious texts; if some sentences seem better constructed than most (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, style, flow), you can copy and paste these into a browser and see if anything comes up as an exact match. If any **word strings longer than three words** (unless those three words constitute non-changeable terminology) are found, indicate this as PLAGIARISM in your feedback.

### 4. APA Citations and References

For the details of APA formatting of citations and references, please see the Webster University APA Quick Guide (Appendix 1), or a similar guide (e.g., Purdue).

#### 4.1. In-text Citations

All written works should follow the conventions for citing sources in text, including written supplements to presentations, e.g., slides and handouts. **It is not enough to provide only a list of References at the end of a presentation, not indicating which slides contain information from which sources.**

**Whether citations are clear and abundant enough:** The APA publication manual provides explicit direction on the documentation of sources. First, every sentence that alludes to other work should include a citation; therefore, citations to a given author should be repeated in every sentence that describes that author's work. **This is not considered repetitive.** Remember, students can choose either explicit or implicit citing styles to avoid excessive repetition and may also carry over a citation to the next sentence by using "this author"; the basic requirement is that it always be clear what material comes from where.

**Unclear student paper that does not follow APA conventions:**

Kroch defines language change as a "failure in transmission" of linguistic features from one generation to the next (2008, p. 2). In terms of syntax, one possibility is that "change at other levels of structure, however caused, provokes grammatical reanalysis" (p. 4).

**Problem:** Sentence contains an incomplete citation (only a page number).

**Remedy:** Repeat author's name and year in the second sentence (see example below)

**Clear student paper that follows APA conventions:**

Kroch defines language change as a "failure in transmission" of linguistic features from one generation to the next (2008, p. 2). In terms of syntax, one possibility is that "change at other levels of structure, however caused, provokes grammatical reanalysis" (Kroch, 2008, p. 4).

**Secondary and primary citations:** Check the student’s use of secondary citations, which are probably necessary, at least in certain assignments. Remember, a secondary citation is a citation to a work that the author has not him/herself read, but has found in other research. Secondary sources do not have to be cited in full, but the primary source should be cited in full, including the phrase “as cited in X,” where X is the primary source. Remember, citing in full means including the last name and the year of publication or release. **If any direct quotes are taken (either from the primary source directly or from the secondary source through the primary source), the page or paragraph number must be included.**

**Incorrect use of secondary sources:** The theory of evolution, also known as natural selection, is how organisms adapt through time due to changes in “heritable physical or behavioral properties” (Than, 2015; Darwin, 1859).

**Assuming:**

Than, 2015: Primary Source (read and used by student)

Darwin, 1859: Secondary Source (not read by student directly)

**Problem:** The student has listed Darwin (1859) as a primary source, when (s)he is not likely to have ever read it. The fact that there is a direct quote makes this especially ambiguous as it is not clear from which author the quote is from.

**Correct use of secondary sources:**

Darwin's theory of evolution describes the processes organisms go through over time due to changes in "heritable physical or behavioral traits" (as cited in Than, 2015, para. 1).

**The use of *et al.* in citations:** The phrase *et al.* should be used in the following cases:

- When citing a paper of 6 or more authors (Firstauthor et al., year).
- When citing a paper by 3-5 authors, **after it has already been cited in full once** (it does **not** have to be cited in full in every section).

If a student does not follow these conventions consistently, it could indicate too much reliance on the formatting of the student's primary sources or even plagiarism (i.e., copying existing citations from available literature reviews without reading these sources).

**Incorrect (possibly suspicious) use of *et al.*:**

Previous research already points out the importance of a strong research design (Aroni & Meiers, 2008; Fischer et al., 2007; Smith, 2004; Williams & Carney, 2008).

Check the references list if you are unaware of which paper the student is citing. If the paper has 3-5 authors (see the box below),

**References**

Fischer, A. K., Donaldson, M., Fuller, D., & Rooney, C. M. (2007). Article title:  
Subtitle, if existing. *Journal Name*, 4, 456-467. doi:10./47593.EXAMPLE



and this is the first time in the paper that the student cites the paper, it may indicate that the student has copied this list of citations from somebody else's literature review. If that is the case, you will likely find this list of citations in the Turn-it-in review. If there is no plagiarism, the writing center still recommends making note of the incorrect use of *et al.*

Correct use of *et al.*:

According to Fischer, Donaldson, Fuller, and Rooney, strong research design delimits the possible outcomes of a study (2007). The reason for this is.... (Fischer et al., 2007).

#### 4.2. Reference List

The following list contains typical errors made by students in the formatting of References (due to use of tools that are not 100% accurate, or to lack of understanding and/or negligence).

- Capitalization of article and book titles (Informative and concise title: Subtitle, if present);
- DOI or retrieval statement missing (Keep in mind, most peer-reviewed articles have DOIs);
- Retrieval date included for peer-reviewed articles (retrieval dates should only be included for web sites/pages with changeable content, e.g., Wikipedia);
- Issue numbers included for peer-reviewed articles (issue numbers should only be included when journals do NOT consecutively paginate across issues, or in absence of page numbers);
- Alphabetical order > Chronological order of Reference entries;
- List formatting (should not contain bullets or a numbered list; entries should be formatted with hanging indentation, with no extra line spaces between entries);

- Title of a Web page/site listed in author position (if an article has no listed author, students should use the article title in author position; however, this is only for articles, not web sites, pages, or blogs. See Appendix 1 for the formatting of web sources);
- Long URLs with hyperlinks (hyperlink should be removed and the URL to the home page given).

### **5. Recommended Activities/ Checklist**

1. Check the Turn-it-in Review; if any entire clauses or sentences are found copied (without the student having indicated that these are quotations), make this clear in your feedback and see Webster's policy on plagiarism.

2. Cross-check items cited in text with items listed in the References; if there is no 1-1 match, indicate that this a violation of APA conventions on documenting sources. [Remember, students should **not** list secondary sources in the References list, so take this into account in your check.]

3. If part of your rubric contains APA References, check the student's implementation of the guidelines on both citations and references (e.g., the APA Quick Guide in Appendix 1).

4. If you are unsure of the proper formatting of a given document type, please send an email to the Writing Center ([writingcenter@webster.nl](mailto:writingcenter@webster.nl)) or stop by the center (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday in Spring, 2017).

5. If you are in doubt about potential plagiarism, you can always consult the writing center for support.

### References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2016). *The little, brown handbook*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

### Appendix 1: Webster APA Quick Guide

#### I. In-text citations

##### A. Explicit vs. implicit style (note use of &)

- Haugen identifies this as a language contact situation (1966a, 1966b). [EXP]
- Collins and Mees (2008) describe three variants of English. [EXP]
- This is identified as a language contact situation (Haugen, 1966; Speas, 1970). [IMP]
- Three variants of English are described (Collins & Mees, 2008). [IMP]

**B. Direct quotation (short quote):** provide a page number (or paragraph number of the document is non-paginated) and use quotation marks to indicate direct copies:

- Ritter (2013) argues for a “model of communication rather than a model of grammar” (**para. 10**).
- However, “pidgins change more rapidly than creoles” (Haugen, 1966, **p. 28**).

**C. Direct quotation (long quote of 40 words or more):** Set of the quote with line spaces and do not use quotation marks; always indicate the page number(s). Note the position of the period:

Freewriting is a brainstorming activity in which you write freely about a topic because you are looking for a specific focus. While you are writing, one idea will spark another idea. As with listening, the purpose of freewriting is to generate as many ideas as

possible and to write them down without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, or organization. (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, pp. 267-268)

**D. Citing secondary sources** (texts the author has not read, and therefore, which do not have to be listed in the References) through primary sources (texts the author has read, and therefore, which do have to be listed in the References; in the following, Marx is the secondary, and Walicki, the primary source:

- **Implicit style:** Marx envisioned freedom as the ability “to exercise conscious rational control over his environment and over his own social forces” (as cited in Walicki, 1983, paras. 2-3).
- **Explicit style:** According to Walicki (1983), Marx understood freedom as the ability to “exercise conscious rational control over his environment and over his own social forces” (paras. 2-3).

**E. Citing 3-5 authors:** list all on first citation; subsequently, use *et al.*:

- Ladusaw, Keen, Murray, and Carsten (2010) demonstrate the following developing trends..... Therefore, according to Ladusaw et al. (2010), certain reforms are needed.

**F. Citing 6 or more authors:** Use *et al.* every time:

- Gilder et al. (2015) list the following.

**G. No individual author name:**

G.1. Cite a research group: (Lenshow Research, 2013).

G.2. If an author refers to him/herself as anonymous, use this in the citation: (Anonymous, 2013).

G.3. Cite the article title in quotations: (“Leaping the Wall,” 2013). **NOTE: only for articles, not web sites or web pages.**

G.4. Website or webpage with no author: (www.cyberbullying.us)

**H. No date:** use “n.d.” but try to find an item that has a date, which may be more reliable:

- Collins (n.d.) provides the following analysis.... **[EXPLICIT]**
- However, an alternative analysis has been provided (Collins, n.d.). **[IMPLICIT]**

**II. References:** in the following sample References list, the type of item being referenced is given at the end **[in bold and within square brackets]**. **This is not part of the reference entry itself.**

### References

Atkinson, M., Kilby, D., & Roca, I. (1982). *Foundations of general linguistics*. London, UK:

George Allen and Unwin. **[print book with multiple authors]**

Cyberbullying Research Center. (n.d.). [Web site]. Retrieved February 1, 2016 from

<http://cyberbullying.us> **[web site with a group author]**

Haugen, E. (1966a). Dialect, language, nation. *American Anthropologist*, 68, 922-935.

doi:10.1525/aa.1966.68.4.02a00040 **[journal article with continuous page numbering across issues and a DOI]**

Haugen, E. (1966b). *Language conflict and language planning: The case of modern Norwegian*.

Retrieved from <http://topicsinlanguageconflict.com> **[ebook]**

Herring, S. C. (1999). Interactional coherence in CMC. *Journal of Computer-Mediated*

*Communication*, 4(4). doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.1999.tb00106.x **[electronic journal article without pagination and with DOI]**

Labov, W. (1972). Rules for ritual insults. In D. Sudnow (Ed.), *Studies in social interaction* (pp.

120-169). New York, NY: Free Press. **[article/chapter in a print edited volume]**

Leaping the wall. (2013). Retrieved from <http://leapingthewall.on> **[online article with no listed**

**author and no DOI]**

LINGUIST List. (n.d.). MultiTree. [Web page]. Retrieved October 6, 2015 from

<http://linguistlist.org> [**one page of a Web site with no date]**

Van Nuys, D. (2014, March 23). Confronting the netherworld of child pornography. [Blog

comment]. Retrieved from <http://kristofblogs.nytimes.com> [**Blog comment]**

**Checklist:**

- Alphabetize entries by author's last name, then chronologically by year
- No line spaces between entries; hanging indentation
- Each item ends in a period unless it ends with a DOI or a retrieval link
- Journal articles: check whether the journal from which your article is coming from uses continuous pagination across issues or not; if so, do not include the issue number (Haugen, 1966a above); if not, or if the journal does not include page numbers, include the bracketed issue number (Herring, 1990 above).
- Ensure that there is no space between "doi:" and the number itself and that "doi" has not been autocorrected to "Doi."
- For online news articles, blog entries, and other informal posts, include the exact date it was placed online, if that information is available (van Nuys, 2014 above).
- Only when website have changeable content (e.g., Wikipedia) is it necessary to include a retrieval date (LINGUIST List, n.d. above).