APA GUIDELINES FOR GRAMMAR and PUNCTUATION

Note: The following information has been downloaded directly from the APA Style website of the American Psychological Association (APA) at http://www.apastyle.org This information has been compiled and reformatted by Lois E Brenneman, MSN, APN (www.npceu.com/fdu). It is intended to be used strictly for educational purposes with students enrolled in academic courses within a classroom or online course setting. These materials are copyrighted by the Americal Psychological Association (APA) and should not be circulated or distributed without express permission of the American Psychological Association • 750 First Street, NE • Washington, DC, 20002-4242 Telephone: 800-374-2721; 202-336-5510. TDD/TTY: 202-336-6123

When is it wrong to use a comma?

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 switch that stops the recording device also controls the light.

Between two parts of a compound predicate

<u>Example</u>: The results contradicted Smith's hypothesis and indicated that the effect was nonsignificant.

To separate parts of measurement

Example: 8 years 2 months

Example: 3 min 40 s

Hyphenation -

Hyphenation - General Principle 1

Do not use a hyphen unless it serves a purpose. If a compound adjective cannot be misread or, as with many psychological terms, its meaning is established, a hyphen is not necessary.

Example

- covert learning techniques
- health care reform
- day treatment program
- sex role differences
- grade point average

Hyphenation - General Principle 2

In a temporary compound that is used as an adjective before a noun, use a hyphen if the term can be misread or if the term expresses a single thought (i.e., all words together modify the noun).

Example:

"the adolescents resided in two parent homes" means that two homes served as residences, whereas if the adolescents resided in "two-parent homes," they each would live in a household headed by two parents.

- A properly placed hyphen helps the reader understand the intended meaning.
- Also use hyphens for compounds in which the base word is

Examples:

- capitalized: pro-Freudian

- a number: post-1970

- an abbreviation: pre-UCS trial

- more than one word: non-achievement-oriented students

► All "self-" compounds whether they are adjectives or nouns

Examples:

- self-report
- self-esteem
- the test was self-paced
- Words that could be misunderstood

Examples:

- re-pair [pair again]
- re- form [form again]
- un-ionized
- Words in which the prefix ends and the base word begins with the same vowel

Examples

- meta-analysis
- anti-intellectual
- co-occur

Hyphenation - General Principle 3

Most compound adjective rules are applicable only when the compound adjective precedes the term it modifies. If a compound adjective follows the term, do not use a hyphen, because relationships are sufficiently clear without one.

Example

client-centered counseling (but) the counseling was client centered

Example

t-test results (but)
results from t tests

Example

same-sex children (but) children of the same sex

Hyphenation - General Principle 4

Write most words formed with prefixes as one word.

Examples:

- aftereffect
- extracurricular
- multiphase
- socioeconomic

Hyphenation - General Principle 5

When two or more compound modifiers have a common base, this base is sometimes omitted in all except the last modifier, but the hyphens are retained.

<u>Example</u> - Long- and short-term memory Example - 2-, 3-, and 10-min trials

Use a colon

 Between a grammatically complete introductory clause (one that could stand as a sentence) and a final phrase or clause that illustrates, extends, or amplifies the preceding thought. If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter.

<u>Example</u> - Freud (1930/1961) wrote of two urges: an urge toward union with others and an egoistic urge toward happiness.

<u>Example</u> - They have agreed on the outcome: Informed participants perform better than do uninformed participants.

In ratios and proportions

Example - The proportion (salt:water) was 1:8.

In references between place of publication and publisher

Example - New York: Wiley. St. Louis, MO: Mosby.

When is it wrong and/or inappropriate to use a slash mark?

Do not use a slash (also called a virgule, solidus, or shill) when a phrase would be clearer

Example

Each child handed the ball to her mother or guardian (not) Each child handed the ball to her mother/guardian.

• For simple comparisons. Use a hyphen or short dash (en dash) instead.

Example

Test-retest reliability (not)
Test/retest reliability

 More than once to express compound units. Use centered dots and parentheses as needed to prevent ambiguity.

Example

```
nmol • hr-1 • mg -1 (not)
nmol/hr/mg
```

Verbs

Verbs are vigorous, direct communicators. Use the active rather than the passive voice, and select tense or mood carefully.

Example

Poor: The survey was conducted in a controlled setting. Better: We conducted the survey in a controlled setting.

Example

Poor: The experiment was designed by Simpson (2001). Better: Simpson (2001) designed the experiment.

Example

Poor: The participants were seated in comfortable chairs equipped with

speakers that delivered the tone stimuli.

Better Participants sat in comfortable chairs equipped with speakers

that delivered the tone stimuli.

Using brackets

To enclose parenthetical material that is already within parentheses.

<u>Example</u>: (The results for the control group [n = 8] are also presented in Figure 2.)

Exception 1:

Unnecessary: (as Imai [1990] later concluded) Better: (as Imai, 1990, later concluded)

Exception 2:

In mathematical material, the placement of brackets and parentheses is reversed; that is, parentheses appear within brackets.

To enclose material inserted in a quotation by some person other than the original writer.

Example: "when [his own and others] behaviors were studied" (Hanisch, 1992, p. 24)

Numbers Expressed in Words

According to the Publication Manual, you should use words to express any number that begins a sentence, title, or text heading. (Whenever possible, reword the sentence to avoid beginning with a number.)

Example:

- Ten participants answered the questionnaire.
- Forty-eight percent of the sample showed an increase; 2% showed no change.
- Four patients improved, and 4 patients did not improve.

Linguistic Devices

- Devices that attract attention to words, sounds or other embellishments instead of to ideas are inappropriate in scientific writing.
- Avoid heavy alliteration, rhyming, poetic expression, and clichés.
- Use metaphors sparingly; although they can help simplify complicated ideas, metaphors can be distracting.
- Avoid mixed metaphors (e.g., a theory representing one bunch of a growing body of evidence) and words with surplus or unintended meaning (e.g., cop for police officer), which may distract if not actually mislead the reader.
- Use figurative expressions with restraint and colorful expressions with care; these
 expressions can sound strained or forced.

Agreement of Subjects and Verbs

• A verb must agree in number (i.e., singular or plural) with its subject, regardless of intervening phrases that begin with such words as together, with, including, plus, and as well as.

Example:

<u>Incorrect</u>: The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increase with practice.

<u>Correct</u>: The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increases with practice.

How to avoid dangling modifiers

Dangling modifiers have no referent in the sentence. Many of these result from the use of the passive voice. By writing in the active voice you can avoid many dangling modifiers.

Example:

<u>Incorrect</u>: After separating the participants into groups, Group A was tested. <u>Correct</u>: After separating the participants into groups, I tested Group A. Comment: [I, not Group A, separated the participants into groups.]

<u>Incorrect</u>: The participants were tested using this procedure. <u>Correct</u>: Using this procedure, I tested the participants. Comment: [I, not the participants, used the procedure.]

<u>Incorrect</u>: To test this hypothesis, the participants were divided into two groups. <u>Correct</u>: To test this hypothesis, we divided the participants into two groups. Comment: [We, not the participants, tested the hypothesis.]

When to use a semicolon

To separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction

<u>Example</u>: The participants in the first study were paid; those in the second were unpaid.

To separate elements in a series

Example:

The color order was red, yellow, blue; blue, yellow, red; or yellow, red, blue. (Davis & Hueter, 1994; Pettigrew, 1993)

Example:

```
main effects of age, F(1, 76) = 7.86, p < .01, d = .09 (MSE = .019); condition, F(1,76) = 4.11, p = .05, d = .06; and the Age x Condition interaction, F(1, 76) = 4.96, p = .03, d = .07
```

Preferred Spelling

- The APA Publication Manual recommends Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as the standard spelling reference for APA journals and books. If a word is not in Webster's Collegiate, try consulting the more comprehensive Webster's Third New International Dictionary.
- If the dictionary gives a choice, use the first spelling listed; for example, use aging and canceled rather than ageing and cancelled.

How to Avoid 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 words in bold are redundant and should be omitted.

They were both alike
A total of 68 participants
Instructions, which were exactly the same as those used
Absolutely essential
Has been previously found
Small in size
One and the same
Completely unanimous
Period of time

Quotation Marks

Observe the following guidelines for uses of double quotation marks other than in material quoted directly from a source.

Use double quotation marks

 To introduce a word or phrase used as an ironic comment, as slang, or as an invented or coined expression. Use quotation marks the first time the word or phrase is used; thereafter, do not use quotation marks.

Example

- considered "normal" behavior
- the "good-outcome" variable...the good-outcome variable [no quotation marks after the initial usage.]
- To set off the title of an article or chapter in a periodical or book when the title is mentioned in text.

<u>Example</u>: Riger's (1992) article, "Epistemological Debates, Feminist Voices: Science, Social Values, and the Study of Woman"

- To reproduce material from a test item or verbatim instructions to participants
- Italics may sometimes be appropriate instead of quotes.

<u>Example</u>: Subjects in the *small* group [Small is italicized to prevent misreading. Here it means a group designation, not the size of the group.]

Use of Abbreviations

- To maximize clarity, APA prefers that authors use abbreviations sparingly. Although abbreviations are sometimes useful for long, technical terms in scientific writing, communication is usually garbled rather than clarified if, for example, an abbreviation is unfamiliar to the reader.
- APA style does permit the use of abbreviations that appear as word entries (i.e., that are not labeled abbr) in Webster's Collegiate. Such abbreviations do not need explanation in text.

Examples: IQ, REM, ESP, AIDS, HIV, NADP, ACTH

Using Parentheses

 According to APA style, it is correct to use parentheses to set off structurally independent elements.

Example: The patterns were significant (see Figure 5).

- (When a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place punctuation in the sentence inside the parentheses, like this.)
- If only part of a sentence is enclosed in parentheses (like this), place punctuation outside the parentheses (like this).