

Write On! for Counselling

*A guide for the presentation of Counselling assignments at
Australian Lutheran College (ALC)*

Λ | L | C

Write On! for Counselling

A guide for the presentation of Counselling Program student assignments at Australian Lutheran College (ALC).

A similar, but separate, guide exists for Ministry and Theology student assignments.

Copyright © 2025 Australian Lutheran College

While every effort has been made to ensure that the content of this guide is as accurate as possible at the time of publication, ALC reserves the right to update and amend as necessary.

Table of Contents

1.	Citations	5
1.1	Basic principles.....	5
1.2	Citation examples	5
1.3	Quotations	5
1.4	Translations.....	6
2.	References	7
2.1	Basic principles.....	7
2.2	Reference examples.....	7
2.3	Further information	8
3.	Style guidelines	8
3.1	Punctuation.....	8
3.2	Spelling and hyphenation	8
3.3	Capitalisation	9
3.4	Numbers.....	9
3.5	Italics and quotation marks.....	10
3.6	Abbreviations	10
3.7	Lists	10
3.8	Footnotes	10
4.	Grammar	11
4.1	First person pronouns.....	11
4.2	Singular “They”	11
4.3	Plurals and possessives	11
4.4	Active and passive voice	11
4.5	Verb tense.....	11
4.6	Logical comparisons.....	12
5.	Inclusive language guidelines	12
5.1	General principles	12
5.2	Specific guidelines.....	12
6.	Other.....	13
7.	Research skills and thesis writing: resources.....	13
8.	Assignment format	14
8.1	Layout.....	14

8.2	Declaration of independent work.....	14
8.3	Assessment details.....	14
8.4	Page numbers	14
8.5	Your name	14
8.6	Higher degree by research students.....	14
9.	Steps towards writing an essay	14
9.1	Choosing the topic	14
9.2	Analysing the question.....	15
9.3	Preparing the references	15
9.4	Taking notes.....	15
9.5	Theme statement.....	16
9.6	Outline of essay.....	16
9.7	Linkages.....	16
9.8	Three main parts.....	16
9.9	Final draft.....	17
10.	Wit and wisdom for writers.....	17
	Reference list.....	18

1. Citations

Write On for Counselling!, Australian Lutheran College’s (ALC) official style guide for Counselling programs, is based on the American Psychological Association (APA) style which recommends use of in-text citations. This style of citation briefly identifies the source for readers and enables them to locate the source of information in the alphabetical reference list at the end of your essay.

1.1 Basic Principles

An in-text citation requires two main elements: the author’s name and publication year of the source. There are two main types of in-text citation in the APA format; parenthetical and narrative.

- **Parathetical**The last name of the author and the year of publication are included in parentheses at the end of the sentence
- **Narrative**The last name of the author is included within the sentence and the year of publication is included in parentheses at the end of the sentence or directly following the author’s name.

Further details: [In-text citations](#)

1.2 Citation Examples

The following examples have been reproduced from the APA Publication Manual at a high level only. For further information, and for complicated scenarios, always refer to the [APA Style citation guidelines](#) or the publication manual itself.

One Work by One Author

In a recent study of reaction times (Walker, 2000)

Walker (2000) compared reaction times

Within a paragraph, you need not include the year in subsequent references as long as the study cannot be confused with other studies cited in your essay.

In a recent study of reaction times (Walker) described the method. ... Walker also found

One Work by Multiple Authors

When a work has **two** authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in text.

When a work has three or more authors, cite only the surname of the first author followed by et al. and the year for the first and subsequent citations. (In the reference list, however, provide the initials and surnames of the first six authors, and shorten any remaining authors to et al.)

1.3 Quotations

A direct quotation reproduces words verbatim from another work or from your own previously published work. It is best to paraphrase sources rather than directly quoting them because paraphrasing allows you to fit material to the context of your paper and writing style.

Use direct quotations rather than paraphrasing when:

- reproducing an exact definition
- an author has said something memorably or succinctly
- you want to respond to exact wording (e.g., something someone said)

For a direct quotation, always include a full citation (parenthetical or narrative) in the same sentence as the quotation, including the page number (or other location information, e.g., paragraph number).

Short Quotations

For quotations of fewer than 40 words, add double quotation marks around the words and incorporate the quote into your own text—there is no additional formatting needed. Do not insert an ellipsis at the beginning and/or end of a quotation unless the original source includes an ellipsis.

Effective teams can be difficult to describe because “high performance along one domain does not translate to high performance along another” (Ervin et al., 2018, p. 470).

Longer Quotations

When a quotation is longer than 40 words (about 3 lines) it should be isolated from the essay by indentation without using inverted commas.

Researchers have studied how people talk to themselves:

Inner speech is a paradoxical phenomenon. It is an experience that is central to many people’s everyday lives, and yet it presents considerable challenges to any effort to study it scientifically. Nevertheless, a wide range of methodologies and approaches have combined to shed light on the subjective experience of inner speech and its cognitive and neural underpinnings. (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015, p. 957)

Providing Emphasis Within Quotations

For special emphasis you may italicise a word or phrase from the section you are quoting, followed by [emphasis added].

The Use of an Ellipsis

An ellipsis (...) is used when you omit words from quotations.

She stated, “The ‘placebo effect’ ... disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner” (Miele, 1993, p.276), but she did not clarify which behaviors were studied.

The omitted words are: ‘which had been verified in previous studies,’. These words don’t disturb the flow of the sentence when omitted.

Employing [sic] in Quotations

If a word in a section you are quoting is misspelt or archaic or fails the test of inclusive language, you may indicate that you are aware of this by adding the italicised word *sic*, Latin for ‘thus,’ and placing it in square brackets [sic] after the problematical word.

Further details: [Quotations](#)

1.4 Translations

If you translate a quote from another language yourself or by using an app (e.g. Google Translate), your translation is considered a paraphrase, not a direct quotation. Because your translation of the material is a paraphrase, do not use quotation marks around the material you translated. To avoid *patchwriting*, a form of plagiarism, aim to create paraphrased translations rather than translate word-for-word.

To cite your translated material, all you need to do is include the author and date of the material in the in-text citation. Include the page number (if available) in the citation to help readers who do speak the language of the original passage find the material in the original work.

In the reference list, provide a reference for the work in its original language; and after the foreign-language title, include a translation of the title of the work in the language in which you are writing your paper in square brackets. To be clear about the source of the translation, include either (my translation) or the name of the app used (e.g. Google Translate) at the end of the reference.

Further details: [How to cite translated works](#)

2. References

References provide the information necessary for readers to identify and retrieve each work cited in the text. Accurately prepared references help establish your credibility as a careful researcher and writer.

Consistency in reference formatting allows readers to focus on the content of your reference list with ease.

2.1 Basic Principles

In general, each work cited in the text must appear in the reference list, and each work in the reference list must be cited in the text.

A reference list entry generally has four elements: the author, date, title, and source. The [Elements of reference list entries](#) page goes into detail about each of these elements and their formats.

Further details: [References](#), [Creating an APA style reference list guide](#)

2.2 Reference Examples

Examples of the most common works that writers cite are provided on the APA style [reference examples](#) page.

Further details: [Common reference examples guide](#), [Reference quick guide](#)

Grammarly (and Similar Products)

Where a lecturer has indicated students are allowed to use tools such as Grammarly, you must ascertain the limits. Grammarly and similar products have two main modes, one involves correcting spelling, grammar, and punctuation. This mode does not use generative AI but needs to be mentioned in your introduction (or methodology) section.

The second main mode of these products is generative. This means it does not correct your text, but writes it for you. Be careful that you do not use this mode unless the lecturer has indicated this is appropriate.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Generated Text

Where a lecturer has indicated that use of gen-AI in some form is allowed, you **must acknowledge** whenever you use the AI-generated text in your own work. In your text, provide the prompt you used and then any portion of the relevant text that was generated in response.

The following example has been reproduced from APA style blogpost [How to cite ChatGPT](#), only the basic details are included here.

When prompted with “Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?” the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, “the notation that people can be characterized as ‘left-brained’ or ‘right-brained’ is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth” (OpenAI, 2023).

Reference

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Mar 14 version) [Large language model].
<https://chat.openai.com/chat>

In this note OpenAI stands in as “author” of the content. The “date” is the year of the version you used. The name of the model is “ChatGPT,” so that serves as the “title”. The version number is included after the title in parentheses. The format for the version number in ChatGPT references includes the date because that is how OpenAI is labelling the versions. The bracketed text is used to help a reader understand what’s being cited—in this case the version of ChatGPT used is described as a “large language model” by OpenAI. For ChatGPT, the “author” and “publisher” are both OpenAI, so do not repeat the publisher name, move directly to the URL. The URL for ChatGPT is <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

If you've edited the AI-generated text, you should say so in the text or at the end of the note (e.g., "edited for style and content").

You may also put the full text of long responses from ChatGPT in an appendix of your paper so readers have access to the exact text that was generated. It is particularly important to document the exact text created because ChatGPT will generate a unique response in each chat session, even if given the same prompt.

Although OpenAI assigns unique URLs to conversations generated from your prompts, those can't be used by others to access the same content (they require your login credentials), making a ChatGPT conversation like an email, phone, or text conversation—or any other type of personal communication.

2.3 Further Information

The University of Divinity is committed to the use of one basic referencing style for counselling courses, which is based on the latest version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020). The [APA website](#) includes a lot of free resources. See <https://divinity.libguides.com/counselling/APAcitation>.

3. Style Guidelines

The use of style guidelines ensures clear, consistent communication and presentation in written works. When you follow style guidelines, you avoid inconsistencies among and within academic papers, journal articles, and book chapters.

APA [style guidelines](#) cover the following areas (only the most commonly addressed principles are included):

3.1 Punctuation

Punctuation tells readers where to pause (comma, semicolon, and colon), stop (period and question mark), or take a detour (dash, parentheses, and square brackets).

- Use one space after a period (or other punctuation mark at the end of a sentence) unless your lecturer requests something different.
- Use a serial comma (also called an Oxford comma, Harvard comma, or series comma) between elements in a series of three or more items.

Factors of personality include extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

If one or more items in the series already contain a comma, use semicolons between the items instead of commas.

Subjective well-being is characterised by the presence of positive affect, such as whether people feel happy and peaceful; the absence of negative affect, such as whether people feel angry or bored; and a high level of life satisfaction.

3.2 Spelling and Hyphenation

In your writing, follow Australian English spelling conventions and use a consistent spelling authority throughout your work.

If you quote and reference works written in other English versions (e.g. US English), keep the spelling of the title and quoted text unchanged; don't convert them to Australian spelling.

For compound words that can be either be two separate, hyphenated, or one solid word (e.g. health care, self-esteem, caregiver); follow Australian English conventions. If the compound word does not appear in your chosen spelling authority, for clarity it is best to hyphenate it when it's used as an adjective (e.g. noise-cancelling headphones or part-time work).

3.3 Capitalisation

In APA Style words are lowercase unless there is specific guidance to capitalise them. Capitals are used for the first word of a sentence, for proper nouns, for the title of a specific person, and for the names of organisations, committees, boards, and the like, when the full name of the body is used. When titles of organisations, and the like, are used in subsequent references, the practice is to abbreviate the reference and use the lower case, except for words normally capitalised.

- Names of [racial and ethnic groups](#) are treated as proper nouns, and therefore capitalised
- Capitalise brand name medications, but not general or generic names (e.g. Panadol, acetaminophen, paracetamol)
- In general, do not capitalise the names of diseases, disorders, therapies, treatments, theories, concepts, hypotheses, principles, models, and statistical procedures. However, do capitalise personal names that appear within these kinds of terms (e.g. Alzheimer's disease).

Title Case

Use title case for:

- the title of your own paper and of named sections and subsections within it
- all [headings](#) within a work (these are also bolded)
- titles of articles, books, reports, and other works appearing in text
- titles of [periodicals](#) (these are also italicised)
- titles of tests or measures, including subscales
- [table titles](#) (these are also italicised)
- [figure titles](#) (these are also italicised), axis labels, and legends

In title case, major words are capitalised, and most minor words are lowercase.

- **major** words: Nouns, verbs (including linking verbs), adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and all words of four letters or more are considered major words.
- **minor** words: Short (i.e., three letters or fewer) conjunctions, short prepositions, and all articles are considered minor words.

Further details: [Title Case Capitalisation](#)

Sentence Case

In sentence case, most major and minor words are lowercase (proper nouns are an exception in that they are always capitalised).

Use sentence case for:

- titles of articles, books, reports, webpages, and other works in [reference list entries](#), even if title case was used in the original work
- [table column headings, entries, and notes](#)
- [figure notes](#)

Further details: [Sentence Case Capitalisation](#)

3.4 Numbers

In general, use words to express numbers zero through nine, and use numerals to express numbers 10 and above. However, there are exceptions to this general guideline for number usage.

For details on when to **always use words** to express numbers in the following cases, even numbers 10 and above see: [Numbers expressed in words](#)

For details on when to **always use numerals** to express numbers in the following cases, even numbers zero through nine see: [Numbers expressed in numerals](#)

3.5 Italics and Quotation Marks

Italics and quotation marks are used to draw attention to text. For example, italics are used to draw attention to key terms and phrases when providing definitions and to format parts of reference list entries (e.g., titles of books and periodicals). Quotation marks are used to present linguistic examples and titles of book chapters and articles in the text. When writers follow guidelines for the use of italics and quotation marks, their papers become more consistent and readable.

For guidance on when to use italics, when to avoid italics, how to use italics for emphasis, and when to use reverse italics see: [Use of italics](#)

For guidance on how to use quotation marks in cases other than with direct quotations see: [Use of quotation marks](#)

For information on how to use quotation marks when presenting quotations, see Section 1.3 above.

3.6 Abbreviations

Abbreviations are shortened forms of words or phrases; often used to save space and avoid cumbersome repetition.

Specific abbreviations must be defined the first time they appear in a work. The first time you use a term that you want to abbreviate, present both the full version of the term and the abbreviation.

posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Once you have defined an abbreviation, use only the abbreviation. Do not alternate between spelling out the term and abbreviating it.

Some common abbreviations don't need to be defined (e.g. cm, hr, et al., etc.)

Further details: [Abbreviations](#)

3.7 Lists

Using lists helps readers understand a related set of key points within a sentence or paragraph. When writers follow guidelines for the creation of lists, their works become more consistent and readable.

For ease of reading, ensure all items in a list are syntactically and conceptually parallel. For example, all items might be nouns or all items might be phrases that begin with a verb.

Use a numbered list if you want to display items in a numbered series. Use a bulleted list if you want to draw visual attention to items without implying that they go in a certain order.

Further details: [Lists](#)

3.8 Footnotes

Footnotes may be used for additional information that would otherwise disturb the flow of the essay you are writing. Additional information may consist of further supporting evidence for a point that you are making. Or you may like to include in a footnote an argument or a position that runs counter to the point you are making in your essay, in which case you would also include in the footnote your reasons for disagreeing with the counter argument. Some use footnotes to make comments, such as that you would like to explore the issue more extensively at another time. Also, additional resources may be referred to in a footnote.

Use the footnotes function of your word-processing program to insert a footnote at the bottom of the page of text on which the footnote appears.

4. Grammar

Correct grammar and usage are important to all writing as incorrect grammar and careless sentence construction distracts readers, introduces ambiguity, and impedes clear communication.

Only a few of the most common areas of concern are discussed here, for more detailed guidance see: [Grammar](#).

4.1 First Person Pronouns

Use first-person pronouns to describe your work as well as your personal reactions.

- If you are writing a paper by yourself, use the pronoun “I” to refer to yourself
- If you are writing a paper with coauthors, use the pronoun “we” to refer yourself and your coauthors together

Do not use the third person to refer to yourself (e.g. the author explored ...) as it can create ambiguity for readers about whether you or someone else performed the action.

4.2 Singular “They”

Use of the singular “they” as a generic third-person pronoun is helpful because it is inclusive of all people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender.

If the person’s gender is known, use “he”, “she”, or “they” as appropriate; otherwise use “they” or reword the sentence to remove the pronoun.

Further details: [Singular They](#)

4.3 Plurals and Possessives

It’s common for errors arise when adding “s” to the end of words to create plurals or to show possession.

In general:

- Plural—add “s” or “es” to the end of a word to create its plural version (e.g. squares, boxes)
- Possessive—add an apostrophe “s” to the end of the noun

Do not confuse “its” with “it’s.” “Its” shows an association or possession of a thing within itself. “It’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has.” Check each instance of “it’s” in your work to determine whether you should remove the apostrophe to make the possessive form “its” or spell “it’s” out to “it is” or “it has.”

Much more detailed guidance is available: [Plural nouns](#), [Possessive nouns](#), [Possessive adjectives](#)

4.4 Active and Passive Voice

Both the active and the passive voice are permitted in APA Style. However, writers often overuse the passive voice.

Use the active voice as much as possible to create direct, clear, and concise sentences, especially when you are writing about the actions of people (e.g. the children ate the cookies).

Use the passive voice when it is more important to focus on the recipient of an action than on who performed the action, such as when describing an experimental setup (e.g. the cookies were eaten by the children).

4.5 Verb Tense

Generally, use the past tense or present perfect tense of verbs in your works. The only exceptions are for when talking about your own personal reactions, discussing results and presenting conclusions; these should use present tense.

Further details: [Verb tense](#)

4.6 Logical Comparisons

Make clear and logical comparisons in your scholarly writing. Illogical comparisons often result from unparallel sentence structure or the omission of key words. Adding the word “by” in the following sentence removes the ambiguity.

You have higher odds of being injured by a vending machine than (by) a cat

5. Inclusive Language Guidelines

5.1 General Principles

In their writing, it is important for students to talk about others with inclusivity and respect by using language that is free of bias, prejudicial beliefs or demeaning attitudes. Some general principles are:

- Focus only on relevant characteristics—there is no need to mention characteristics of a person that are irrelevant to the topic of discussion
- Acknowledge relevant differences where they do exist
- Be specific enough about people to avoid over-generalisations
- Be sensitive when using labels—make an effort to determine the most appropriate way to refer to a group
- Respect individuality and humanity—use adjectival forms (e.g. gay men, older adults, people with paraplegia, etc)
- Avoid comparisons with “normal” or “general public”—this can imply abnormalities and deviance

5.2 Specific Guidelines

Refer to the following APA Style pages for specific guidance on appropriate bias-free language:

- [Age](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Gender](#)
- [Sexual orientation](#)
- [Racial and ethnic identity](#)
- [Socioeconomic status](#)
- [Historical context](#)
- [Participation in research](#)

Below is an alphabetical list of some more common, exclusive terms, together with possible inclusive alternatives. Alternative words and expressions should be chosen with care and discretion. The context and the sensitivities of the readers should always be considered. Note that in some cases forms which accurately refer to one gender or the other may be used when the gender is known.

actress, hostess	actor, host, etc.
brethren, brothers	brothers and sisters, members of the congregation or community
businessman/men	business executive, business manager, business owner, financier, businessman/businesswoman, business community, business people
chairman	chair, chairperson, chairman/chairwoman
churchman	churchgoer, church member, church worker
cleaning lady	cleaner, house or office cleaner

countryman	citizen
faith of our fathers	faith of our ancestors, faith of our parents
forefathers	ancestors
founding fathers	founders, pioneers
housewife	homemaker, home manager, housewife/househusband
juryman	juror, member of the jury
layman	layperson, layman/laywoman, non-specialist
man-hours	labour hours, work hours, working hours
man in the street	average person, ordinary people
man-made	artificial, constructed, hand-made, manufactured, synthetic
man on the land	farmer, farming community, grazier, landowner, rural community, country people
manpower	human resources, labour, staff, personnel
man the desk	staff the desk
man the phone	answer the phone, be in charge of the phone
master the art	become skilled, competent, proficient, expert
salesman	sales agent, sales attendant, salesperson, shop assistant
spokesman	advocate, representative, official, person speaking on behalf of, spokesperson
sportsman	athlete, player, competitor
sportsmanlike	fair, sporting
workman	employee, worker ¹

6. Other

6.1 Tables and Figures

Tables and figures are not addressed specifically in this document, however, for details refer to [Tables and Figures](#).

6.2 Biblical and Theological Language

Biblical and theological language is not addressed in this document, however, if this is relevant for your work refer to [D680 Write On! for Ministry and Theology](#).

7. Research Skills and Thesis Writing: Resources

- Badke, W. B. (2008). *Research strategies: Finding your way through the information fog*. (3rd ed.). iUniverse.
- Bell, J. (2010). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. (5th ed.). Open University Press.

¹ The *Style manual* (Adelaide, SA: Lutheran Publishing House, 1989), 23–25.

- Lester, J. D., & Lester, J. D., Jr. (2009) *Writing research papers: A complete guide*. (13th ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Murray, R. (2006) *How to write a thesis*. (2nd ed.). Open University Press.
- Northey, M. (2015) *Making sense: A student's guide to research and writing; religious studies*. (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- O'Donoghue, T. A. (1997) *Preparing your thesis/dissertation in education: Comprehensive guidelines*. Social Science Press.
- O'Collins, G. (2011) *A short guide to writing a thesis: What to do and what not to do*. ATF Press.
- Thomas, R. M., & Brubaker, D. L. (2008) *Theses and dissertations: A guide to planning, research, and writing*. (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.
- Walliman, N. S. R. (2005) *Your research project: A step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher*. (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- White, B. (2011) *Mapping your thesis: The comprehensive manual of theory and techniques for masters and doctoral research*. ACER Press.

8. Assignment Format

8.1 Layout

The font recommended for essays is Calibri 11. Students are free to use single, 1.5, or double line spacing.

8.2 Declaration of Independent Work

University of Divinity policy states that all written assignments submitted for assessment must contain a statement declaring it is the result of student's own work, or their own work in the case of a group submission.

8.3 Assessment Details

Please write the assessment topic at the start of the assignment.

8.4 Page Numbers

Pages should be numbered, usually on the right-hand side of the footer.

8.5 Your Name

Your name should appear on each page e.g. on the left-hand side of the footer.

8.6 Higher Degree by Research Students

Postgraduate research students are directed to the University of Divinity website <https://divinity.edu.au/sgr/current-research-students/> for policies and regulations as well as thesis format and submission guidelines and other information.

A [Thesis Certification and Submission Form](#) is to be submitted to certify material submitted for assessment/examination is the result of student's own work.

9. Steps Towards Writing An Essay

9.1 Choosing the Topic

It is a good idea to choose an essay topic that you find interesting—interesting because you know of its value for your future work, interesting because of its central psychological and/or educational significance, or interesting because it is a topic that has appealed to you for some time, but you have

never had the opportunity to study it in depth. It is also wise to choose a topic that you know will stretch you or take you into previously unexplored territory, rather than settling for something that you can write about quite easily.

9.2 Analysing the Question

Analyse the essay question in terms of the **tasks** you have been asked to perform and the **information** you have been asked to find out. Take the following essay topic: *Briefly investigate one example of scholarly misconduct (see, for example, [Retraction Watch](#)). What factors led to the misconduct? What checks-and-balances failed to allow the misconduct to go unnoticed? How was due process (i.e., fairness) embedded into the investigation and outcome? What has this example taught you about avoiding academic misconduct or, if necessary, adequately defending a charge?* (1200 words)

The **information** you are asked to find out and record is an example of scholarly misconduct, the factors which led to it, the checks and balances which failed and allowed the misconduct to go unnoticed, and how due process was embedded into the investigation and outcome.

The **tasks** you are given are to create an essay that spells out that information clearly and systematically, and then to spell out what you have learned about how to avoid academic misconduct, and how to adequately defend a charge of misconduct. If an essay topic is posed as a question, it is advisable that you turn it into a statement before asking what information you have to gather and what tasks you are to undertake.

9.3 Preparing the References

One of the first tasks when writing an essay is to gather a list of bibliographical references (no longer called a bibliography). The heading for the listing is References, or Reference List, or List of References. You insert the list at the end of the essay. For guidance on the number of references to include, refer to [Appropriate Level of Citation](#) and [Six Steps to Proper Citation](#). It is your responsibility to compile your references, drawing on the search processes available in the library, and if necessary consulting with the lecturer, the library staff and fellow students. You are well advised to prepare your references as your first task, according to the author-date format. Then, when you are actually writing the essay and citing references in the body of the essay, you need to employ only the minimal in-text citation format, knowing that you have already attended to the full bibliographical reference for that book or article.

You will probably keep adding to the references as you continue to work on the essay, because of works referred to in your reading or because you find you need to follow up an aspect of the topic at greater length. Be sure to list all the works you have cited in the essay. On the other hand, do not include works you have read but have not drawn on or referred to in your essay.

9.4 Taking Notes

Take notes as you read. If you believe that you may want to quote an author word for word in the final essay, be careful to copy accurately, use quotation marks, and note the page(s) the quotation comes from. If you intend only to put the writer's opinions in your own words, make doubly sure that you indicate in your notes the page or pages where you found them. Judgments and opinions that are not your own must always be attributed to their source.

Towards the end of the note-taking process you are advised to start thinking of how you will develop the argument of your paper. As you reflect on your reading and research, a coherent essay will gradually form in your mind, and the argumentation will become increasingly your own. You will discard large portions of the material you have gathered, because it is not relevant to your case, and you will assemble those quotations that support your case and state it most clearly and succinctly. It is vital that you avoid creating an essay simply by stringing together a series of quotations. It will resemble a hotchpotch of disconnected statements or opinions.

The longer you spend reading in the area of your topic, the better you will know and digest its subject matter, and the better you will be able to express it in your own words. The longer you spend reflecting on the topic, the more coherent will your essay's argument become. In the end it will be your own argument that stands front and centre, even though you have marshalled and duly acknowledged several powerful witnesses in support.

9.5 Theme Statement

As you continue to read in and reflect on your topic, it is important that you work towards stating the case you wish to make, in one sentence. What is the point you are driving at? What is your argument in a nutshell? A one sentence statement is best. Anything less than a sentence—a phrase, a clause, a slogan—does not provide the scope for stating a complete argument. On the other hand, more than one sentence will lead to an essay whose argument is ill-defined. An example of a possible theme statement is as follows:

Academic misconduct undermines the integrity of education by devaluing honest effort, eroding trust in academic institutions, and hindering genuine intellectual growth.

9.6 Outline of Essay

After you have read widely on the topic and developed a theme statement, you are ready to prepare an outline for the essay. A well-planned essay will serve you well. It is a good idea to prepare a Table of Contents page, even though undergraduate students are not required to present one. But a contents table will indicate the direction you plan to take with your essay, and the chief items you intend to cover along the way. The divisions that are indicated in such a table can then also serve as headings throughout the body of the essay. They will keep you on track. They will prevent you from straying from the theme; and if you do go off on a tangent—as sometimes you must—the headings that lie ahead will guide you back to the course you have planned to take from the outset.

9.7 Linkages

An essay ought to contain an intelligible progression of thought, not a jumble of random thoughts. But it is hard to provide the linkages between paragraphs that make the flow of the argument clear. Ideas can be linked in the following ways:²

- a sequence of first, second and third
- contrasting ideas e.g. 'on the one hand ..., but on the other hand ...'
- an addition
- a similar point
- an example or analogy
- a consequence
- a time sequence
- a problem-solution
- a summary

9.8 Three Main Parts

An essay consists of the introduction, the body of the essay, and the conclusion. In the introduction you should discuss the essay question, maybe give your reason(s) for choosing it, give some background to the question, and provide an overview of the way you plan to deal with it. The introduction should close with the theme statement. The body of the essay will develop the

² The dot points are taken from the 'Guide to writing essays' produced by the University of SA's Learning and Teaching Unit <<http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learn/LearningConnection/?PATH=/Resources/workshop%2Dessay+writing/Guide+to+writing+essays>> (Accessed 25/01/10)

argument you have summarised in the theme statement, logically and consistently. The conclusion will draw together the main points you have made in the body of the essay (summary), restate the theme statement (conclusion proper), and in some cases suggest further avenues of exploration that the essay has opened up, but you haven't had time or space to pursue.

9.9 Final Draft

Please check your essay carefully before handing it in. Check it for spelling, punctuation, English expression, inclusive language, plagiarism, accuracy of quotations, and logical or coherent progression of argument (linkages). Then check the table of contents (if applicable), the division headings, the list of references, citations in the body of the essay, and footnotes (or endnotes). If you have not written an essay for a long time, or if you are new to tertiary studies, you are strongly encouraged to draw on as much help as you can muster while you are preparing the first draft of your essay, and when you have completed it run it past an experienced essay writer.

10. Wit and Wisdom for Writers

Writing is a journey, not a destination. So enjoy the trip.

If you seek wisdom like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Prov 2:4,5).

The hand will not reach out for what the heart does not long for. (German proverb)

The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited. (Plutarch)

Physical fitness makes us mentally alert.

Cutting back on sleep is false economy.

Class preparation time enhances the value of time in class.

Blank faces speak of blank minds.

Your lecture notes are not a verbatim record, but a summary of what matters.

If you can't follow, lead with a question.

Ask a question and look a little foolish for a moment. Don't ask and remain a fool for ever.

In sermons and assignments, less is usually more.

The simpler the language, the profounder the idea.

You never really understand anything until you can explain it to your grandmother. (Einstein)

Choose a topic that leads you out of your comfort zone.

I am always doing things I can't do. That's how I get to do them. (Picasso)

Perplexity is the beginning of knowledge. (Kahil Gibran)

Choose a topic that has long puzzled you because it strikes you as important.

Choose your topic early. Read widely, but don't imagine you have to read everything that's ever been written on your chosen topic.

Plan to write, and write to a plan.

Begin, and you are halfway there. (Alfred A. Montapert)

We win no favours with God, our spouse, or our family, if we put our studies or field education before them.

Reference List

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

American Psychological Association (2025). *APA Style and Grammar guidelines*. APASStyle.
<https://apastyle.apa.org/>