

## **Writing Tips**

### **1) AFFECT AND EFFECT**

Usage of affect and effect--Both words can be used as nouns or as verbs. They have related, but different meanings when used as a noun or a verb and are often confused.

Affect as a verb: (1) to have an effect on; to influence; (2) to move or stir the emotions.

Example (1): The student's low final exam score significantly affected her final grade for the course.

Example (2): The city's employees were deeply affected by the death of the mayor.

Effect as a verb: (1) to bring about; to cause; to produce as a result.

Example (1): It is argued that raising the minimum driving age to 18 will effect a desired reduction in traffic accident fatalities.

Affect as a noun: (1) an emotion or feeling attached to an idea or object.

Example (1): In his first counseling session, the prisoner exhibited a hostile affect toward the therapist.

Effect as a noun: (1) a result; anything brought about by a cause; (2) influence or action on something.

Example (1): The cause-effect relationship is a frequent focus of research about crime.

Example (2): The narcotic drugs had an immediate sedative effect on the uncooperative patient.

### **2) DO NOT USE CONTRACTIONS IN YOUR PAPERS!**

Which of the following should not be used in formal writing?

- a. can't
- b. won't
- c. don't
- d. isn't
- e. all of the above are fine to use
- f. none of the above are fine to use

If you answered "f," you are correct. Contractions are not used in formal papers. As a safety net, Microsoft Word has a setting where you can have Word squiggly underline (in green) contractions in your document. To be sure you have this setting in use: go to the Tools menu, Options command, Spelling & Grammar tab, Settings. Scroll down to "Contractions" and make sure the box is checked.

### **3) ONLY USE 1 SPACE!**

Here is a simple tip for this week - save a space. What I mean by this is that APA no longer wants us to hit our space bar twice after periods, colons, question marks, or exclamation points. We only need one space, just like we do after commas. What will you do with your extra paper room?

#### **4) VERB TENSES**

A. Use past tense when referring to past actions.

Ex. In the 1980s, Nancy Reagan introduced the "Just Say No" motto and program.

B. Report the literature in past tense.

Ex. Venable and Strano (1999) observed that student living arrangements were significantly correlated with alcohol related problems.

C. Use present perfect tense for past action that persist.

Ex. Earlier and more recent examinations have found little to no support for the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program.

D. Use past tense when describing the purpose of a study.

Ex. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of family life on drinking behaviors in college.

#### **5) HOW TO CITE MULTIPLE AUTHORED WORKS**

Here are the basics:

1. In text citations:

Sources with two authors:

Burek and Liederbach (2008) or (Burek & Liederbach, 2008).

Note you can use the ampersand (&) if the citation is enclosed by parentheses.

Sources with three authors:

First time in text = Lab, Buerger, and King (2005) or (Lab, Buerger, & King, 2005).

Sources with four or five authors are cited the same as with three above.

Sources with six or more, can cite as illustrated in number two below throughout the paper, even the first time noted.

2. Second time citing sources with two authors: Burek and Liederbach (2008) - never use et al. Always include both authors.

Second time sources with three or more authors are cited and thereafter: Lab et al. (2005)

3. Reference citation:

Two authors = Burek, M. & Liederbach, J. (2008).

Three authors = Lab, S., Buerger, M. & King, W. (2005).

Four or more authors = Lab, S. Buerger, M., King, W., Burek, M., & Liederbach, J. (2007).

To recap: the key is to be sure to cite everyone involved in the writing of a particular work, regardless of how

many authors. It is not acceptable to cite just Dunn or Dunn et al., when Dunn wrote just with Mason. You would cite Dunn and Mason. If Dunn wrote with Mason and Lab, you would cite Dunn, Mason, and Lab. Got it?

Think about those days on the playground - you were part of the kickball team when it started, you want to be part of it during the semifinals, finals, and school trophy case display, too.

### **6) ALWAYS USE THE AUTHOR'S LAST NAME & YEAR!**

When citing any author's last name, ALWAYS INCLUDE THE YEAR of the publication!

Example: According to Morris (2008)...

### **7) DIRECT QUOTES**

When directly quoting something from a published work, you ALWAYS need the page number!

Example: "The 'get tough' movement dominated the 1980s and still persists today in criminal justice policy" (Burek, 2008, p.3).

If you are summarizing what an author said in your own words, you only need the author's last name and year of the publication.

### **8) USING QUOTATION MARKS**

Here is a great tip when you are using quotations (BUT make sure you only quote directly from your source when there is no possible way of getting across the same meaning if you reworded it. A paper full of quoted material, even when cited properly, is not permitted and will likely earn you a low grade):

Quotation marks typically "hug" commas and periods. They do not let them stand alone on the paper playground.

Correct Example: "Tomorrow's election could change the economic and social course for our nation's children."

Incorrect: "Tomorrow's election could change the economic and social course for our nation's children".

Essentially, the only time a period would fall outside the quotation mark is when it appears after an in text citation.

Correct: "The 'get tough' movement dominated the 1980s and still persists today in criminal justice policy" (Burek, 2008, p.3).

Incorrect: "The 'get tough' movement dominated the 1980s and still persists today in criminal justice policy." (Burek, 2008, p. 3)

### **9) USE OF "THAT" INSTEAD OF "WHO"**

The use of "that" instead of "who" when speaking of a person or persons. Use "that" for things and "who" for people.

## 10) TRY-ALL IS ERROR

“Try” All Is Error. There is no “try and prove,” nor indeed any “try and” anything. There is only “try to prove” and its cousins. When you find yourself writing such a phrase, stop: think whether the “try” portion is even needed, or whether the primary verb is strong enough to carry the point without ‘try’-ing my patience. (Remember, “try” really only counts if points are being awarded for the effort, despite failure. If the act can be or is accomplished, then the “try” is inherent, and need not be mentioned.)

## 11) THEIR VS. THERE VS. THEY'RE

1. Use **there** when referring to a place, whether concrete ("over there by the building") or more abstract ("it must be difficult to live there").
  - o **There** is an antique store on Camden Avenue.
  - o The science textbooks are over **there** on the floor.
2. Use **their** to indicate possession. It is a possessive adjective and indicates that a particular noun belongs to *them*.
  - o My friends have lost **their** tickets.
  - o **Their** things were strewn about the office haphazardly.
3. Remember that **they're** is a contraction of the words *they* and *are*. It can never be used as a modifier, only as a subject (who or what does the action) and verb (the action itself).
  - o Hurry up! **They're** closing the mall at 6 tonight!
  - o I'm glad that **they're** so nice to new students here.
4. **Test your usage.** When you use any of these three words, get in the habit of asking yourself these questions:
  - o If you wrote **there**, will the sentence still make sense if you replace it with **here**? If so, you're using it correctly.
  - o If you chose **their**, will the sentence still make sense if you replace it with **our**? If so, you've chosen the correct word.
  - o If you used **they're**, will the sentence still make sense if you replace it with **they are**? If so, you're on the right track!

**Recognize incorrect examples and learn from the mistakes.** By looking over others' work with a critical eye, especially by offering [proofreading or copyediting](#) help, you can become more sensitized to correct usage and practice it yourself.

- o **Wrong:** *Their* is no one here.
  - o **Wrong:** Shelley wants to know if *there* busy.
  - o **Wrong:** The dogs are happily chewing on *they're* bones.
  - o **RIGHT:** I can't believe **they're** leaving **their** children **there** alone!
5. **Practice, practice, practice!** Get your English [teacher](#) or friend to say several sentences aloud that include one of these three words and write down which version they are using. Hire a private English tutor if you're still having trouble.

## **12) DO NOT START A SENTENCE WITH A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION!**

In the written language, do not use coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "but" to start a sentence. In formal English, try to start sentence with "additionally," (or "moreover") "nevertheless," and "alternatively." In casual writing, you can start sentences with "also," but avoid this in formal English unless the word "also" is modifying a verb (usually in the imperative mood): "Also read Chapters Two and Three." Coordinating conjunctions are meant to join words and phrases, so a coordinating conjunction is left dangling without a role to play when a sentence begins with a coordinating conjunction. Simply attach the sentence that starts with a coordinating conjunction to the previous sentence; this produces a compound sentence. You also may use "additionally," "also," "either," "though," and "however" instead of starting with "and" and "but." You should tuck the words "also" and "however" in your sentence, not using them to start a sentence. "Though," coming at the very end of your sentence, can prove a painless alternative to starting your sentence with "but": "The passive voice can make your writing more formal. It can cause you problems, though."

## **13) AVOID CLICHÉS**

Clichés are sayings or expressions. Clichés make your writing informal and sometimes humorous. They often make your writing unoriginal, but sometimes, you can use them to make an original play-on-words. Here are some clichés to avoid in formal writing:

- Hercules was *as strong as an ox*.
- I have to give *an arm and a leg* to find a parking spot during the holiday season.
- It was *as pretty as a picture*.

## **14) THE WORDS “CAN” AND “NOT”**

**The word “cannot” is all one word. It is NOT spelled “can not.”**

## **15) DO NOT WRITE USING SLANG TERMS!**

While writing your paper, do not write as if you are text messaging someone or writing an informal e-mail.

Example of what NOT to do: Smoking weed does not make men grow titties.