# Table of Contents

- Step 1: Select a Topic .............................................................. 1
- Step 2: Research ................................................................. 1
- Relevance of Literature ......................................................... 2
- Step 3: Prepare an Outline ..................................................... 3
- Step 4: Structure Your Paper ................................................. 3
- Step 5: Putting it All Together ............................................... 4
- Step 6: Citation .................................................................... 5
- APA Format ........................................................................... 5
- References ............................................................................ 6
- Appendixes ........................................................................... 7
Writing a Scholarly Paper

A scholarly paper communicates your ideas clearly and concisely with supporting evidence. This may be the first time you have been asked to write a scholarly paper. Don’t panic. Work hard, consult with your instructor, and follow these tips to write a good scholarly paper.

This document “Writing a Scholarly Paper” is, in part, a summary of the directions of the American Psychological Association (APA). This summary does not replace the APA manual and at some point you may use the full Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)

Step 1: Select a Topic

Understand what you are asked to do. Read your assignment criteria carefully and if you are still unsure, ask your instructor.

Your topic should be narrow enough to allow you to present your information in the required number of words or pages. Broad topics are usually difficult to complete within the length required.

Step 2: Research

Begin to do some reading in the area you are assigned or have selected. Remember you are writing a scholarly nursing paper and that articles and books from the field of nursing are preferred.

- If your topic is related to an idea from one of the course modules, use the reference list at the end of the module.

- Use the reference lists in the course textbook chapters to locate other relevant literature.

- Conduct an article literature search using databases licensed by the Library. Also check the Library catalogue for books.

- Use your Okanagan College librarian. Talk to your course instructor. Ask knowledgeable health professionals that you know. All may be valuable sources of ideas and articles.

Keep notes as you read and talk to people. Try to summarize various articles that are relevant to your paper. Write down direct quotes that
may be useful. Remember to record the sources of your readings, quotes, and ideas in a rough reference list so you don’t need to search for them later.

Collecting the information for an assignment can be very interesting. There is always one more book or article to read or one more source to find. At some stage, however, you must decide that you have enough information and begin organizing the information collected (Spencer, 1998).

Relevance of Literature

Use books for an overview of your topic. Remember books and textbooks are rarely the most recent sources of information. It takes time to write, edit, and publish a book.

Professional periodicals and journals usually contain the most current ideas relating to research. These articles may be case studies, research studies, or general interest topics. Journals that use peer review are more reputable than those that do not. Peer review means that each article is evaluated by one or more experts in the field before the editor of the journal accepts it for publication. Publication of the article is based on scholarly merit.

Normally books and journals should be no more than ten years old, although older, classic references may be used to provide a foundation for your topic. Newspapers and popular magazines are not scholarly and some may be sensational in their approach to health care. Most information on the Internet is not scholarly.

“Googling,” if done with care, can be a “quick and dirty” way to access good information. But use caution when evaluating sources of information on the Internet. There is no quality control; anyone with an opinion or an idea can create a website or post material. The Johns Hopkins University Library guide Evaluating information found on the Internet (2011) suggests asking the following questions:

1. Is the name of the author given and is the author qualified?
2. Is the publishing body identified and reputable?
3. Is the date of the publication clearly stated? Up-to-date information is important for many assignments.
4. Is the information accurate and can you verify the details?
5. Does the information have a point of view or bias?
6. The information refers to other publications by including references or showing knowledge of other publications.
Step 3:
Prepare an Outline

This stage takes time. Don’t be tempted to skip it and just start writing. Planning helps to structure your paper clearly and keep your information and ideas organized. When you have a clear idea of what you want to say in your paper, write the thesis statement, which should answer the question: What one important thing am I trying to say that meets the criteria of the assignment?

Remember an early thesis statement can be changed. As you write your paper you may find that you want to modify, qualify, or alter your thesis statement to reflect the direction of your paper. It is not unusual to revise your thesis statement after you have written the body of your essay.

Ask yourself: What are the main points related to the thesis statement that you want to communicate to your reader? These main points, each building on one another, will become the body of your paper.

Jot down the different ideas you have for your different points. Use headings to help organize your thoughts and convey the sequence and relative importance of your information. You may wish to use the assignment evaluation criteria as headings for your paper. Identify which ideas/information ‘go’ with each main point. Be aware that not all your information will fit into the essay (Spencer, 1998).

Step 4:
Structure Your Paper

Your paper should have a beginning (introduction), a middle (the body), and an end (conclusion). After you have created your outline, you are ready to write your introduction. An introduction briefly describes the purpose of your paper, where you intend to take your reader, and gives an overview of your main ideas. Your introduction should contain your thesis statement and mention each of your main ideas.

The body of the essay is the main section in which you present and develop your ideas. Your essay must be solidly based on the topic you have chosen. General statements should be supported with specific examples and evidence. The individual points and paragraphs must link to the essay topic. Transitions between paragraphs should be smooth and the presentation of ideas should flow easily from one paragraph to another (Spencer, 1998).
As a general rule, begin a new paragraph whenever you introduce a new idea (Zilm, 2009). Most paragraphs contain a single, central thought that is adequately argued and supported using examples from several sources. A paragraph should consist of more than one sentence and contain not less than 25 words or more than 250 words.

The conclusion summarizes your ideas and presents any conclusions that have emerged from your discussion. Your conclusions should not introduce any new ideas and should include all the main ideas presented in the body of your paper. Rephrase information but do not add any new information. Your concluding statements should add strength and credibility to the ideas presented in your introduction.

Structuring your paper should fulfill an old adage:

- Introduction — tell them what you are going to tell them
- Body of paper — tell them
- Conclusion — then tell them what you told them.

**Step 5: Putting it All Together**

If you find writing the introduction difficult, start by writing another paragraph first. Don’t worry about spelling at this stage. Just get going. When you have a rough draft of your essay, leave it alone for a day or two. When you return to it, you will have ‘new eyes’ that will help you spot errors and omissions in the content, as well as awkward style and grammatical and/or spelling errors.

Reread your draft, sort out any muddled ideas, and rewrite any awkward sections. Aim for clear, concise sentences and paragraphs. You may require several drafts before you complete your final paper. Make sure that you have met the Evaluation Criteria of the assignment. Now title your paper to reflect the main ideas. Before submitting your essay, proofread it one more time: Spell-check does not identify incorrect words that are correctly spelled.

If you feel your essay is a hopeless mess, in spite of your best efforts, don’t give up or struggle on your own. Contact your instructor, the writing assistant in the OC Learning Centre/Student Success Centre or ask someone else to read it. Constructive feedback improves both your thinking and your writing.

Appendix A contains a synopsis for writing a scholarly paper.
Step 6: Citation

Credit all sources of quotations and ideas. This practice not only indicates intellectual courtesy and honesty, but also allows the reader to find any reference that seems particularly interesting.

You must acknowledge the source of words, ideas, or interpretations that you have paraphrased or directly quoted in your paper, both within the body of your paper (in text citation) and in your reference list. Citing is not necessary for matters of common knowledge or facts that are generally accepted as true (e.g., the earth is round; pregnancy usually lasts nine months); however, information contained in textbooks, professional journals, and course manuals is not “common knowledge” and must be acknowledged.

Plagiarism, the presentation of materials or work prepared by another person or persons as your own work and without reference credit, may result in grade of zero for the course (Okanagan College Calendar. General Academic Regulations and Policies). For more information on the please see Okanagan College academic policy at http://webapps-1.okanagan.bc.ca/ok/calendar/Calendar.aspx?page=AcademicOffenses

APA Format


Web-based sources of information relating to general APA style format are:

Okanagan College Library APA Style
www.okanagan.bc.ca/administration/students/library/help/style/apa.html

American Psychological Association
References


Appendixes

A. Synopsis: Writing a Scholarly Paper
B. APA Style Guidelines
C. Ensuring Safe Sleep (Sample Paper)
Synopsis: Writing a Scholarly Paper

Content

1. Introductory paragraph
   - introduces the topic
   - presents relevant background ideas and/or context
   - includes the thesis statement — indicates the writer’s stance and major points on the topic

2. Body
   - normally a paragraph for each main idea
   - include supporting evidence for each main idea

2. Concluding paragraph
   - draws the essay to a clear and thought-provoking conclusion
   - summarizes the significant points of the essay

3. Essay remains ‘on topic’ throughout — focus.

4. Each paragraph structured around one idea — paragraph unity.

5. Each paragraph relates directly to the thesis statement — essay unity.

6. Logical transitions between sentences and between paragraphs — coherence.

7. Paragraphs developed through use of narration, description, examples or statistics, analogy, comparison, contrast, cause-effect, definition.

8. Points in the essay (within paragraphs and within the larger essay) ordered chronologically, logically, or strategically.

9. Thought and analysis appropriately detailed for the assignment topic.

10. Essay directly addresses the assigned topic.

Style

1. Punctuation and sentence variety
2. Clear meaning
3. Concise writing — minimum of unnecessary words and phrases
4. Sets appropriate tone for the assignment

Grammar, Language, and Mechanics

1. Proofread for language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence errors. Do not rely on spellcheckers.
2. Words are in the right form — subjects match with predicates — language errors.
3. Right words used and in the right order. Structure of the sentence clear and conveys its meaning — grammatical errors.
4. Words are correctly spelled and punctuation is correct, consistent, and easy to follow — mechanical errors.
5. Do not use contractions. Avoid contractions such as isn’t or don’t. Instead, use is not and do not.
APA Style Guidelines

Nursing professional papers are usually formatted using *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), 6th ed. (2010). Student papers will be written according to this style. The APA standards have been summarized here. Please refer to the text and your instructor to clarify your understanding of these guidelines.

**Appearance**

- Paper (if not electronically submitted) must be 8.5 by 11 inches (22 by 28 cm), 20-pound bond weight, and white in colour.
- Margins must be 1 inches (2.54cm) on the top, bottom, right, and left. All margins must be the same.
- All type must be **Times New Roman and 12-point size**.
- All lines are double spaced including quotations and references.
- Paragraphs are indented 5–7 spaces (½ inch, 1.27 cm) consistently. This is usually the first TAB setting on computers. Type the remaining lines in a uniform, left aligned format (leave the right margin unjustified (“ragged”))
- There is one space after all punctuation, except after internal periods in abbreviations (e.g.).
- All pages are numbered consecutively, beginning with the title page. Use Arabic numbers. The number should appear 1 inch (2.54 cm) from the right-hand edge of the page in the upper right-hand corner, ½ inch (1.27 cm) from the top of the page.
- Running head is an abbreviated article title (no more than 50 characters in length. It uses upper case letters and is positioned flush left at the top of the title page and same level as the manuscript page header.
- The title page includes the following information centered horizontally and vertically on the page. Upper and lower case letters are used. (See Appendix C: An Example of a Paper.)
  - Title of the paper
  - Your name (first name, middle initial, last name)
  - School affiliation (Okanagan College)
  - Course name and number*
  - Date submitted*

* A modification from APA guidelines to meet the needs of the nursing.

- The title should be explanatory when standing alone. It is to inform readers about the content of the paper.
The sections of papers are ordered as follows:
< Title page: Separate page, numbered page 1.
< Text of the paper: Start on separate page, numbered page 2.
< References: Start on a separate page, page numbered in sequence with the rest of the paper.
< If used, an Appendix: Start each on a separate page, numbered in sequence following References. If there is more than one Appendix, label each with a capital letter (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) in the order mentioned in the main text.

Writing Style

- The introduction introduces the topic of the paper and the organization of the paper. It has no heading.

- When describing literature, the past tense or present perfect tense should be used. For example:
  Begany (1994) suggested … or
  Jett (1996) has stated …

- Jargon and redundancy should be eliminated. This means that contractions, slang expressions (kids, mom), and euphemisms (passed away) should not be used. Also, expressions like my own personal views should be shortened to my views.

- Words should be used precisely. This means that feel cannot be used when think is the more accurate word. Also, plural pronouns (they) cannot be used to refer to singular nouns (man).

- The editorial “we” should not be used unless it refers to a group of people to whom one belongs. For example:
  We usually think of nurses as women would be better written as people usually think of nurses as women.

- Grammar and sentence structure rules apply to all writing.

- Verbs should be phrased in the active voice. For example:
  The paper was written by Smith (2000) … would be better phrased as Smith (2000) wrote …

- Biased language (his or her) must be removed from all writing. Use person or individual to indicate gender neutrality.

- Quotation marks are used to indicate that a portion of the text was quoted from another source.

- Italics indicate emphasis, as well as journal or book titles and journal volume numbers.

- Numbers less than or equal to ten are written as words. Numbers greater than ten are written as figures.

- Do not use contractions.
• Abbreviations should be kept to a minimum. Abbreviations that are not universally understood must be defined when they are first used.

  For example:
  British Columbia Perinatal Care Program (BCPHP)

< Units of time are never abbreviated (day, week, month, and year).

< Plural abbreviations add an s not an apostrophe s. For example: 
  RT becomes RTs.

< State and province abbreviations are two letters with no period following them. For example:
  BC or ON or CA

Reference Citations in Text

The APA’s in-text reference citations provide at least the author’s name and the year of publication. If a work is cited more than once in the same paragraph, the date does not need to be included in any citation after the first. Otherwise, the citation format is the same each time a work is cited. For direct quotations and some paraphrases, a page number is given as well. The following are some examples. Unless otherwise noted, electronic sources follow the same pattern as printed ones.

Single Author

  In 2005 Hess discussed wounds

  Hess (2005) discussed wounds

  In a recent discussion on wounds (Hess, 2005)

Note: If no date is available, use the first word in title of article, followed by (n.d.)

Multiple Authors

When a work has two authors, use both names consistently.

  A recent work (Schenck & English, 2001)

When a work has three to five authors cite all the authors the first time. In subsequent citations use only the first author’s name followed by et al. (not italicized and there is a period after al.)

  First citation: Reynolds, Jeris, and Theodore (2002) found that

  Later citation: Reynolds et al. (2002) found that

When a work has six or more authors, give the first author’s last name followed by et al. and the year.

  First & later citations: Roby et al. (2002) demonstrated that

For more examples of in-text citations see the Okanagan College Library APA style guide: http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Assets/Departments+%28Administration%29/Library/PDFs/apa.
Quotations

Whenever the *exact word or words* of another person who wrote, spoke, or sang them have been used in a paper, they must be quoted and cited in the paper. Consult BCIT policies for the consequences of plagiarism.

- Short quotations of fewer than 40 words are made to fit grammatically into the sentence and enclosed by quotation marks. Follow the quote with the citation that includes the page number on which the words are found. For example:

  As researched by Begany, “people continue to value nurses mainly for their caring disposition …” (1994, p. 29).

- Quotations of more than 40 words are set off from the text of the paper by indenting them five spaces from the left margin and do not have quotation marks around them. Again, the citation includes the page number. For example:

  APA (2001) has specific guidelines for long quotations. Display a quotation of 40 or more words in a free-standing block of typewritten lines and omit the quotation marks. Start such a block quotation on a new line, and indent it five spaces from the left margin (in the same position as a new paragraph). Type subsequent lines flush with the indent. … Type the entire quotation double-spaced (p. 292).

- Quotations must be accurate. If part of the sentence is omitted, indicate the omission by using three spaced dots… called ellipses. If the omission occurs at the end of a sentence, use four dots, the last one being the period indicating the end of the source’s sentence. For example:

  Awiatka (1992) closes her essay with a call to action on the part of her readers. “We must all insist that – in film and other media – the positive portrayal of Native Americans be deepened and enlarged and that … [they] have the opportunity to speak for [themselves]” (p. 195).

- Explanations, clarifications, or grammatical/syntactical adjustments, which you make to the quotation, are indicated by square brackets.

- Secondary sources of information must not be quoted as primary sources. Secondary sources are sources of ideas originally written by another author, but quoted or used by the secondary author. For example:

  Begany’s study (as cited in Singer, 1990)…

  Only the secondary author will be listed in the references.
See separate document:

Ensuring Safe Sleep (Sample Paper)