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Running head: APA FORMATTING FOR STUDENTS

APA Formatting For Dixie State College Nursing Students

An A. Student

Dixie State College

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APA Formatting for Dixie State College Nursing Students

Nursing students are required to use American Psychological Association (APA) style in writing papers in the Dixie State College Nursing Program. APA style is used by the vast majority of nursing programs and nursing journals. Learning APA style may seem intimidating at first but it is easy to learn as there are many resources to help students.

Instructors most likely have required or recommended that students purchase the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.)*. One problem with the APA Style Manual is that it is written for writers who are submitting manuscripts to journals as well as written for students. There is a lot more information in the manual than nursing students will ever need to know to write papers for the nursing program. There usually are only a few things students need to know in order to write most of their papers for the nursing program and fulfill the requirement of having them in APA format. These are:

1. Title page
2. Pagination
3. Header
4. Headings
5. Bulleting or numbering lists
6. Citation of sources within your paper
7. Reference list

One suggestion then is for students to flag these sections in the APA Style Manual and ignore the rest (unless they have to use the rest; e.g. want to include a table or chart in one of their papers). A second suggestion is for students to purchase the *Concise Rules of APA Style* instead of the larger manual. This is available at www.apastyle.org for \$26.95.

An excellent online resource is:

http://www.vanguard.edu/faculty/ddegelman/index.aspx?doc_id=796. It is well-written, concise, and has links to examples for each section. For instance, the site first discusses requirements of the title page then takes the user to a link for an example of a correctly written title page.

The Dixie State College library has an online guide to APA format. However, it is a guide only for writing the reference list in APA format. Students may find this link by going to the College webpage, entering the library website, clicking on HELP at the top of the page and then going to APA Style Guide.

There are a number of APA software programs that can be purchased and downloaded. These programs will format a paper as students write it. Most of these programs take some understanding on a student's part of APA format and require a student's input along the way. For example, a student wishes to enter a heading in their paper. The student "tells" the program how many levels of heading are desired and then enters the appropriate heading at the right time when prompted. One such software program, *APA-Style Helper 5.1*, is available at www.apastyle.org for \$34.95. Other APA software programs can be found through a Google search.

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All faculty members are available for assistance in learning APA style. If a student is unsure that he or she has written a paper correctly in APA style, share a rough draft with the course instructor for suggestions and corrections several days before the paper is due. It is advised to not let this go to the last minute. This will make it difficult for the instructor to provide the best help and challenging for the student to make the necessary revisions in order to have the paper in by the due date.

Students should not try to figure out the “why” of APA format. There surely are reasons behind why the American Psychological Association requirements for writing are what they are. However, it is futile and a waste of a student’s time and energy to try to figure out those reasons.

Don’t get discouraged. Most nursing students and instructors are self-taught in APA format. This is a process that takes time. As students learn APA format, they will have very little difficulty with using it in their final semester of the ADN program and will be experts in their senior year in the BSN program. The following are more specific guidelines for writing an APA paper.

Title Page

All margins should be 1 inch (this applies to the rest of the paper as well). The page header will be in the top right margin and should include a quick reference word that applies to the paper as well as the page number. Do not use a name as the page header. The page number should be 5 spaces away from last letter of the header. The running head should be next on the left and should not be over 50 characters. The running head appears only on the title page. The header and page number should appear on each page of the paper including reference list page. The title of the paper will be centered in the upper half of the title page followed by your name and the school (Neyhart & Karper, 2002).

Abstract

As the typical length of papers in the nursing program is relatively short, an abstract is not included. Individual instructors may make exceptions to this especially if students are writing a lengthy paper (20 or more pages).

Text

The title of the paper is included at the top of the first page of your text. However, it is not considered a heading. Do not use “Introduction.” The first paragraph of a research paper, or a thesis statement, sets the tone for the rest of the paper. Taking adequate time to capture an audience is a critical part of the planning process. The thesis statement can either make or break a paper. Questions, which are commonly used within a thesis statement, should be avoided when possible, as stronger, more captivating statements can be used to draw in an audience. Do not forget that a paragraph needs to have at least three sentences. The paper should be double-spaced throughout.

Headings

The heading structure of a paper can become quite taxing to the unprepared writer. The organization of the heading structure is dependent upon the number of organization levels

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Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading [Level 1]

Centered, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading [Level 2]

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading [Level 3]

Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. [Level 4]

CENTERED UPPERCASE HEADING [Level 5]

of specified Levels:

1 Level: Level 1

2 Levels: Level 1 & 3

3 Levels: Level 1, 3 & 4

4 Levels: Level 1, 2, 3 & 4

5 Levels: Level 5, 1, 2, 3 & 4 (American Psychological Association, 2001).

Grammar and Contractions

Be sure to brush up on grammar usage. Nursing students are only required to study up to English 2010. Since some students have been out of high school for a period of time, two semesters of English may not be enough to present well in a professional paper. Online Writing Lab at Dixie State College (<http://dsc.dixie.edu/reber/>) or Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/oldindex.html>) may provide an excellent source to improve your writing skills.

Ill-usage of contractions is a sure way to lose the respect of a reader, as contractions have no place in a professional paper. While revising the paper be sure to take notice of contractions and replace with the proper form to provide a quick fix to sounding professional. The following are a few examples of contractions to avoid (Neyhart & Karper, 2002):

1. "Don't" should be "do not"
2. "Can't" should be "cannot"
3. "Wasn't" should be "was not"
4. "They'll" should be "they will"
5. "It's" should be "it is"

Avoid using 1st or 2nd person writing, as professional articles should only use 3rd person unless otherwise specified in an assignment. Another common error in writing APA is that only one space is required after a period due to the technological advances removing the need for additional space after the period to separate sentences. There are a few additional grammatical problems commonly seen in professional pages and should be avoided as follows (Neyhart & Karper, 2002):

1. When referencing page numbers, use p. for page and pp. for pages not pg. and pgs.
2. Subject should match the verb; i.e. instead of "A patient has their needs met" use "A patient has his or her needs met."
3. "It's" is not the possessive, "its" is the possessive, i.e. "The client liked its aroma."

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4. Do not use abbreviations until the word(s) has been written out once and then followed by the abbreviation; i.e. “She was a CNA” should be first, “She was a certified nurse assistant (CNA).” Thereafter, “CNA” alone can be used in the paper.
5. Avoid medical jargon and its abbreviations; i.e. “The doc ...” or “The MD...” should be “The physician...”
6. Certified nurse assistant, registered nurse, nurse practitioner, physician, etc. are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence.
7. The plural form of an abbreviation does not use an apostrophe; i.e. the plural of “CNA” is “CNAs” not “CNA’s.” Similarly, the plural of a proper name does not require an apostrophe: “the Lees” not “the Lee’s.”

Writing from another Source

There are three ways of incorporating other writers’ work into your own writing according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

Quotations must be identical to the original source, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author (Neyhart & Karper, 2002).

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from sourced material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the *original* source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage: you only have to make reference of the author and year of publication in your text (Neyhart & Karper, 2002).

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the *original* source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Short and Long Quotes

Short quotes can be efficiently used when the information is best presented in the original source’s own words. When formatting the short quotes utilize the following necessities (Neyhart & Karper, 2002):

1. Direct quotes of fewer than 40 words in your text
2. Enclose the quotation within double quotation marks
3. Provide the author, year, and specific page cited in the text

Punctuation marks, such as periods, commas, and semicolons, appear after the citation. Question marks and exclamation marks appear within the quotation.

Example of a short quote: According to Jennings (2006), “There is a distinct relationship between horses and zebras; until closer observation is performed, then one is able to fully understand the differences between horses and zebras” (p. 300).

Long quotes, like short quotes are used to preserve the content and organization of the original source. The following items differ from the formatting of short quotes (Neyhart & Karper, 2002):

1. Place direct quotes longer than 40 words in a freestanding block and omit quotation marks
2. Start the quotation on a new line, indented five spaces from the left
3. Maintain double spacing throughout
4. **Example of a long quote:** Barton (2005) found the following:

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Students often had difficulty writing APA papers, especially when it was their first time citing sources. This difficulty could be attributed to the fact that many students failed to purchase a style manual or to ask their teacher for help. (p. 199)

Formatting Citations

Citations are such an important part of professional writing. When utilizing someone else's work, proper referencing and citation must take place to give credit to the person with whom the idea originated. The following items need to be of concern while citing within the professional paper (Neyhart & Karper, 2002):

1. Always capitalize proper nouns, including author names
2. If you refer to the title of a source within your paper, capitalize all words that are four letters long or longer or greater within the title of a source
3. When capitalizing titles, capitalize both words in a hyphenated compound word
4. After a colon or dash in a title, capitalize the first word
5. *Italicize* the titles of longer works such as books, edited collections, movies, documentaries, or albums
6. Put quotation marks around the titles of shorter works such as journal articles, articles from edited collections, television shows, and song titles
7. If a work has two authors, cite both names every time the reference appears in our text. Join the authors' names with the word **and**
8. If a work has three, four, or five authors, cite all of the authors the first time you refer to the work in your text. The next time you refer to the work, shorten the citation to the last name of the first author plus the words **et al**. Join the authors' names with the word **and** if you are referring to them in the text; join the authors' names with an ampersand (&) if you are referring to them in a parenthetical citation
9. If a work has six authors (or more), cite only the last name of the first author plus the words **et al**
10. For more information about these rules, see pages 94-99 and 207-209 of the *APA Publication Manual*.

Figures and Tables

When writing a professional paper, specific pictures, graphs, or tables of information may be useful in order to enhance the readers understanding of the information presented. In APA format the following rules need to be observed while utilizing the additional features to the paper, along with examples after the reference page (American Psychological Association, 2001):

1. Number all tables consecutively, and refer to them by numbers in the text (for example, see Table 4). Tables may be placed within the text or on separate pages at the end of the paper. Students should find out what their instructor prefers. Each table should have a brief explanatory title. Type the word Table along with an Arabic numeral flushed left above the table (for example, Table 7)
2. Double-space and type the title of each table (in italics) flush left. Capitalize the first letters of principal words of the title (for example, Frequency of Negative Responses of Dorm Students to Questions Concerning Alcohol Consumption)
3. Number all figures consecutively, and refer to them by numbers in the text (for example, See Figure 1). Figures may be placed within the text or on separate pages at the end of

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the paper. Students should find out what their instructor prefers. In addition to a number, each figure should have a caption that explains the figure and serves as a title

4. Do not include the captions with the figure themselves. Instead, list captions for all the figures together on a separate page. At the top of this page, center the title Figure Captions. Then, for each caption, type the work *Figure* followed by the number (both italicized) (for example, *Figure 1*). If you source material in your paper, citations should be consistent with APA documentation style.

Include a table or figure only if it is necessary. If it duplicates text, it is not necessary.

Reference List

An example of a reference list is included on the following pages. A common error that is made relates to capitalization of book, article, and journal titles. As noted in the following reference list:

1. Book and article titles: Capitalize the first letter of the first word, the first letter of the first word after a colon, and proper names only.
2. Journal titles: Capitalize the first letter of each major word. Do not capitalize words such as “an, of, and, for, to.”

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References

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Neyhart, D., & Karper, E. (2002). *Using American Psychological Association (APA) format (Updated to the 5th edition)*. Retrieved February 15, 2006, from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html.

An article in a periodical (e.g. journal, newspaper, or magazine)

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. D. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, Volume number (issue number), pages.

Examples of journals

Harlow, H. F. (1983). Fundamentals for preparing psychology journal articles. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 55, 893-896.

Journal articles, more than six authors

Harris, M., Karper, E., Stacks, G., Hoffman, D., DeNiro, R., Cruz, P., et al.

Magazine article

Henry, W. A., III. (1990, April 9). Making the grade in today's schools. *Time*, 135, 25-31.

A nonperiodical (e.g., book, report, brochure, or audiovisual media)

Author, A. A. (year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle*. Location: Publisher.

Book example

Calfee, R. C., & Valencia, R. R. (1991). *APA guide to preparing manuscripts for journal publication*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

A book or article with no author or editor named

Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

New drug appears to sharply cut risk of death from heart failure. (1993, July 15). *The Washington Post*, p. A12.

Writing labs and the Hollywood connection. (2001). *Journal of Film and Writing*, 44(3), 213-245.

Article in an Internet Periodical

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of journal*, volume number (issue number if available). Retrieved month day, year, from <http://Web address>.

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Nonperiodical Internet Document (e.g., a Web page or report)

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). *Title of article*. Retrieved month date, year, from <http://Web address>.

An online journal article

Kenneth, I. A. (2000). A Buddhist response to the nature of human rights. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 8(4). Retrieved February 20, 2001 from <http://www.cac.psu.edu/jbe/twocont.html>

Article in an Internet Periodical

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal, volume number*(issue number if available). Retrieved month day, year, from <http://Web address>.

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Table 1

Clinical Errors/Untoward Clinical Incidents Reported by RN Study Participants for Themselves and for Other Nurses

Clinical Errors/Untoward Clinical Incidents

	Study RNs				Other Nurses				
	Occur	Short	Distress	N	Occur	Short	Distress	N	
	%	%	%		%	%	%		
Medication Clinical Errors									
1	Not given/wrong time	78	69	73	1386	91	80	32	1381
2	Incorrect medication	39	35	40	1378	80	66	73	1373
3	Incorrect dose	35	30	34	1369	65	54	60	1360
Treatment Clinical Errors									
4	Not given/wrong time	65	63	61	1375	77	71	68	1363
5	Incorrect administration	18	19	19	1363	51	43	47	1341
6	Incorrect treatment	16	16	17	1351	43	38	41	1334
Untoward Clinical Incidents									
7	Fall (patient)								
8	Pressure ulcer (stage 2,3,4)								
9	Unplanned admission								
10	Restrained (physical or chemical)								
11	Nurse injury on job								

Occur = occurred, that is, error made (yes)

Short = occurrence of error related to nursing shortage (somewhat/strongly)

Distress = occurrence of error related to nursing shortage resulted in moral distress (somewhat/strongly)

N = number of RNs who responded to the survey for each of the 11 categories

From “errors, the nursing shortage and ethics: Survey results” by R. Ludwick, M. C. Silva, 2003,

Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, Retrieved February 16, 2006, from

http://www.nursingworld.org/ojin/ethicol/ethics_12.thm. Reprinted with permission.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Image showing where a stroke may occur in the brain along with an enlarged image of what may occur inside the vessels of the brain causing the stroke.

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Figure 1

