

Some basic writing elements and exercise assignments

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The information contained in pages 1-7 of this document was copied verbatim from Robert Perrin's *Handbook for College Research*, (3rd ed.), p.114-121.

You will find this information useful while preparing to write your term papers, especially when you are gathering data and taking notes from various sources.

Consistent Format

Record notes in a consistent format to avoid confusion at later stages of research or writing.

- *Placement of information.* Where to place the author's name, title (when necessary), category notation, and page numbers is a personal choice, but be sure to establish a consistent pattern to use in all notes.
- *Abbreviations.* Use abbreviations selectively during note-taking. Using unfamiliar, spur-of-the-moment abbreviations to save time can actually waste time; when you work with notes days or weeks later, unusual abbreviations can be indecipherable or baffling.
- *Notations.* Note peculiarities or special qualities of a source. For example, indicate that a pamphlet has no page numbers or that a source has an excellent chart. Indicate where page breaks occur; a double slash (//) is an effective notation. (See sample notes in this document)

Kinds of Notes

Accurate Information

After completing a note, double-check its accuracy. Check the spelling of names and the wording of titles; check numbers, dates, and statistics; check quotations. Returning to sources to recheck the accuracy of notes (as opposed to looking for additional information) wastes valuable research time.

Collaboration

Because you and your collaborators share note-taking responsibilities and because during later stages of planning and writing, you will use the notes gathered by *all* researchers, use the same note-taking strategies. Having all notes from all collaborators in an agreed-upon format makes it easy for everyone to work without confusion or frustration at later stages of the research process.

Take different kinds of notes, depending on the material.

Few sources satisfy all researching needs. Some are well written but have few facts; others include excellent ideas expressed in unimpressive language. Because sources have different strengths and provide different kinds of information, take notes flexibly. Four common kinds of notes serve most purposes.

1. Facts

Factual notes record technical information—names, dates, amounts, percentages—to be incorporated in your own sentences. Record such information with minimal clarifying notations; double-check notes for accuracy.

Original Source

First read this brief excerpt from pages 27-28 of Lyle E. Schaller's *The Evolution of the American Public High School: From Prep School to Prison to New Partnerships* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000). Then examine the note card that records facts from the excerpt.

A major reason for [the] national debate in the 1890s over the ideal high school curriculum was the sharp increase in enrollment and graduate rates that began after the Civil War and the subsequent emphasis on graduation. The number of students graduating from high school was 16,000 in 1870, a year in which the number entering first grade was over a million. The number of high school graduates doubled to 32,000 in 1883, doubled again to 65,000 in 1894, doubled again to 129,000 [page break] in 1908, [more than] doubled again to 1,068,000 in 1937, and doubled again to 2,290,000 in 1964. That 1964 number was 143 times the number of high school graduates 96 years earlier! Since 1980, the number of students graduating from high school each year has ranged between the high of 2.9 million in 1980 and the low of 2.4 million in 1990, with the 1990s averaging 2.5 million annually.

<u>Schaller/Evolution</u>	<u>enrollment numbers</u>
High School Graduation Rates	
-1870: 16,000	-1937:1,068,000
-1883:32,000	-1964:2,290,000
-1894:65,000	-1980:2.9 million
-1908:129,000//	-1990:2.4 million
	pp.27-28
Schaller, L. E. (2000). <i>The evolution of the American Public High School: From prep school to prison to new partnerships</i> . Nashville: Abingdon.	

2. Summaries

Summaries present the substance of a passage in condensed form. A useful means of recording examples, summaries must be written entirely in your own words, usually in abbreviated form. When taking notes, read the passage carefully, determine which information and ideas to record, and express them in your own words, phrases, or short sentences. **Do not use** any of the author's words without enclosing them in quotation marks.

Original Source

First read this brief excerpt from page 76 of Erik Larson's *The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Public Commodities* (New York: Holt, 1992). Then examine the note card that summarizes the excerpt.

TRW [a credit-reporting company] won't provide a marketer with copies of any actual credit reports. This would be too brazen a violation of existing fair credit laws. Instead TRW compiles a list of consumer names that reflect the credit data. L.L Bean, for example, could request a list of all consumers who possess a bank card with \$5,000 or more of available credit. (TRW does not allow a search by specific brand of card; neither did Equifax.) TRW would then search its files and pull a few million names. The company, however, would not return the list directly to Bean, but rather to a third party printer, ostensibly to protect the privacy of consumers who fit the search criteria (but also a dandy way of keeping unscrupulous clients from running off the names and using them again).

Larson/ Naked Consumer

mailing lists

Equifax and TRW (major credit-reporting firms) compile lists—the book's example is people with credit cards with spending limits over \$5,000—and sell them to direct-market retailers. That way retailers can target people with, the assumption is, large discretionary spending habits—the \$5,000 figure would generate a list of several million people.

p.76

Larson, E. (1992). *The naked consumer: How our private lives become public commodities*. New York: Holt.

3. Paraphrases

Paraphrases restate a passage in your own words, but unlike summaries, they contain approximately the same amount of detail and the same number of words as the original. If a passage contains an important idea but does not meet the requirements for a quotation (see p.5 of this document), restate the idea in your own words, sentence structure, and sequence. After finishing the paraphrase, check it carefully against the original passage to ensure that the idea has been completely restated. If you use any phrases or sentences from the original, place them in quotation marks.

Original Source

First read this brief excerpt from page 152 of Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Birth* (New York: Dutton, 1992). Then examine the note card that paraphrases the excerpt.

Following up on the report by the Public Citizen Health Research Group, some metropolitan dailies highlighted its findings as related to their own communities. The *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* featured a chart showing the caesarian rates in several for-profit hospitals ranging from 42.5 percent to 32.6 percent, whereas Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, which delivers babies to more indigent mothers than any other hospital in the state, had one of Georgia's lowest rates—18.7 percent.

<i>Mitford/American Way</i>	<i>c-sections</i>
<i>The rates of caesarian sections increase or decrease depending on how doctors bill separately for procedures and when patients have their own insurance, the rates of caesarian sections increase to roughly one-third of births (33-39%); hospitals with the lowest c-section rates are those where doctors do not receive special fee and where bills are not itemized.</i>	
p.152	
Mitford, J. (1992). <i>The American way of birth</i> . New York: Dutton.	

4. Quotations

Quotations reproduce a writer's work word for word, maintaining original spelling and punctuation. Assess the value of the quotation before you copy it by asking the following questions:

- *Style*. Is the author's language so distinctive that you cannot say the same thing as well or as clearly in your own words?
- *Vocabulary*. Is the vocabulary technical and therefore difficult to translate into your own words?
- *Reputation*. Is the author so well known or so important that the quotation can lend authority to your paper?
- *Points of contention*. Does the author's material raise doubt or questions or make points with which you disagree?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then copy the quotation into your notes. Enclose the author's words in quotation marks and double-check the note against the original; the copy must be *exact*. Indicate when the quotation comes from a comment or a passage by someone other than the author—for example, when an author has quoted someone whom you also wish to quote.

Original Source

First read this brief excerpt from pages 270-271 in Paul Robinson's *Freud and His Critics* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993). Then examine the note card that quotes from the excerpt.

Michael Foucault has called Freud a "founder of discursivity," meaning by that someone who has created a new way of speaking, "an endless possibility of discourse." Harold Bloom asserts, "No twentieth-century writer—not even Proust or Joyce or Kafka—rivals Freud's position as the central imagination of our age." Freud has fundamentally altered the way we think. He has changed our intellectual manners, often without our even being aware of it. For most of us Freud has become a habit of mind—a [page break] bad habit, his critics would be broken. He is a major source of our modern inclination to look for meanings beneath the surface of behavior—to be always on the alert for the "real" (and presumably hidden) significance of our actions. He also inspires our belief that the mysteries of the present will become more transparent if we can trace them to their origins in the past, perhaps even in the very earliest past we can remember (or, more likely, not remember). See p. 10 of this document for the explanation of [] as indicated.

<i>Robinson/Critics</i>	<i>influence</i>
<i>"Freud has fundamentally altered the way we think. He has changed our intellectual manners, often without our even being aware of it. For most of us[,] Freud has become a habit of mind—a // bad habit, his critics would be quick to urge, but a habit now too deeply ingrained to be broken. He is the major source of our modern inclination to look for meanings beneath the surface of behavior—to be always on the alert for the 'real' (and probably hidden) significance of our actions."</i>	
p.270-271	
Paul Robinson, P. (1993). <i>Freud and his critics</i> . Berkeley Univ.: California.	

Taking Notes

Record facts, summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotations from the books and articles on your preliminary list of sources; each note should accurately reflect the source and provide full identifying information.

Consider the issues of common knowledge.

Determining whether information is common knowledge (which requires no documentation) or whether it is specialized knowledge (which must be documented) complicates note-taking.

Common Knowledge

Some facts and interpretations are known by many people and consequently are described as common knowledge. That U.S. presidents are elected to four-year terms is commonly known, as is the more interpretive information that the U.S. government is a democracy with a system of checks and balances among its executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

However, common knowledge extends beyond general information to more specific information within fields of study. In English studies, for example, it is commonly known that George Eliot is the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans, and a commonly acknowledge interpretation is that drama evolved from a Greek festival honoring the god Dionysus. Documenting these facts in a paper for *an English course* would be unnecessary because they are commonly known, even though you might have discovered them for the first time.

Guidelines

As you research an unfamiliar subject, distinguishing common knowledge that does not require documentation from special knowledge that requires documentation is sometimes difficult. The following guidelines should help:

- *Historical facts.* Names, dates, and general interpretations that appear in many general reference books are considered common knowledge. For example, George Washington was the first president of the United States, and the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787.
- *Unattributed literature.* When literature cannot be attributed to a specific author, it is considered common knowledge. Two examples are *Beowulf* and the Bible. However, the use of specific editions or translations still requires acknowledgement. (When in doubt, ask your instructor for assistance.)
- *General observations and opinions.* Observations and opinions are shared by many people are considered common knowledge. For example, a general observation is that children learn by actively doing, not just by passively listening: a commonly held opinion is that reading, writing, and arithmetic are basic skills to be learned by an elementary school child.
- *Unacknowledged information from multiple sources.* When information appears in multiple sources without special notation, consider it common knowledge. For example, it is common knowledge that the earth is approximately 93 million miles from the sun and that the gross national product (GNP) is the market value of all goods and services provided by a nation in a given year.

If a piece of information does not meet these general guidelines or if you are uncertain about whether it is common knowledge, always document the material.

Collaboration

Working with collaborators provides multiple perspectives on what information can be considered common knowledge. After all, you and your collaborators have all read substantial amounts of material. As a result, you have multiple points of reference when deciding whether certain facts or ideas are common knowledge—allowing you to make a more specific judgment than you might make alone.

Common Knowledge about Your Topic

Make a list of ten facts, ideas, or interpretations that are generally known or held about your topic. Next to each item, identify the category of common knowledge into which it falls.

Example

Subject: Academy Awards

1. *Gone with the Wind* (1939) was the first color film to win the award for best picture: historical fact.
2. If you give good performances long enough, you're bound to get an Oscar: general observation.
3. Katherine Hepburn won more acting Oscars than any other performer in a leading role: unacknowledged information from multiple sources.
4. Comedies and comic performances are less likely to win awards than dramatic films and performances: general opinion.
5. Whoever wins the Directors' Guild award usually wins the Oscar for best director: general observation.
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Recognize the seriousness of plagiarism.

Plagiarism—the word comes from the Latin word for kidnapping—is the use of someone else's words, ideas, or lines of thought without acknowledgment. In its most extreme form, plagiarism involves submitting someone else's completed work as your own; a less extreme but equally unacceptable form involves blocking and copying entire segments of another writer's work into your own writing; and a third form involves carelessly or inadvertently blending elements (words, phrases, ideas) of a writer's work into your own.

In all of its forms, plagiarism is academically dishonest and unacceptable, and the penalties for its practice range from failing individual papers or project to failing courses to being dismissed from college to having degrees revoked. The seriousness of plagiarism cannot be ignored, so you must make a determined effort to avoid this practice.

The information contained in pages 8-11 of this document was copied verbatim from Robert Perrin's *Handbook for College Research*, (3rd ed.), p.140-143.

A. Remember general strategies for drafting papers.

Because the research paper is in many ways like all other papers, keep these overall writing strategies in mind:

- *Gather all materials together.* You can proceed with relatively few interruptions if your planning materials and writing supplies are nearby.
- *Work from the outline.* Write one paragraph or section at a time, in any order postponing work on troublesome sections until you have gained momentum.
- *Remember the purpose of the paper.* Arrange and develop only the ideas presented in the outline – and closely related ideas that emerge as you write.
- *Use only ideas and details that support the thesis statement.* Resist tendencies to drift from your point or to provide interesting but extraneous details.
- *Remember reader's needs.* Include information and explanations that readers need in order to understand the discussion.
- *Do not worry yet about technical matters.* Concentrate on getting ideas down on paper; attend to punctuation, mechanics, and spelling later.
- *Rethink and modify troublesome sections.* If the outline creates problems, if an example seems weak, or if the order of the paragraphs no longer seems logical, change it.
- *Reread section while writing.* Rereading earlier sections while writing helps you maintain a reasonably consistent tone.
- *Write alternative versions of troublesome sections.* Write multiple versions of troublesome sections; then choose the best one.
- *Periodically take a break from writing.* Interrupting your writing too often can cause inconsistencies in style and tone, but occasionally getting away from the work helps you maintain a fresh perspective and attain objectivity.

COLLABORATION

Because collaboration writing requires several people to compose together in order to achieve the best combined expression, expect some challenges.

Schedule a time when you and your collaborators can work for an extended period and decide on a method for writing. Consider having one person type or write, while others dictate phrases; this process, though slow, produces a draft that truly blends the work of all collaborators. Or consider dividing the writing, with each collaborator composing a portion of the paper or project; although this pattern of writing is efficient, it sometimes produces a paper whose tone and style shift from paragraph to paragraph, unless collaborators then revise heavily so that the individual styles merge into one style.

Think carefully about alternative composing patterns and choose the one that promises the most success for you and your collaborators.

B. Consider strategies that apply principally to drafting research papers.

The research paper has its own peculiarities and demands. Consequently, keep these special strategies in mind:

- *Allow ample time.* Drafting a research paper requires more time than drafting other, briefer papers because of its length and complexity. Consequently, begin writing as soon as possible and write something each day.
- *Work on a section at a time.* Work steadily, section by section. When a section is difficult to write or when you need more information, leave that section for later and move to the next. Look for any needed new material as soon as possible.
- *Give special attention to technical language.* Define carefully any discipline-specific or other specialized language required in the paper. Writing thoughtful definitions of important technical terms clarifies ideas.
- *Think of the paper by section, not by paragraph.* Discussions of most sections require more than one paragraph, so use new paragraphs to present subsections of your discussion.
- *Use transitions to signal major shifts within the paper.* The multiparagraph explanations required for key points can make it difficult for readers to know when you shift from one major element of the paper to another. Consequently, emphasize transitions in the draft.
- *Incorporate research notes smoothly.* Materials from sources should support, not dominate, the paper. Incorporate source materials as needed to develop the thesis; do not simply string notes together with sentences. (For a complete discussion of incorporating research notes, see section C)

C. Incorporate notes in the paper.

Incorporate information from note-taking in the research paper, providing clarifications, explanations, and illustrations of important ideas. Use information selectively to substantiate key points, not simply to show that you have gathered materials, and comment on the central ideas. Readers should know why you have included source material.

The following advice about the writing techniques for introducing quotations and clarifying discussions is appropriate for all documentary styles. (See pgs. 384 – 385 of *A Writer's Reference*)

Facts and Summaries

Incorporate facts and summaries in your own sentences. Sentences containing facts and summarized ideas require parenthetical notes (see APA) to identify the sources of the information, as in this example: #1

Unlike productions from earlier generations, current musicals are extravaganzas, developed by multinational groups and presented in multiple venues. *Les Miserables* – produced in France, England, and the United States in 1989 – had eighteen companies touring worldwide, bringing in \$450 million (Rosenberg & Harburg, 1993).

Commonly known information, however, does not require an identifying note; that *Les Miserables* is based on the novel of that name by Victor Hugo is generally known and consequently does not require a note (see p.6 of this document for a discussion of common knowledge).

Paraphrases

Include paraphrased materials wherever they fit into the paper. A one-sentence paraphrase should be followed immediately by a parenthetical note. Longer paraphrases, especially background information taken from a single source, should be placed in a separate paragraph with parenthetical documentation at the end; identify the author and source at the beginning of the paragraph. For example: #2

In *School choice: The Struggle for the Soul of American Education*, Peter W. Cookson, Jr., (1994) provided a useful summary of why people have come to question the government's monopoly of public education. According to Cookson, high dropout rates, in-school violence, disintegrating facilities, low educational standards, and cultural fragmentation have all contributed to education's decline. However, he contended that it was media attention to these troubles, coupled with the conservative backlash of the Reagan years that gave the school choice movement its momentum (p 2-7).

Quotations

Use quotations selectively to add clarity, emphasis, or interest to a research paper, not to pad its length. Excessive quoting reduces the effectiveness of a paper because it suggests overdependence on other people's ideas.

Never include a quotation without introducing or commenting on it; readers cannot be expected to know why it is worth quoting. Instead, frame the quotation with your own ideas and provide evaluative comments, no matter how brief. A wide range of verbs may be used to introduce quotations, each creating its own kind of emphasis: The following signaling verbs and phrases were copied from Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*.

Varying signal phrases in APA papers

MODEL SIGNAL PHRASES

In the words of Terrace, "..."
As Davis has noted, "..."
The Gardners, Washoe's trainers, pointed out that "..."
"...," claimed linguist Noam Chomsky.
"...," wrote Eckholm, "..."
Psychologist H.S. Terrace has offered an odd argument for this view: "..."
Terrace answered these objections with the following analysis: "..."

VERBS IN SIGNAL PHRASES

admitted	contended	reasoned
agreed	declared	refuted
argued	denied	rejected
asserted	emphasized	reported
believed	insisted	responded
claimed	noted	suggested
compared	observed	thought
confirmed	pointed out	wrote

To omit a full sentence or more, use a period before the ellipsis dots.

According to Wade (1980), the horse Clever Hans "could apparently count by tapping out numbers with his hoof.... Clever Hans owes his celebrity to his master's innocence. Von Osten sincerely believed he had taught Hans to solve arithmetic problems" (p. 1349).

Ordinarily, do not use an ellipsis mark at the beginning or at the end of a quotation. Readers will understand that the quoted material is taken from a longer passage.

Using brackets

Brackets (square parenthesis) allow you to insert words of your own into quoted material, perhaps to explain a confusing reference or to keep a sentence grammatical in your context.

Seyfarth (1982) has written that “Premack [a scientist at the University of Pennsylvania] taught a seven-year-old chimpanzee, Sarah, that the word for ‘apple’ was a small, plastic triangle” (p. 13).

To indicate an error in a quotation, insert [sic]—italicized and in brackets—after the error.

Setting off long quotations

When you quote forty or more words, set off the quotation by indenting it one-half inch or five spaces) from the left margin.

Long quotations should be introduced by an informative sentence, usually followed by a colon. Quotation marks are unnecessary because the indented format tells readers that the words are taken word-for-word from the source. (See pg 389 of a *Writer’s Reference*).

Hart (1996) has described the kinds of linguistic signs and symbols used in the early ape language experiments:

Researchers attempted to teach individual signs derived from American Sign Language (ASL) to Washoe, a chimpanzee; Koko, a gorilla; and Chantek, an orangutan. Sarah, a chimpanzee, learned to manipulate arbitrary plastic symbols standing for words, and another chimpanzee, named Lana, used an early computer keyboard, with arbitrary symbols the researchers called lexigrams. (p. 108)

REFERENCES

- Cookson, P. W., Jr. (1994). *School Choice: The struggle for the soul of American education*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Rosenberg, B. & Harburg, E. (1993). *The Broadway musical: Collaboration in commerce and Art*. New York: New York UP.

The above is a partial reference list for works cited as examples #1 & 2, p. 9-10. Please note that the date appears after the authors name; also, watch for the appropriate punctuation. (See *A Writer’s Reference*, Exercise: APA-4, pages 392-404)

Before coming to the writing workshop, please read the attach documents, then from the document **ORIGINAL SOURCE: Documents attached**

1. Summarize the document in your own words, using appropriate documentation.
2. Paraphrase some aspect of the document your own words using the appropriate documentation.
3. Quote some aspect of document using the appropriate documentation.