

University of Idaho
Writing Center Tutors
on
College Writing

In compiling this packet, Writing Center tutors thought about 1) the sorts of questions students bring to tutoring sessions, and 2) their own writing process, including how they work and where they might run into challenges. First, we offer a set of reflections about writing in college that we hope will be encouraging advice to students who are new to academic writing. Next, we delve into more nitty-gritty, practical strategies and tools. The tools are organized in order of how they're needed in most writing processes.

We start with information about thesis statements and planning because it can be so helpful to have a good plan in place when you begin drafting. We then offer sentence templates that writers can use for presenting their claims, considering different perspectives, referring to sources, and transitioning between ideas. Students are sometimes dubious about the templates because using a sort of ready-made framework for a sentence can feel artificial, or even like cheating. But as you complete the templates with your own, unique ideas, you'll see that the templates are really pretty standard structures—like a frames or boxes—for presenting and clearly communicating your thoughts in relation to those of others. As you continue reading published work, you will see those same templates, or structures, appearing there too.

We end the packet with some information about formatting and APA style. Formatting comes last because, while you'll want to keep a record the sources you read in preparation for writing your papers, the actual formatting of those source citations can typically happen after you have your draft in place.

We hope this information is helpful!

- Section 1: Tutor Reflections on College Writing
- Section 2: Planning Makes the Process Smoother (Steps for Building Thesis Statements, Outlines, and Graphic Organizers)
- Section 3: Useful Transitional Phrases and Writing Templates for Different Situations
- Section 4: APA Guidelines and Your Sources

Section 1: Tutor Reflections on College Writing

The following tips come from a few Writing Center tutors, who are also experienced students and/or teachers. These ideas represent the sort of issues we talk about with students during tutoring sessions, and they come from our own learning and writing processes. We hope these ideas are reassuring and helpful.

Give yourself time. We cannot emphasize this enough. Give yourself time to research the topics at hand, time to think about your specific argument, time to write ideas out, and time to revise them again and again until the paper says what you want it to say.

Trust yourself. When the academic writing process is boiled down to its basics, the main components are something people do on a daily basis: we take in information, break it down, think about it, and form opinions in response. When beginning something like a research paper, these same steps apply. You take in new information (the research), break down and think about the information, and form new ideas in response to the research. From there, you write down those new ideas, organize them, and work them into a response that someone else can then take in and begin to think about.

Never disregard an idea because you think it doesn't sound smart. Some ideas are better than others, and part of the writing process is sorting through those ideas to determine what should and shouldn't be a part of your final response. But even ideas that aren't strong enough to make it into your paper are important because they will have likely helped you to get to the ideas that *do* make it into your final product.

Know that good writing is a result of revision. When you read something that's published, it might seem like the writing came out that way, but behind well-written sentences are many, many revisions. Good writers revise. So don't stop with a single draft, and try not to feel discouraged. If you are working and reworking sentences, rearranging paragraphs, or removing and inserting text, you are doing it right.

Focus on *what* you write instead of *how much* you write. It can be easy to get preoccupied with meeting an assignment's word or page limits. If you're under the limit and need to add more, make sure those additions come in the form of ideas, references and other supporting evidence, and analysis. Try not to be tempted to stretch your prose with unnecessary words and phrases or generalities--brainstorm additional ideas and details instead.

Think about what type of writer you might be. George R. R. Martin, the author of the *Game of Thrones* wrote, "I think there are two types of writers, the architects and the gardeners. The architects plan everything ahead of time, like an architect building a house...They have the whole thing designed and blueprinted out before they even nail the first board up. The gardeners dig a hole, drop in a seed and water it. They kind of know what seed it is...But as the

plant comes up and they water it, they don't know how many branches it's going to have, they find out as it grows."

Try thinking about your writing process in this way. Are you the type of writer who should spend time outlining and developing a thesis before starting to write? Or would you prefer to write, write, write and deal with organizing your ideas and formulating a specific thesis later? Are you an architect, a gardener, some combination of the two? If you aren't sure what works for you--try a combination of strategies and see what you like.

Don't get too attached a single style guide. When it comes to style guides, it's important to realize that different classes (and different fields of study) follow different guidelines. Rather than memorize rules for one guide or another, it is better to learn how to follow examples. For example, English classes usually follow MLA (the style guide for the Modern Language Association), while classes in the social sciences (like anthropology, psychology, and sociology) follow APA (the style guide for the American Psychological Association). Always ask, if it's not stated on a syllabus or assignment sheet, which style guide you should follow for a specific writing project, and learn to pay attention to details like spacing, italics, capitalization, citation method, or font size.

Practice. The art of academic writing is especially daunting when you don't have much practice or experience, but with the willingness to understand some of the basic techniques, it gets easier.

Section 2: Planning Makes the Process Smoother (Steps for Building Thesis Statements, Graphic Organizers, and Outlines)

This section will first look at the process of writing a thesis, and then present a few strategies for outlining and organizing ideas. A solid thesis is crucial to a well-structured paper, but different writers will have different methods for drafting and organizing. For example, each of the tutors writing this guide have different approaches. Abigail makes sure she has a thorough thesis and outline before she begins to write a draft. Xena, on the other hand, does not use an outline at all. Corrin does a lot of mental mapping or thinking about what she wants to say before she begins to write, and Jamaica usually figures out her thesis, does some stream-of-conscious drafting and brainstorming (including listing), and then begins to build an outline for organizing those ideas. Some people also find a reverse outline useful as a way to “map” what they’ve drafted and gain a better sense of how what they’ve written so far is organized.

Writing Thesis Statements

What is a thesis statement? A thesis explains your overall argument and presents the main points or claims of your paper. It often appears toward the beginning of an essay, but it doesn’t have to. No matter its location, the thesis acts like a roadmap to the ideas you present in your paper, meaning that the main points you plan to make in your paper should be forecast, or echoed, in your thesis statement.

How do you come up with a thesis? When it comes to pre-thesis-thinking, your professor has provided some helpful tips and considerations for getting started. We’ll begin with those, and then apply those ideas to an example situation.

Tips from Professor Hodwitz

- (1) Prior to writing this section, you should reflect on the issues and themes that were discussed during the class meeting. What themes, points, or issues did you find interesting? Jot these down.
- (2) Since it is difficult to write about several issues well, select one or two of these issues and themes to write about.
- (3) Develop your own analysis of the issue/s or theme/s you select. What do you think about what you read and discussed during class?
- (4) Use quotes from the readings and examples from class discussion to support your analysis or to highlight the limitations of your analysis.

Questions to answer in order to write a thesis:

- (1) What issue do you want to focus on?
- (2) Identify quotes from your reading that spoke to you/stood out to you?
- (3) What do these quotes suggest your stance on the topic is?
- (4) Why is this your argument? (What do your quotes suggest about your topic?)

Writing your Thesis:

- (1) Identify your stance on the topic
- (2) List why this is your stance
- (3) [Stance on topic] because [list reasons].

Example:

Imagine that you have to respond to an article on the pros and cons of investing in renewable energy sources:

Questions to answer in order to write a thesis:

- 1) First, determine the issue you're going to write about. In this example case, the issue is renewable energy sources.
- 2) Second, record the information (paraphrased) or direct quotes that spoke to you. Here are three that we chose:
 - "If the sun always rises and the wind always blows, the reliability of renewable energy types can far exceed that of fossil fuels."
 - "Renewable energy sources make the environment healthier as they do not pollute it with Co2 and other toxic gases that are produced by fossil fuels."
 - "It costs a lot to develop renewable energy stations...The known ways of using fossil fuel are less costly because all of the manufacturing and construction processes are already in place."
- 3) Ask yourself what the quotes suggest about your stance on the topic.
 - The first two quotes suggest that renewable energy is good.
 - The final quote was an interesting alternative perspective to me (and something I might want to address in my writing), but I am more persuaded by the first two statements.

- We decide to argue that investing in renewable energy is something we should do
- 4) Ask yourself, “Why is this my argument?” (What do my quotes suggest about the topic?)
- We can count on renewable energy more than we can on fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources won’t run out.
 - Renewable energy is better for the environment.

Writing the thesis:

- (1) Identify your stance on the topic → After considering the four questions above, we decided our stance was that renewable energy is important for the future. We acknowledge that renewable energy is more expensive, but want to take the stance that the benefits outweigh the costs.
- (2) List why this is your stance
- We can count on it (it is reliable).
 - It is good for environment.
- (3) Frame this stance as a thesis statement → [Stance on topic] because [list reasons].
Example Thesis: **Renewable energy is important for the future because it is reliable (we can count on it) and it is good for the environment.**

We can also revise the thesis to include our stance on the opposing view (that it’s expensive). Here’s how we’ve done it: **Despite its relative expense, renewable energy is important for the future because it is reliable and it is good for the environment.**

Tools for Organizing Ideas: Graphic Organizers and Outlines

With a working thesis complete, we now present two possible methods for organizing your ideas: a graphic organizer and a more traditional outline format.

Graphic Organizers

This is an example of a basic graphic organizer:



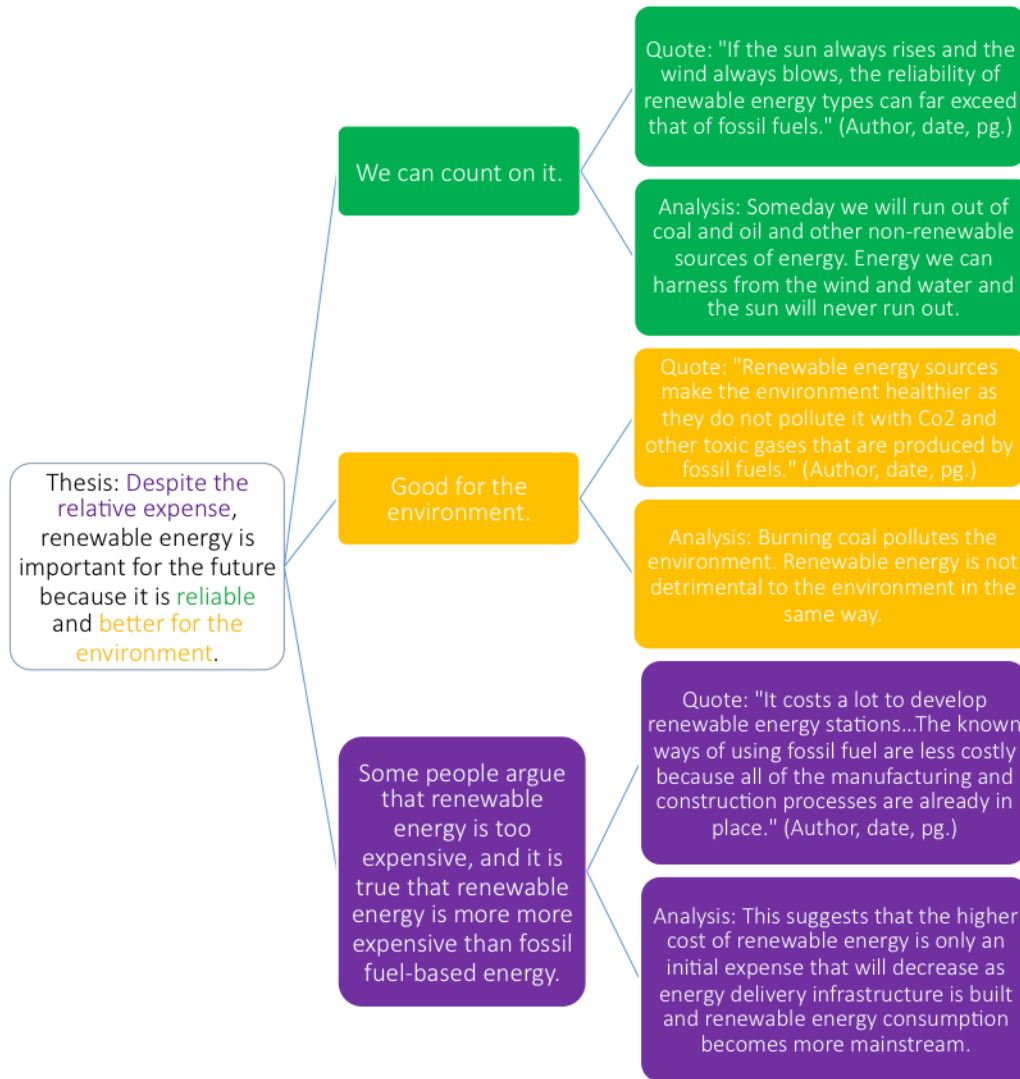
In the graphic organizer above, each color represents a paragraph.

To create a graphic organizer like this one using Microsoft Word, you can follow these steps:

1. Open a new document.
2. Click on the “Insert” tab, and select “Smart Art.”
3. Choose “Hierarchy” from the menu of Smart Art graphics.
4. Select “Horizontal Hierarchy.”
5. Click “Okay.” A new Smart Art graphic will appear in your document.
6. To adjust the color of a section, click on it and select your desired color. You need to do this first, before you add text.
7. To add text to a section, click on it. A window will open that shows your graphic organizer in outline form. Type your text there. You will see it appear in the section.

Of course, you don’t have to use a computer to create a graphic organizer. You can just as easily use a pencil and paper and sketch out your ideas using the graphic organizer format.

Graphic Organizer Using the Example Thesis about Renewable Energy



Using this tool, you can visualize the relationship between your thesis, claims, and support, and you can refer to it, like a guide or a road map, as you write.

Outlines

An outline is another organizational tool that can be used at any point in the drafting process. Many writers like to have an outline in place before they begin drafting, but others write an outline once they have a good idea of where their paper is going, and then the outline helps them to stay on track. Other writers create an outline from what they've written (this is called reverse-outlining) as a way to check the organization of their draft.

Sample Outline

Thesis: [Stance on topic] because [list reasons].

- I. Reason 1
 - A. Quote supporting reason 1
 1. Analysis: explaining the quote, connect it back to your thesis
- II. Reason 2
 - A. Quote supporting reason 2
 1. Analysis: explaining the quote, connect it back to your thesis
 - B. Second quote supporting reason 2
 1. Analysis: explaining the quote, connect it back to your thesis
- III. Reason 3
 - A. Quote supporting reason 3
 1. Analysis: explaining the quote, connect it back to your thesis

Outline Using the Example Thesis about Renewable Energy

Thesis: Despite the relative expense, renewable energy is important for the future because it is reliable and better for the environment.

- I. Reason #1: We can count on it
 - A. Quote: "If the sun always rises and the wind always blows, the reliability of renewable energy types can far exceed that of fossil fuels"

1. Analysis: someday we will run out of coal and oil and other non-renewable sources of energy. Energy we can harness from wind and water and the sun will never run out.
- II. Reason #2: It's good for the environment
- A. Quote: "Renewable energy sources make the environment healthier as they do not pollute it with Co2 and other toxic gases that are produced by fossil fuels"
 1. Analysis: burning coal pollutes the environment. Renewable energy is not detrimental to the environment in the same way.
- III. Reason #3 (In this case, this reason acknowledges an opposing argument): Renewable energy is more expensive than energy that comes from fossil fuels.
- A. Quote: "It costs a lot to develop renewable energy stations... The known ways of using fossil fuel are less costly because all of the manufacturing and construction processes are already in place."
 1. Analysis: this suggests that the higher cost of renewable energy is only an initial expense that will decrease as energy delivery infrastructure is built and renewable energy consumption becomes more mainstream.

Reverse Outlines

Reverse outlining is a tool you can use to map the paragraphs you've written in a draft. With a reverse outline, you can see whether each paragraph has a clear topic, and you can better see the ordering of your paragraphs. You can see if and where you veer off topic, or whether you move from one point to the next too quickly.

Steps to creating a reverse outline:

1. Begin with your draft and a new sheet of paper (or a new, blank document file).
2. On the new sheet of paper, write your thesis or main point (this could be your research question or the main idea you want your paper to get across to a reader).
3. Below your main point, write a number for each paragraph, from 1 for your introductory paragraph, 2 for your second paragraph and so on, through to your final paragraph.
4. Beside each paragraph number, in just one short sentence, summarize what the paragraph is about.
5. Once you've written a short summary statement for each paragraph, go back and note where the page breaks are. For example, write or type "Page 1" beside your summary statement for paragraph 1. Then note at which paragraph Page 2 begins. Note that in your outline. Continue doing this for all page breaks in your paper.

Now you have an outline that shows your main point, pages, and paragraph numbers and summaries. Using this "map" of your paper, ask yourself:

1. How does each summary relate to your main point? If it's difficult to see how a summary does relate, take a closer look at the paragraph in your draft. Have you veered off-point and perhaps written something that doesn't belong in your paper? Or perhaps you just need to better explain how the idea in the paragraph relates to the rest of the work.
2. Are your paragraph summaries short—were you able to capture what the paragraph was about in a single, short sentence? If a paragraph was difficult to summarize with a short sentence, its main point might be unclear. If this is the case, write down the point you'd like that paragraph to make, and revise the paragraph to say that.

3. Do any of the paragraphs contain multiple points? If one paragraph is trying to cover multiple points, it might be difficult for a reader to follow. Break the paragraph where you see yourself shifting topics, and devote a paragraph to each point/topic.

4. Is the order of your paragraphs logical? Read each summary, in order, to be sure that your ideas, as you've organized them in your paper, are the clearest they can be. Sometimes, drafts will contain our ideas more in the order that we had them, rather than in the most persuasive or most logical order.

5. Do you have any pages that contain too many or too few paragraphs? By noting the page breaks, you can see about how many paragraphs are on each page. If you have a page with many small paragraphs, reread that page to see if any of those short paragraphs need additional development (more supporting evidence from sources, or more discussion and analysis from you). If you have a full page of writing that contains just one or one-and-a-half paragraphs, check that the longer paragraph isn't something that contains too many different ideas. Look for topic changes in the paragraph, and break the paragraph to begin a new one at that location.

Section 3: Useful Transitional Phrases and Writing Templates for Different Situations¹

Academic or college writing is filled with conventions—ways of presenting our ideas and formatting our writing that have come to be expected by an audience, usually because doing so makes our writing easier for an audience to read and process. The phrases and templates found in this section represent conventions often found in academic writing. Many students, when presented with them in a table-form, like we provide here, feel like it wouldn't be right to use them. Students fear that using a stock phrase or template is unoriginal, or worse, a form of cheating. It is neither—you will “fill” the templates with your own unique ideas. And as you continue to read published writing, you will notice how other writers, too, have incorporated these conventions in their own work.

Transitional Phrases

For Adding Information	For Contrasting	For Elaborating	For Comparing
Also	Although	Actually	Along the same lines
And	But	By extension	Similarly
Besides	By contrast	In short	Likewise
Furthermore	Conversely	That is	In the same way
In addition	Despite	In other words	
Additionally	Even though	To put it another way	
Indeed	However	To put it succinctly	
In fact	In contrast	Ultimately	
Moreover	Nevertheless		
Beyond that	Nonetheless		
	On the contrary		
	On the other hand		
	Whereas		
	Regardless		
	Yet		

¹ From *They Say / I Say*, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, 2006, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

For Showing Cause & Effect	For Providing Examples	For Conceding Something	For Concluding
<p>Accordingly As a result Consequently Hence Of course To be sure</p>	<p>After all For example For instance Specifically</p>	<p>Admittedly Although it is true Granted Naturally If course To be sure</p>	<p>As a result Consequently Finally Hence In conclusion In short In sum Therefore Thus To sum up To summarize</p>

Templates for Different Situations

Templates for Agreeing

- I agree that _____ because my experience (with, as) _____ confirms it.
- X is surely right about _____ because recent studies have shown _____.
- X’s theory of _____ is useful because it sheds insight on the difficult problem of _____.
- I agree that _____. This is a point that needs emphasizing because so many people believe _____.
- Those unfamiliar with this idea may be interested to know that it basically boils down to _____.

Templates for Disagreeing

- I think X is mistaken because he overlooks _____.
- I disagree with X's view that _____ because, as recent research has shown, _____.
- X contradicts herself/can't have it both ways. On one hand, she argues _____. But on the other hands, she also says _____.
- By focusing on _____, X overlooks the problem of _____.
- X claims _____, but we don't need him to tell us that. Anyone familiar with _____ has long known _____.

Templates for Simultaneously Agreeing and Disagreeing

- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____.
- Although I disagree with much of what X says, I fully endorse her final conclusion that _____.
- Though I concede _____, I still insist _____.
- X is right that _____, but she becomes questionable when she claims _____.
- While X is probably wrong when he claims _____, he is right that _____.
- Whereas X provides evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me of _____ instead.
- My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position that _____, but I find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

Templates for Signaling Who Is Saying What In Your Own Writing

- X argues _____.
- According to both X and Y, _____.
- X argues _____. Y, however, argues _____.
- X argues _____. Similarly, Y argues _____.

Templates for Embedding Voice Markers

- X overlooks what I consider an important point about _____.
- My own view is that what X insists is a _____ is in fact a _____.

- I wholeheartedly endorse X's point that _____.
- These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that _____.

Templates for Indicating, "Who Cares?"

- _____ used to think _____. But recently, _____ suggests _____.
- This interpretation challenges the work of those critics who have long assumed _____.
- These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to assume _____.
- Recent studies like these shed new light on _____, which previous studies had not addressed.

Templates for Establishing Why Your Claims Matter

- X matters /is important because _____.
- Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of _____.
- My discussion of X is addressing the larger matter of _____.
- These conclusions/This discovery will have significant applications in _____ as well as in _____.
- Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

Additional Templates

- In other words, _____.
- What _____ really means is _____.
- My point is _____.
- To put it another way, _____.
- Essentially, I am arguing _____.
- My point is not that we should _____, but that we should _____.

- Consider _____, for example.
- Even more important, _____.
- But above all else, _____.
- Although some readers may object that _____, I would say _____.
- Although some might argue _____, I believe _____.

Section 4: Creating References

Citing sources and creating a reference page serves several purposes: to show your research and demonstrate your credibility, to credit the original sources you are using, and to allow your readers to find those sources so they can learn more. You might have to use different style guides for different classes. The important thing is not to memorize the rules, but to know where to look for examples and follow those examples closely. Pay attention to capitalization, punctuation, italics, and spacing in the templates and examples.

Full-Citation Format for Reference Pages

The following are examples for how to format your sources on the references page at the end of your paper.

Books

Template

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

Sample

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

Articles

Template

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Online Periodical, volume number*(issue number if available), page range (if available).

Sample

Bernstein, M. (2002). 10 tips on writing the living web. *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites, 149*(1), 25-42.

Film

Template

Producer, P. P. (Producer), & Director, D. D. (Director). (Date of publication). *Title of motion picture* [Motion picture]. Country of origin: Studio or distributor.

Sample

Smith, J. D. (Producer), & Smithee, A. F. (Director). (2001). *Really big disaster movie* [Motion picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

Lectures

**Lectures are considered “personal communication” and are not listed on references pages. They are only referred to in-text (more about this in the section on in-text citations).

Sample References Page

New Page: Begin References on a new page

Title: Center your page title, "References."

References

Bernstein, M. (2002). 10 tips on writing the living web. *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites*, 149.

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

Smith, J. D. (Producer), & Smithee, A. F. (Director). (2001). *Really big disaster movie* [Motion picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

Alphabetize:

List sources in alphabetical order

Use a Hanging Indent:

Begin each entry on the left margin, and then indent all following lines in the entry. This makes the name(s) of the author(s) easy to see.

Double-space the entire page:

Make sure the spacing is the same (double-spaced) within each entry and between each entry.

Use a Ragged Margin on the Right Side: This just means the text should be aligned with the left margin, not justified. When you have a ragged right margin, the length of each line will differ, but the spacing between each letter and word, on every line, will be consistent. When text is justified, it can look neat because the left and right margins are straight, but in order for each line to end at the same place on the right margin, the spacing across the line (between letters and words) is adjusted slightly.

In-Text Citations

These are examples for how to cite sources in-text, or when you refer to them in the body of your paper.

Books

Template

1 *Author*: (Last name, year, page number)

2 *Authors*: (Last name 1 & Last name 2, year, page number)

Sample

1 *Author*: (Smith, 1984, p. 14)

2 *Authors*: (Calfee & Valencia, 1991, p. 26)

Articles

Template

1 *Author*: (Last name, year, page number)

2 *Authors*: (Last name 1 & Last name 2, year, page number)

Sample

1 *Author*: (Bernstein, 2002, p. 24)

2 *Authors*: (Fox & Wallace, 2014, p. 11)

Film

Template

(Producer last name & Director last name, year)

Sample

(Smith & Smithee, 2001)

Lectures

Template

(First initial. Last name, "lecture," date).

Sample

(O. Hodwitz, lecture, September 4, 2018).

**Citation comes at the end of the sentence but before the period

- Example: Many people argue that "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (Smith, 1984, p. 14).

**If you mention the author's name in the sentence, omit it in the citation

- Example: According to Smith (1984), "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (p. 14).

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