

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

DIVISION OF SOCIAL WORK

ONLINE WRITING GUIDE

Welcome to our Writing Guide! We hope the information in this Guide will assist you with some of your writing concerns. We also welcome your feedback. Let us know if you have suggestions for specific writing assistance.

Please contact us at **916-278-7187**.

Listed below are various SOCIAL WORK WRITING RESOURCES, CAMPUS WRITING RESOURCES, and SOCIAL WORK WRITING GUIDELINES.

Social Work Writing Resources

[Social Work Writing Tutorial Program](#)

[Social Work Writing Workshops](#)

Campus Writing Resources

[Learning Skills Center Tutoring](#)

[Services to Students With Disabilities](#)

[Writing Across the Curriculum \(WAC\)](#)

[Psychological Counseling Center](#)

Social Work Writing Guidelines

[Deciphering Assignment Instructions](#)

[Preparing an Outline](#)

[Using APA Style](#)

[In-text Citations](#)

[APA Style Reference List](#)

[The Literature Review](#)

[Plagiarism—How to Avoid It](#)

[Grammar and Punctuation Rules](#)

Social Work Writing Resources:

Social Work Writing Tutorial Program:

Students can receive one-on-one assistance for help with written assignments, beginning the second or third week in September. You can self-refer, or you may be referred by a professor. Hours and locations will be announced early in September. Please phone **916-278-7187** to schedule an appointment.

Social Work Writing Workshops:

Writing workshops will be offered during the fall and spring semesters addressing such topics as organizing and writing papers, grammar and structure, doing a literature review, choosing a thesis topic and advisor, writing a thesis, formatting requirements for a thesis. A reading workshop is also planned. All students will receive advance notice of the workshops.

Campus Writing Resources:

Learning Skills Center Tutoring:

Students can receive tutoring at the **Learning Skills Center (916-278-6725)**. There are special classes to improve writing, reading, and language skills for students who speak English as a Second Language. These classes are either sponsored by the English Department or by the Learning Skills Center (LS classes). Refer to the university course schedule under the English Department or the Learning Skills Center.

Services to Students With Disabilities:

This office can provide assistance to students who have learning problems. **If you have already received accommodation at another university you must be evaluated again at CSUS.** If you have a learning problem which will interfere with your academic work, it is best to be evaluated as soon as possible. Contact **Services to Students With Disabilities** by phone at **916-278-6955 or 916-278-7239 (TDD only)**. The e-mail address is sswd@csus.edu, or the website, www.csus.edu/sswd/general-info.html also provides detailed information.

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC):

Need help with your Thesis/Project? The WAC program organizes and assists Thesis Writing Groups. Join a Thesis/Project Writing Group and attend the workshops. The e-mail address is melzer@csus.edu, and the website is <http://www.csus.edu/wac>.

Psychological Counseling Center:

The Counseling Center may be able to help you if your academic work is not up to par due to stress or emotional distress. Contact the Center at **916-278-6416**. For additional information on hours and services, check the website at www.csus.edu/psysrv/.

DIVISION OF SOCIAL WORK WRITING GUIDELINES

Deciphering Assignment Instructions:

Writing assignments in the Social Work Division may include Abstracts, Case Studies, Journals, Literature Reviews, Method Papers, Research Proposals/Reports, or other types of papers. At times your instructors will hand out a detailed, written assignment for you to complete. When you receive such an assignment, read it over carefully several times. Next, underline key words or phrases that may be important in carrying out the assignment. Key words to look for are words that tell you what actions to take. Here are some examples and definitions of key words:

Analyze: Divide the subject into parts and explain the relationship of the various parts.

Critique: Review and consider the subject's strengths and weaknesses in order to judge its quality or worth.

Define: Give a clear meaning of a term, classify it, and show what distinguishes it from all others in the classification

Discuss: Give all the important main points about the subject.

Evaluate: Establish criteria for judging the value of the subject; discuss its strengths and weaknesses.

Explain: Make the subject more understandable by stating facts and giving details.

If any of the words in your assignment instructions are unfamiliar to you, refer to a dictionary for definitions. Or, if technical terms are involved, refer to your textbook(s) or your instructor for clarification. Read the following assignment:

Various governmental agencies have reported that an alarming increase in the incidence of elder abuse has occurred during the last decade in our society. Using the information from our class discussions and readings, define one of the five forms of elder abuse. Explain the possible factors that may contribute to that specific type of abuse. Discuss a preventive intervention strategy that could be designed, and include the community and public health programs and services that would be available to the individual and to the family.

In this assignment, you are being asked to do several things (the key words are underlined): (1) Define one form of elder abuse; (2) Explain *contributory factors* to the abuse; (3) Discuss *preventive intervention strategies* available to the individual and to the family. Note that the italicized words may be terms that you would be familiar with after reading and/or discussing information from your textbook(s), or from your notes of the instructor's lectures. Before attempting to begin the assignment, make sure you understand what all these words/terms mean.

Preparing an Outline:

The next step in completing the assignment is to prepare an outline, which will assist you in staying focused on correctly answering all elements of the assignment. A possible outline for the assignment on elder abuse could be as follows:

Thesis: Neglect is a serious form of elder abuse that necessitates the establishment of preventive intervention strategies that can be accessed by the individual and the family.

- I. Definition of Neglect and Background Information
 - A. Caregiver Neglect
 - B. Self-Neglect

- II. Contributory Factors of Elder Neglect
 - A. Caregiver Neglect
 1. Inability to provide proper care for the elder
 2. Addictive or emotional problems
 3. Financial problems
 - B. Self-Neglect
 1. Substance abuse or overmedication problems
 2. Isolation and lack of social/family support
 3. Dementia or physical impairment

- III. Preventive Intervention Strategies
 - A. Individual
 1. Public Health substance abuse treatment
 2. Public Health medical treatment
 3. Community-based supportive services

 - B. Family
 1. Public Health family counseling
 2. Community-based caregiver training
 3. Community-based respite care

Using APA Style:

The Division of Social Work uses the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)* as their style guide. Students will be required to document their written work, using the APA format for referencing works of other authors (in-text citations), and for listing these citations in a Reference List. This list of in-text citations is placed at the end of the written work, and is alphabetized by last name of author.

Please note that within this Writing Guide the reference examples listed are based on APA style, and they are current with the Fifth Edition of the APA Publication Manual (2001). Also, you

may refer to the APA Publication Manual Web site: www.apastyle.org which provides the latest updates to any changes that may have taken place since publication of the fifth edition.

In-text Citations

When using citations in your written work, use the author's last name and the year of publication.

1. **One author cited** -- The author's last name is used, and the year of publication is placed in parentheses.

Example: Leigh (1986) reported on various beliefs shared by the general public concerning the effects of alcohol on human behavior.

If the author's name is not used in your text, put the author's name and the year in parentheses, and separate them with a comma.

Example: Even though elder abuse may be apparent, many family members hesitate to report a relative to the Adult Protective Services (Johnson, 2001).

If an author's name is used with a direct quotation in your text, put the page number of the quoted text in parentheses.

Example: Jones (1998) emphasized the important role of the ombudsmen because they "provide help for people who are not able to help themselves" (p. 22).

If the author's name is not used with a direct quotation in your text, place the author's name, date, and the page number of the quoted text in parentheses.

Example: Many people who have been victims of abuse "are older, frail, vulnerable, and depend on others to provide their basic needs" (Rudolf, 2001, p. 61).

2. **Two authors cited** -- Use both names each time you refer to them in your text.

Example: Smith and Jones (1998) showed

Use an ampersand (&) in place of "and" when placing the names within parentheses.

Example: Reports of suspected elder abuse have increased dramatically during the last decade (Smith & Jones, 1998).

3. **Three to five authors cited** -- Use all the authors' names the first time you refer to them in your text.

Example: Smith, Jones, Jensen, Appleman, and Wright (1996) have shown

In future references to the authors in paragraphs that follow, use only the first author's name, and the words "et al." (be sure to place a period after "al"). Then place the year of publication in parentheses.

Example: Smith et al. (1996) have shown

If another reference to the authors appears in the same paragraph, the second reference does not require the date.

Example: Smith et al. have shown

4. **Six or more authors cited** -- Use the name of the first author only. Include the words "et al." and the date for the first reference, as well as all others that follow.
5. **Groups cited** -- Groups, such as government agencies and corporations should have the complete name cited the first time you make reference to them.

Example: One element of the report focuses on transitioning people from social security income to work (National Council on Disability [NCD], 2004).

Note: Brackets are used to enclose the initials within parentheses.

If there is an acronym or initials to distinguish the name, include the acronym or initials in additional references.

Example: The overall purpose of the agency is to promote equal opportunity and empowerment for people with disabilities (NCD, 2004).

APA Style Reference List

In an APA Style Reference List you must list all of the references you cited in your text. The reference page is numbered and appears at the end of your work. **Double-space all entries and use a hanging indent.** Always organize the references in alphabetical order by the authors' last names. In the case of a work with no author, use the full title in place of the author's name. Capitalize the first word of the title/subtitle, and all proper nouns.

The following examples are guidelines for formatting books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and websites in your reference list. If you are unsure of how to cite a source in your reference list, refer to Chapter 4 of the APA Publication Manual.

1. **A book with one author** -- Cite the author's last name, initials, year of publication, title, place of publication, and publisher.

Example: Payne, B. K. (2000). *Crime and elder abuse: An integrated perspective*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.

2. **A book with more than one author** -- List all the authors in the order they are listed in the book, separated by commas.

Example: Minuchin, P., Colapinto, J., & Minuchin, S. (1998) *Working with families of the poor*. New York: Guilford Press.

3. **An edited book** -- List the editor or editors, followed by (Ed.) or (Eds.).

Example: Keigher, S. M., Fortune, A. E., & Witkin, S. L. (Eds.). (1998). *Aging and social work: The changing landscapes*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

4. **A selection from an edited book or anthology** -- Cite the author and title of the selection, editor and title of the anthology, and page range of the selection.

Example: Maccoby, E. E. (1987). Gender segregation in childhood. In H. Reese (Ed.), *Advances in child behavior and development* (pp. 37-52). New York: Academic Press.

5. **Two or more works by the same author** -- List the works in order of date of publication; put the earliest date first.

Example: Hacker, Andrew. (1997). *Money: Who has how much and why*. New York: Scribner.

Hacker, Andrew. (2003). *Mismatch: The growing gulf between women and men*. New York: Scribner.

6. **A government document** -- When no author is provided, use the government agency as the author.

Example: U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Digest of education statistics 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

7. **An article in a scholarly journal** -- Cite the author(s), year, article title, journal name, volume number, and page range.

Example: Giordano, N. H., & Giordano, J. A. (1984). Elder abuse: A review of the literature. *Social Work, 29*, 232-236.

Exception: Most issues of a journal are **continuously paginated** (i.e., each issue of a journal does not begin with page 1. If the last issue ended with page 160, the next issue will begin with page 161). However, in those cases where each issue of a journal begins with page 1, include the **issue number** in parentheses and do not use italics.

Example: Author. Year. Article title. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29*(2), 10-26.

8. **A magazine article** -- Cite the author, year and month (also include the day for magazines published weekly), article title, magazine name, volume, and page range.

Example: Kadlec, D. (2001, October 1). Money in motion. *Time*, 158, 87.

9. **A newspaper article** -- Cite the author, year, month, day, article title, newspaper, and page number.

Example: Greene, K. (2005, July 10). New retirees: Live it up. *The Wall Street Journal*, p. D10.

10. **An online article or abstract from a database** -- Cite the author, year and month, article title, journal, volume number, issue number (if not continuously paginated), page range, date the article was retrieved, and name of database.

Example: McCurdy, K. (2005, March). The influence of support and stress on maternal attitudes. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 29(3), 251-268. Retrieved June 29, 2005, from PsycInfo database.

11. **A government report from a website** -- Cite the author (or organization hosting the website), date and month of publication, title, date retrieved, and website address.

Example: U. S. Department of Justice. (1998, April). *Alcohol and crime*. Retrieved January 14, 2000, from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/ac.txt>

The Literature Review

The literature review involves reviewing important scholarly research on specific Social Work topics. You may sometimes receive an assignment from your instructor requiring a literature review to provide you with practice in exploring research on a specific topic. This assignment will also assist you in knowing how to recognize areas or issues that may call for further research. On other occasions, the literature review will be a part of your research report or research proposal assignment. In this case, you will do a literature review using sources that are related to your own topic.

Searching for Sources

Once your research topic has been established, you can begin to search for relevant literature for your literature review. At this point, you can access the **Social Work Resources** page of the **CSUS Library** from a computer on campus, or from your computer at home (if you have Internet access). For books and tapes, you can access **EUREKA**. The **Database and Periodical Indexes** are used for accessing scholarly or peer reviewed articles.

You can also access electronic databases, such as **Social Services Abstracts**, **Social Sciences Abstracts**, **PsychInfo**, and **EBSCOhost: Academic Search**. For instructions on off-campus access to these electronic databases, use the **CSUS Library** link to

Off-Campus Access to Library E-Resources.

Website Links:

We are listing some website links that have good information on how to do Literature Reviews. There are detailed explanations of how to develop and assess your literature review.

[University of Toronto:](#) “Writing a Literature Review”

[Boston College:](#) “Write a Literature Review”

[U C, Santa Cruz:](#) “How to Write a Literature Review”

Plagiarism—How to Avoid It:

As you write your research report, it’s important that you give credit in writing to all your sources. Cite the sources in the body of your text, as well as in your reference list. When you fail to acknowledge the works of others, you are guilty of plagiarism. This is a very serious violation of “academic honesty” as spelled out in California State University, Sacramento’s *Policies and Procedures Regarding Academic Honesty*.

Refer to the [CSUS Library Homepage](#) for a link to “Plagiarism Information for CSUS Students and Faculty.” This link will give you all the information you need to know about avoiding plagiarism. Click on “What is Plagiarism” and you will be given the definition. There are several examples of actual plagiarism of text, but there is also an example of **how to correctly paraphrase** an author’s work so that you will not plagiarize. You are also given a link to CSUS Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures for complete detailed information.

Grammar and Punctuation Rules:

You have finally completed your research paper, and with a sigh of relief you sit before the computer to type the final copy. But, wait a minute! Have you taken the time to look closely at your paper? No matter how hard you had to work to gather information in order to complete your research, if you have not taken the time to check the grammar and punctuation, you are not ready to turn in your paper.

Sometimes it’s difficult to see your own errors. So, if you have problems editing your own work, ask a classmate or friend to look your paper over for grammatical and punctuation errors. We are listing some examples of grammar and punctuation errors that are often made. The following information and examples are adapted from *The Tongue and Quill*, U. S. Air Force Handbook 37-137, August 1994.

1. **Subject-verb agreement** -- Subjects and verbs must always agree in number. Plural subjects take plural verbs, and singular subjects take singular verbs. The key to avoiding

most problems in subject-verb agreement is to identify the subject of a sentence, determine whether it's singular or plural, and then choose a verb in the same tense.

Compound subjects can be confusing. A compound subject consists of two or more nouns or pronouns joined by one of these conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*. Compound subjects are not always plural, but if joined by *and*, they normally take plural verbs.

Example: The Air Force and the Army *are* two components of the nation's defense Forces. (compound subject, plural verb)

However, when a compound subject is joined by *or*, *nor*, or *but*, the verb must agree with the subject **nearest** to it.

Example #1: Either the President or his cabinet members *are* planning to attend. (plural subject, plural verb)

Example #2: Neither the cabinet members nor the President *is* planning to attend. (singular subject, singular verb)

Note: There are two exceptions to this rule – (1) When the parts of a compound subject are considered as a single unit, you'll need a singular verb; (2) When the parts of a compound subject are preceded by *each* and *every*, you'll need a singular verb.

Example #1: Ham and eggs *is* a delicious breakfast.

Example #2: *Each* boy and girl *has* a bike.

When you use **one or more phrases between the subject and verb**, the verb still must agree in number with its subject.

Example: A general, accompanied by 3 colonels and 15 majors, *was* attending the conference.

2. **Pronoun Reference** -- Pronouns are words that replace nouns and refer to a specific noun. This noun is called the **antecedent** because it's the noun the pronoun replaces. If the noun is singular, the pronoun is singular. You're guilty of faulty pronoun reference when you violate this principle.

Example: A pilot can lose *their* way in the fog.

Pilot is singular, but the plural pronoun *their* refers to it incorrectly. The preferred correction is to make pilot plural. This usage keeps the language nonsexist or bias-free. (You don't have to say *he* or *she*.) Take a look at the following examples.

Example #1: When a person drinks alcohol *they* can suffer from impaired judgement. (Change the sentence to read: When people drink alcohol *they* . . .)

Example #2: The committee plans to submit *their* report by the end of the month.
(Change *their* to *its* because committee functions as a single unit in this sentence.)

3. **Parallel Structure** -- When you put items in a list, stick to one pattern. Faulty parallel structure occurs when writers mix items and actions, statements and questions, and active instructions and passive ones. The rule is to be consistent. Make ideas of equal importance look equal.

Incorrect: The registrar told us to show our I.D. cards and we should pay our enrollment fees.

(Parallel ideas are not written in the same grammatical form. One idea is written as an infinitive phrase, and the other idea is written as a noun clause.)

Correct: The registrar told us to show our I.D. cards and to pay our enrollment fees.
(Both ideas are now written as infinitive phrases and are parallel.)

Correct: The paragraph's topic sentence expresses the main idea, gives you a point of focus, and prepares your readers for the supporting information.

4. **Comma Usage** -- Use a comma with coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*) when joining two or more independent clauses.

Example: Many people are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and daily exercise, but their love of fast foods and long hours of TV prevents them from becoming healthier.

Use commas to separate three or more words in a series.

Example: Will you go by car, bus, train, or plane?

Use commas with parallel phrases or clauses.

Example: Patients are classified as needing treatment at the installation, as requiring evacuation to another facility, or as being able to return to duty.

Use a comma with parallel adjectives that modify the same noun. If the adjectives are independent of each other, if the order can be reversed, or if and can stand between the words, the adjectives are parallel and should be separated by a comma.

Example: It was a long, hot summer. (the summer was long and hot)

If the first adjective modifies the idea expressed by the combination of the second adjective and the noun, **do not use a comma**.

Example: He wore a heavy winter overcoat. (winter modifies overcoat;
heavy modifies winter overcoat)

Use commas to set off nonessential words, clauses, or phrases **not necessary for the meaning** or the **structural completeness** of the sentence.

Example: They want to hire Debbie Collins, who has three years of experience, to run the new youth center. (The underlined phrase is “nonessential” information.)

Example: They want to hire someone who has at least three years of experience to run the new youth center. (The underlined phrase is “essential” information.)

Use commas with appositives (words, phrases, or clauses that explain, describe, or identify the noun). If nonessential, set off by commas. If essential or restrictive in nature, do not set off by commas.

Example: Their daughter Sharmon won the contest. (Since they have more than one daughter, her name is “essential” to the sentence.)

Example: Our attorney, Diane Macon, will handle the details. (Diane Macon is “nonessential” information because she is our only attorney.)

Use a comma with transitional words, such as *however*, *that is*, *namely*, *therefore*, *for example*, *moreover*, *consequently*, *on the other hand*, and when interrupting the flow of the sentence.

Example: On the other hand, the report did contain several important points.

Example: The report, however, left out the information about the new youth center.

5. **The Semicolon** -- Use a semicolon to separate independent clauses **not connected** by a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *so*, *yet*), and in statements too closely related in meaning to be written as separate sentences.

Examples: The students were ready; it was time to go.
It's true in peace; it's true in war.
War is destructive; peace is constructive.

Use a semicolon before transitional words and phrases, such as *however*, *therefore*, *hence*, *furthermore*, *as a result*, *consequently*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, and *for example*, when you are connecting two complete but related thoughts and a coordinating conjunction is not used. (These words and phrases are followed by a comma.)

Examples: Our expenses have increased; however, we have not raised our prices.
The decision has been made; therefore, there's no point in discussing it.

Use a semicolon to separate items in a series that contain commas.

Example: If you want your writing to be worthwhile, organize it; if you want it to be easy to read, use simple words and phrases; and, if you want it to be interesting, vary your sentence and paragraph lengths.