Navigating an Undergraduate Degree in the Social Sciences

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Tips and Strategies

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Preface

Navigating an Undergraduate Degree in the Social Sciences: Tips and Strategies is based on a combination of the authors' personal reflections and prior experiences teaching and mentoring thousands of students through their undergraduate degrees. The suggestions in this guide are largely the result of our own research into best practices for assisting students alongside strategies used by high achieving former students we have taught or assisted who were completing course requirements for an undergraduate degree. We have also included a few guidelines that we developed in our respective areas to help circumvent lessons learned through the challenges and disappointment experienced by students who failed to master these essential skills. It is the common errors, questions, indecision points, and various writing and learning styles of students that have ultimately culminated in this book that we hope will afford all students an edge in their quest to succeed in the social sciences.

> This is the first revised edition of the *Thomson Nelson Guide to Success in Social Science: Writing Papers and Exams* by Diane Symbaluk (2006) published by Nelson, a division of Thomson Canada Limited.

Outline of the Book

- Chapter 1 focuses on specific strategies for studying, including how to translate course activities and readings into meaningful lecture notes, how to organize lecture notes into study notes, and how to study effectively.
- Chapter 2 explains multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions, including how the questions are developed and how best to tackle exams based on them.
- Chapter 3 explains how to write an essay including how to narrow your topic and outline your ideas.
- Chapter 4 describes methods for navigating the library and the Internet to find appropriate reference materials for course assignments.
- Chapter 5 covers referencing using APA format, the most commonly used citation style in the social sciences.
- Chapter 6 describes the objectives and main components of a research proposal including important ethical considerations in research.
- Chapter 7 outlines the main format for writing a publishable research report.
- Chapter 8 covers how to start developing a curriculum vitae that conveys your academic achievements to a potential employer or supports your application into graduate studies.
- Appendices include a sample essay, research report, and poster by students who earned high marks and whose writing demonstrates many of the principles outlined in this book.

Acknowledgements

Appendices include illustrations of high-quality course work based on the guidelines provided in this manual by undergraduate students enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts program at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The sample essay included as Appendix A was written by Rebekah Fortier, Appendix B was written by Melanie Modrall, and Appendix C was created by Brenan Molzahn. "Real-life" skills and accomplishments of former MacEwan students Brittany Davidson, Lori Giampa and Meghan Duffy are also included as examples in Chapter 8 to help other students see how they can translate their own academic and employment-related experiences into information provided as part of their Curriculum Vitae.

Rebekah, Melanie, Brenan, Brittany, Lori and Meghan have graciously permitted us to use their work to illustrate students' work that demonstrates many of the suggestions provided in this book.

About the Authors

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CHAPTER 1: STRATEGIES FOR STUDYING

1.1 Introduction to Strategies for Studying

While many university students eventually discover the techniques that work for them, some find that they either study endlessly and still under-perform in their coursework, or they feel so overwhelmed with information that they do not even know where to begin and may inadvertently not prepare appropriately for exams and assignments.

This chapter will help you learn to determine what information is meaningful and worthy of greater attention, and what information is peripheral to lectures and readings, requiring less time and effort. This chapter will also show you how to get the most out of your readings and course lectures, how to choose the review strategies that best suit your needs, and how to find extra help when you need it.

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1.2 Establishing Context

Before you dive into a novel or movie, chances are good you begin by establishing some context for the story. You do not want any spoilers, but you at least want to read the publisher's description on the book jacket or view the movie trailer to figure out if the story is a comedy, thriller, or romance and to get a general idea of how the narrative is going to be situated. We do this intuitively when we sit down to watch or read something for entertainment, but when it comes to scholarly information, we often neglect this important first step.

When we do not understand the context of what we are studying, a few things can happen that get in the way of learning. We may feel disoriented by the wealth of information and have trouble connecting concepts, which makes it harder to remember information or determine why it is relevant. We may also feel as though *everything* we read or hear is important, and that can lead to information overload, where it becomes difficult to know where we should be spending the bulk of our mental energy, and we risk putting a lot of effort into remembering the wrong things.

The following describes ways to establish context for yourself at the beginning of your course and during each lecture.

The Course Syllabus

It may seem like a no-brainer, but it is important to carefully read through the course syllabus. Your course syllabus is often the only way in which your instructors will communicate their expectations for classroom attendance and behaviour; the learning objectives, purpose, and layout of the course; their office hours and preferred modes of communication; exam dates; and the formatting, due dates, and submission requirements for assignments. As you go through the syllabus and take note of important dates and which textbooks to buy, also make sure you explore the following:

Course Learning Objectives

Pay attention to the language your professor uses to present these objectives. Words like *recall*, *identify*, *explain*, or *demonstrate* often suggest that you will spend significant amounts of time remembering and learning to apply key terms, concepts, and theories. Words like *interpret, consider, evaluate, critique, analyze,* or *construct* often suggest that you will be expected to engage with your course material on a deeper level, by thinking critically about key concepts and offering up your own ideas and analyses that you are able to support with good evidence and rationale. (Most social sciences courses at the university level will involve more critical thinking than memorization and identification, particularly in upper level courses.)

The Number, Type, and Weighting of Assignments

Are your assignments spread out over the term? Do they consist of many short assignments that are each worth a relatively small amount, or are there one or two large assignments that are worth a substantial amount? Often, when grades are distributed across many smaller assignments, such as quizzes or short answer assignments, it means that each of these assignments will focus on specific parts of the course content and that each one will involve some memorization, identification, and application of concepts. When the bulk of the grade is centred around a couple of larger projects, such as one or two major papers, it usually signals that students will be expected to think critically, do additional research, and synthesize information from many sources and lecture topics.

The Type of Midterm and Final Exam

Often, the syllabus will say whether any exams will be short answer, multiple-choice, long answer, or a combination of these, which will affect how you will want to study and prepare for these exams. The syllabus may also tell you if your exams

are cumulative or not. Cumulative exams will test your knowledge on all content covered over the semester, whereas non-cumulative exams will test your knowledge of the content covered since the previous exam. See <u>Chapter 2</u> for additional insights into how to prepare for exams.

Units or Topics Covered in Each Week, Module, or Lecture

Your course syllabus will tell you what readings you need to complete for each class, and it will usually tell you what unit, theme, or module these readings correspond to. It is a good idea to look at these themes and start to think about how the topics are going to work together to paint a bigger picture. It is especially helpful to start by asking yourself what you already know about the subject and then to start to guess what kinds of information will be presented each week or module. Which topics look like they might cover material that is already familiar to you? Which ones look like they might be especially interesting? Which ones look daunting or seem like topics you have never encountered? Getting a sense of what you already know, what you do not yet know, what you are excited to learn, and what you feel less enthusiastic about can help you start to plan ahead for weeks in which the content is likely to be a little easier for you to work through and those in which you can anticipate needing more time and mental effort.

Missing or Unclear Information

If you are not sure of something that is discussed in the syllabus, or if you have questions that are not answered by the syllabus, be sure to ask your professor for clarification.

Before and During Each Lecture

Look ahead at your class schedule and see what has been planned for each lecture. Think about the topic being presented and how it fits in with the larger themes of the course. Also try to anticipate what the lecture will be about given what you know from the previous lectures and from the readings. This will help you connect the information to the bigger picture so that it is easier to remember and think about critically.

During a lecture, you want to frequently check in with yourself to determine the purpose of the information or activity. A common mistake that students make is that they do not pay enough attention to *why* they are learning something, especially when it comes to special activities or presentations that their professors include in the course from time to time. Professors use these opportunities to test students' ability to reflect, think critically, and apply knowledge to new scenarios.

For example, suppose your introductory sociology professor asks students to answer a series of questions: *What do you typically put on a piece of toast? What kind of pet is best?* Your instructor is not actually trying to get the lowdown on what you had for breakfast or whether you prefer cats or dogs. Instead, your professor is likely trying to demonstrate a concept like *shared culture* by showing how the class produces a limited number of similar responses that reflect the *norms* of Western culture. This might then lead to a discussion of *ethnocentrism*, or our tendency to judge other cultures from within our own limited perspective.

Thus, as you are taking lecture notes, think about not just *what* your instructor is saying or having the students do but also *why* and *how it connects* to the rest of the course. Later in this chapter, you can learn more about note-taking and how to format your notes so that they are easy to study from while capturing meaningful content.

1.3 Reading Your Textbook and Assigned Readings

Surveying/Scanning

Just as you should review your course syllabus to get some context for your entire course, you should begin each reading by surveying or scanning the chapter or article before diving in. There are many ways to do this, and which method(s) you choose will depend on the type of content you are about to cover and how it is organized within the source. Some common strategies include the following.

Scan the Table of Contents and the Headings

This will tell you what information is going to be covered and in what sequence, and it will help you decide which areas seem especially important or challenging so that you know where to spend your energy.

Read the Preface, Introduction, or Abstract

It is tempting to skip over a book's preface or introduction when it is not part of an assigned reading. However, each of these sections will help you understand why a text was written (e.g. the bigger problem or question it attempts to address). An introduction will also often explain the purpose of the different chapters or sections, especially if the work is a compilation of many writers' contributions.

Abstracts, on the other hand, are intended to be concise summaries of scholarly articles or studies. An abstract will usually tell you the problem the paper will address, what kind of method was used to study or explore the problem, and what the main findings were, making it much easier to follow along as you read further.

Take a Quick Look at the Index

An index can offer up some important clues about what the book is going to focus on. What kinds of terms are included? Which terms seem to be especially important, with lots of corresponding pages listed?

Here is another good reason to scan the index: As you are reading, it can start to get overwhelming to use flags, sticky notes, or other page markers if there are a lot of different topics or themes you want to remember to come back to. A good index can help point you back to specific sections and passages for future reference. If the book's index does not contain the sorts of terms you will need to look for again, there is nothing to stop you from customizing the index with corresponding page numbers for the terms and phrases you think are most important, either on blank pages at the end of a book's index, or wherever you take notes. For instance, you can track pages that will correspond well to sections of a paper you are working on or to specific course discussions or potential exam questions.

Reading About Topics and Concepts

Textbooks that teach topics and concepts are often found in introductory-level courses, though they can be used in upper-level courses as well. These are the texts that introduce lots of terms, definitions, theories, structures, and processes that you may be expected to remember for a multiple-choice or short answer exam, so your ability to recall the information on demand will be important. Often, these textbooks will be designed to make it easier for you to review key concepts. For example,

definitions may be in bold, processes and larger concepts may be presented visually, or there may be chapter summaries included for quick review. These and your own highlighting and notations will be useful in helping you practice recalling information you will need to know for an exam.

When reading these texts, it helps to go slow:

1. Read only one or a few small sections at a time.
2. Read once without highlighting or taking notes. (Upon the first read, most of the content might feel important, so if you highlight right away, you might highlight more than is necessary!)
3. Go back and decide what is important and then highlight, underline, or take notes. Focus on key words and phrases that will help you remember concepts quickly when you go back through your text.
4. In the margin of your textbook, write cues that you can use to test yourself. For example, in a section of your textbook discussing deviance you might write:

   ◦ *Define deviance.*
   ◦ *3 factors determining deviance.*
   ◦ *3 sociological paradigms explaining deviance and crime.*

This way, when you cover up the main text, you can ask yourself questions about the material: What is the definition of deviance? What are three factors used to determine if behaviour is deviant? What three main sociological paradigms offer explanations for deviance and criminal behaviour? This serves the same function as flashcards, but it takes much less time to do. Once you can recall most of the information from one section of text using your notations in the margin, you can move on to the next section of text.

As you become more experienced with this type of material, you might think of your own methods of achieving the same results. We all develop our own study preferences as we go, but what is important to remember with these types of texts is that we want to study in manageable chunks, we want to be able to quickly scan our texts to check our understanding of key concepts, and we want to regularly test our ability to recall that information so that our brains are trained to not only remember it long-term but to also retrieve it quickly when we need it.

A Note About Highlighting

Study strategies experts have differing opinions on how much students should be highlighting from their textbooks, readings and notes. You may have heard before that you should highlight only one or two words in a row instead of highlighting complete sentences, or perhaps you are used to highlighting so much that your textbook looks like a rainbow.

As is the case with so many study strategies, context is important when it comes to figuring out what will work best. If you are highlighting to remember concepts because you are going to have to recall specific definitions, stages, or processes, then less is more because it is easier to review and remember words and short phrases than it is to keep overloading your memory by reading and re-reading long passages of highlighted text. On the other hand, if you are following an author's argument to prepare for a class discussion or as part of your research for a term paper, you may want to highlight whole passages or paragraphs that nicely represent the author's main points or key findings so that the highlighted portions provide a sort of summary of the argument as you re-read them, or so that you can keep track of particularly interesting passages you may want to quote or paraphrase later.

Reading Arguments

The purpose of some texts is to argue a thesis or make a larger statement about an issue. For example, a concept-based psychology textbook about deviance might go over several definitions of deviance, some of the main theories about deviance, and some examples of how deviance has been handled in the courts. An argumentative work on the topic might instead explore how our conceptions of deviance and normality have changed with certain events or socio-political developments, or how they are being inequitably imposed on different members of society to maintain a specific power structure.

These sorts of texts might be full-length books by a single author or a group of authors, they might be scholarly articles, or they might be compilations of works each written by different authors, with each piece contributing an idea or argument that offers unique insight into the general theme or topic of the text. These texts are usually assigned in classes where students are expected to use critical thinking more extensively to respond or react to authors' ideas or to formulate their own scholarly argument in response to an issue. Thus, they are often used when conducting research for term papers and in courses where students will write essay exams or be asked more complex questions without a clear "right" or "wrong" answer.

When reading argumentative or thesis-based texts, you will still want to take your time to digest the material, but rather than looking for specific phrases or passages that look important (because everything will look important!), your task is to determine the author's main argument or thesis, the supporting arguments the author makes to establish that thesis, and the evidence or examples the author uses to illustrate those supporting arguments. It is a skill that will take time and practice to master, but it is important that you learn to recognize and distinguish between these elements; otherwise, it becomes easy to cherry-pick passages that sound important while missing the broader point the author is making, and if you do not understand that broader argument and how it is executed, you cannot effectively respond to it critically.

You will notice, too, that some of your textbooks will seem to fall into both concept-based and argumentative categories. When that happens, it just means that you might have to employ several reading, highlighting, or note-taking strategies throughout.

A Note About Speed Reading

Speed reading courses and texts are sometimes marketed to students as a way to reduce the amount of time spent studying. So, should you buy into the hype about speed reading? At the risk of sounding like a broken record, *it all depends on context*.

More than the speed you are reading at, you should be concerned with how much information you are retaining and how much information you need to be retaining. If you are reading too quickly to process what you are reading, then you are not really saving yourself time. But, contrary to what some may assume, reading more slowly does not always improve retention either. In fact, when you read *too* slowly, it can become easy to focus too much on the details and miss the bigger point or theme.

Rather than concerning yourself too much with your overall reading speed, consider using *variable reading speeds*. With time and practice, as you get better at identifying what information is important to know for your purposes, you will begin to be able to read quickly over parts that are less important and to slow down and more carefully digest those that are more important.

If you are still interested in increasing your reading speed, though, you can try running your finger just under each line of text as you read. Start by moving your finger at your normal reading pace, and then gradually increase the speed so that your finger is just ahead of the words your eyes are

focusing on. This is an easy way to increase your reading speed, and some readers find it helps them stay attentive while reading too. Just be sure to pause every now and then to mentally summarize what you just read and ensure you've actually captured what the text is saying; otherwise, you may increase the speed of your eye movements but not your *reading* speed!

1.4 Attending Class Lectures and Note Taking

Listening and Taking Notes

There are lots of good resources available online and in bookstores that can assist with the development of active listening skills, but many of them focus on how to listen actively in a conversational setting, typically by having you do things like verbally paraphrase things back to the other person. Lectures do not usually work that way, so while students are often encouraged to engage in discussion, they are also expected to spend long periods of time just watching and listening, which can make some of those strategies hard to apply. So, to help yourself listen and take better class notes, try the following tips:

Stick to a Routine

Routines help signal to our brains and bodies when it is time to focus and when it is time to relax, so by establishing a routine that works for you, you will leverage a whole lot of subconscious cues that will help you focus when you need to with less conscious effort on your part. As well, strive to get a good night's sleep every night, and make sure you are eating regularly, with nutritious meals. Do not underestimate the distracting powers of tiredness and hunger!

Sit Where You Can Pay Attention Best

For most people, this will be closer to the front and centre of the room where they can easily hear the professor and see the presentation notes and slides. Some people may have reasons for needing to sit elsewhere, like if they cannot focus with people behind them, or they have a disability that makes it necessary to sit on the outside edge, which is why we are not fans of prescriptive seating advice, but you want to think carefully about whether you are sitting in a place that best allows you to follow the lecture.

Get Your Required Readings Done *Before* Class

A lot of students figure they will go to class and then catch up on those readings later, but that can be a big mistake if it becomes a habit. Reading before class gives you a chance to digest the material and understand it in your own way before hearing how your professor elaborates on it, and it gives you a better understanding of the lecture topic, making it easier for you to follow along. It also cuts down on note taking during the lecture because some of the information will be familiar to you, and it will be easier to listen for what is new and important.

Review Lecture Slides

Anticipate what you will learn in the lecture by reviewing the lecture slides or creating your own outline of the readings before class. Many professors make their lecture slides available online, so if yours is one of them, make sure you review those before class and try to anticipate what your professor is going to say based on those slides and what you know from the readings. If you do not have slides to work from, then make a general outline of your course readings, leaving lots of space for you to fill in with lecture notes. This will help you remember what you have already covered in your readings so that you can listen better for the additional information your instructor gives you to augment those readings. It will also allow you to quickly and easily see how your lecture and readings fit together.

Pay Attention to Examples

Pay attention to the parts of the material your professor spends more time on, and especially pay attention to any stories, case studies or other examples your professor presents. Students often make the error of tuning out during these parts of the lecture, thinking that the professor is just going off on a tangent when in fact, these stories are there to help deepen your understanding by connecting the content to real-world scenarios. These are the sorts of lecture components that are also often used to create exam questions.

Leave Lots of Space to Fill in Notes After Class

As you are writing (or typing) and listening, there will be times when you cannot quite finish a thought before moving on. When that happens, just leave some space and come back to it later.

Review Notes as Quickly After Class as Possible

A lot of those blank spaces you have left when you could not finish writing will make less and less sense as more time passes, so review your notes right away, if possible, or at least within a couple of hours to ensure that you can remember what you meant to fill in. This is also a really good way of summarizing what you had just learned during the lecture so that you can see how everything covered fits together.

Leave Lots of Space in the Margins

In the same way that you want to use the margins of your textbooks to help yourself review material, you will also want to leave space in the margins of your notes to do the same. As you review your notes, you can again write cues and questions to yourself that you can use to test your recall later.

Try Integrating Symbols into Your Notes

Reading, writing or typing notes can easily become a passive activity, where we start writing what we are hearing without really processing it. Integrating symbols into your notes can bring your mind back to a more active processing state because there is a degree of interpretation that needs to take place to assign symbols to different notes. Try using the following, which are easy to integrate as you take notes, or come up with your own:

* Very important/potential exam question

? Need more info; follow up with instructor or textbook

! Potential essay or project topic

#_____ Connects to or exemplifies a topic or concept

@_____ Connects to or exemplifies an author's or theorist's work

A Note About Using Technology in the Classroom

It seems like there is very little consensus out there about whether students should be using laptops and tablets or pen and paper for note taking in the classroom. On the one hand, many students find it convenient to store everything in one place on a laptop, there are lots of apps out there that are attractive to students, and some students require these technologies to help them in school. On the other hand, technologies can be distracting to students and to those around them, and there is some debate as to whether we learn as well when we use computers in the lecture hall.

So, what's our take on this? You guessed it—it depends!

For most students, pen and paper offers simplicity, versatility, and flexibility. You can easily go back and fill in gaps, draw arrows, underline, circle, and quickly sketch out concepts visually as charts or graphs. Computers may be able to do a lot of that stuff, but some people have to spend a lot of time learning how to use various programs or features to do it well, and it may be faster to just do it all freehand.

That said, if you do like to use pen and paper, you still need to put some thought into what will work best for you. Some people like a notebook for each subject. If the pages are not easily movable, though, you might have to use other strategies to insert additional information or notes later, like sticky notes. When we were students, our preference was to carry a basic clipboard or binder stocked with loose leaf paper. At the end of the day, we could sort the notes into the appropriate binder sections, and move pages around as needed.

If you prefer to use a laptop or tablet, that is fine. Just make sure you are using it appropriately by turning off your notifications to your social media and email accounts when in class. The course syllabus typically includes a section on classroom expectations in this regard.

Also, if you are using your laptop because you think it will cut down on your study time, think again. Active learning takes work no matter what programs, devices, and mediums you use to do it, so be prepared to still go back and review your digital notes regularly, add to them, move content around, and simplify concepts into manageable study guides!

Asking Questions and Engaging in Class Discussion

Generally, it is expected in the social sciences that students will be active in class discussions, and students are encouraged to speak up and ask questions or add to the discussion. That is because in the social sciences, we rarely encounter situations with clear "right" or "wrong" answers. Instead, we start by learning the foundational concepts of a discipline, and then as we move on to more complex questions and issues, the answers become more subject to interpretation, and it is the quality of our critical thinking that we seek to refine. For example, in an introductory sociology course, your professor might tell you that a specific situation is an example of a certain concept. In a higher-level sociology course, however, the questions will become yours to explore: Based on your research and critical reasoning, what do *you* think is going on in a certain scenario, event, or practice? Or, how can *you* demonstrate your understanding of this concept using a real-life example?

We often develop these critical reasoning skills best by expressing and exploring ideas with others, which is why class discussion is so important. Class discussion allows us to get feedback from others about the soundness of our own ideas, and

it allows us to see complex issues from many different perspectives, thereby enriching our understanding and capacity to explore the topic further for a research paper or other assignment.

Put your fears aside and do your best to get in there and join in the conversation! If you feel anxious about doing so, consider visiting your professor during office hours to start talking one-on-one and developing some confidence in your understanding of the material. Or, try finding just one or two people in the class you are comfortable forming a study group with, and start discussing the material with them. You will still get the benefit of learning by participating, and odds are good that you will soon start to feel more comfortable voicing your thoughts in the larger group.

1.5 Tips for Studying

It is hard to come up with a prescribed method of studying that will work for all students. Most seasoned students will tell you that they figured out what works for them through trial and error, so while it is good to start with a plan based on what you think will work for you, the strategies you start your semester with may need some tweaking as you go along, and different courses may require different approaches.

The following tips are things you can apply when studying for any university-level class.

General Tips

- Start all courses by taking some time to understand the bigger picture: The importance of the discipline, the purpose of the course, and how the topics covered in class fit together.
- Start all study sessions with an overview of the information you are about to cover.
- Read assigned readings *before* class.
- Spend time remembering and practicing your recall of key terms and concepts. In addition, consider why these are important terms and how they can be applied to real-life scenarios.
- In general, expect to spend about 2 hours of time studying for every hour you are in class. For most students, this means that they should spend about 6 hours studying for each course each week, plus additional time needed around major exams and assignments.

A Note About Multitasking

Multi-tasking is a lie, no matter how good anyone thinks they are at it. When we are trying to do more than one thing at a time, we are, in effect, doing what is called switch-tasking, which means we are switching back and forth between tasks, and it is an inefficient use of time. To demonstrate, try this exercise:

Using the stopwatch on your phone, time yourself as you write out the numbers 1-26, followed by the entire alphabet:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Now, reset your stopwatch and time yourself as you write out the numbers 1-26 and the alphabet together, writing 1, then A, then 2, then B, then 3, then C, and so on:

1 A 2 B 3 C 4 D 5 E 6 F 7 G …

Big difference, right? The same thing happens when you try to switch between studying, talking to friends, watching videos, etc. Every time your focus is taken away from what you are doing, even for just a second or two, you must refocus your attention on the original task. It might not seem like a lot of time in the moment, but it adds up over the course of an entire study session. By focusing on

one thing at a time and giving yourself dedicated time for breaks and relaxing, you will be much more efficient with the time you do spend studying.

Recall Strategies

To recall specific types of information on an exam, such as the names and definitions of key theories or concepts, significant dates, or important people and events, we work to transfer that information from our short-term memories into our long-term memories, *plus* we have to get used to recalling that information when we need it.

Our long-term memories store information best when it is meaningful to us, when we can recognize why it is important, when we have encountered the information many times, and when we can link it to other information that we know. For these reasons, the reading and notetaking methods discussed in this chapter focus so heavily on establishing context, reviewing information regularly, and drawing connections to other information.

Recall strategies help us learn to retrieve information on demand. Have you ever been in an exam and you know that you know an answer to a question, but it does not pop into your head until long after you have left the exam, maybe when you are doing dishes or brushing your teeth that evening? You might think there is something wrong with your memory, but in fact, the information was there all along. The problem is being able to *recall* it in the moment that you require it. The following strategies can help:

Cover Your text or Notes and Review Margin Notes

Previously in this chapter, you learned about using the margins of your textbook and notes to make notations to yourself that you could use to test yourself later. This is a powerful recall tool that works the same way as flashcards, but it can save you a lot of time. As you look at your brief notations in your margin (e.g. *deviance definition, three factors, three paradigms*), recall the answers yourself before looking at your notes or textbook to confirm your answers.

Make Flashcards

If you prefer using index cards because you feel like the process of making them helps you and you appreciate their portability, that is fine too. Be mindful of what information you put on your flashcards, though. Remember, these are best for concepts, definitions, people, events, timelines, and places, but you will want to use other strategies to process complex connections or critical responses. If you want, you can check out some of the flashcard apps available for your mobile device, or you can use index or recipe cards available in most stationery stores.

Create Fill-in-the-Blank Charts or Diagrams

In cases where you need to remember several interconnected or similar pieces of information, try making a blank chart or diagram that you can make several copies of and fill in the blanks to help you remember. For example, if you are in a political science course about the Canadian government, and you are asked to remember the core institutions responsible for governing Canada and their relationship to one another, you can create a chart that shows their hierarchical relationships to one another to help you visualize how they work together, and you can test your knowledge by filling in blank versions of the chart with the appropriate governing bodies.

Practice Elaborative Rehearsal

Practice elaborative rehearsal rather than verbatim memorization, otherwise known as rote learning. Rote learning is fine when you have a limited number of things to memorize, such as a phone number, a locker combination, or a couple of basic formulas, but it is ineffective when we have lots of information to remember, as in the case of studying several textbook chapters for an exam, or when we are expected to exercise critical thinking or interpretation for long answer items, as is the case in many social sciences courses. Elaborative rehearsal means that you put your energy into understanding the *meanings* of terms and concepts rather than trying to memorize their textbook definitions word-for-word. Instead of trying to repeat the exact wording over and over, try to *paraphrase* the information by putting it into your own words, as if you are teaching it to someone else. Go ahead and say it out loud!

Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is especially helpful for developing an understanding of how large or complex pieces of information fit together. Historical timelines are a good example of concept mapping that can help us easily see the sequence of key events, but these are not just useful in history courses. They can also be applied in sociology, political science, psychology, English, or other courses to help link key concepts and to see how different people and events influenced each other or how several theoretical perspectives and developments came out of one main perspective (as an example, see Figure 1).
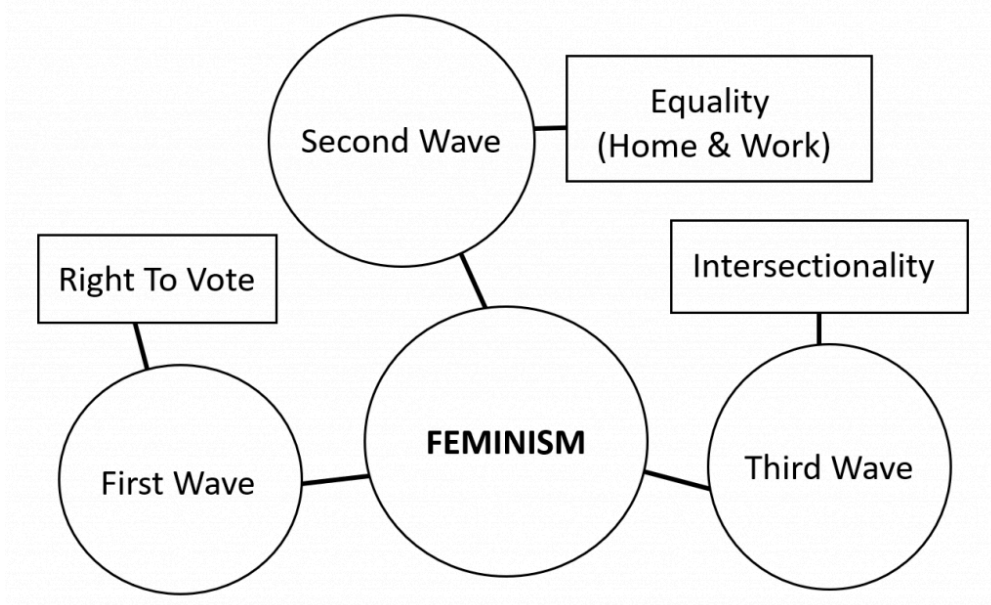
Figure 1.5.1 Concept map example

Study Buddies or Study Groups

Discussing information with others is a highly effective way of remembering it and of deepening our understanding of a topic. When we have a conversation about something, we are often given lots of other memorable information to attach to it. Someone will tell a story, or they will share their own methods of remembering that information, or they will talk about how it relates to something they have learned in another class. These forms of sharing ideas aid in the recall of information because they provide additional meaning and context for us to latch onto. They also allow us to practice sharing our interpretation of course material while getting feedback from others who might let us know when we have really explained something well or if we are maybe a little off track.

The trick with study groups is that you want to make sure that everyone is participating, and you need to form a group with

trusted peers who you know are going to stay on track. If only one person is doing all the talking and everyone else is listening, that one person is getting most of the benefit because they are the ones paraphrasing and teaching the information to everyone else.

If you do not have any peers you feel comfortable studying with, that is okay too. It is still beneficial to try to discuss and explain concepts with others, even if they are not in the course, or to your dog, cat, or goldfish, or even just to yourself. One of the authors prepared for most of her undergraduate essays and exams by going for long walks to think about how she would explain her ideas to someone else.

Using Supplemental Information

Supplemental information is information that may not be part of your assigned readings but that can be used to help you better remember, understand, or apply key concepts. Here are some examples of supplemental information you might use.

Websites Accompanying Textbooks

Publishers frequently create websites you can access to supplement the information published in textbooks. These sites may be completely free, or your textbook may come with an access code that you can use to sign in and create an account. These sites often have additional examples, practice questions, videos or interactive learning tools that present the information in a different way.

Case Studies or Examples

Often, students make the mistake of skipping over the case studies or lengthy examples provided in their textbooks, but these sections can go a long way in helping you see how the information is applied to real-world contexts or helping you remember a concept by connecting it to a story or event.

Recommended Readings

Some professors recommend readings in addition to those that are required for a course lecture. Think of these readings as helpful suggestions for if you are particularly interested in a topic and want to know more, perhaps so you can pursue it as an essay topic, or if you are still uncertain about the topic and need a little extra help wrapping your head around it.

Additional Web Resources

Especially with free online educational content (otherwise known as open educational resources) gaining momentum, there is lots of good, free information online about many university-level subjects. You might find study guides or lecture notes that other professors have put online, or you might find free online lectures or courses through sites like:

- Khan Academy (https://www.khanacademy.org)
- MIT Open Courseware (https://ocw.mit.edu)
- Open Yale Courses (https://oyc.yale.edu)

These are especially helpful if you want concepts or key ideas explained in a different way or in more detail to help you understand them better. And do not rule out podcasts and videos either! Sometimes these resources can help us reflect on main ideas through a different lens or draw unlikely connections we would not have otherwise thought of. If you are not sure where to start or if something looks trustworthy, your professor or a librarian can help.

1.6 Getting Help

One of the most important skills any university student can develop is how to seek appropriate help when they need it. Chances are, your university has a whole host of support systems and services available, but many students either do not know about them or do not know how best to use them.

Your Professor's Office Hours

Professors keep office hours each week so that students have dedicated time during which they can ask for clarification of readings or lectures, get guidance on upcoming assignments or exams, or obtain additional feedback to help them improve on future assignments or exams.

Writing Centres

While university writing centres can assist students with writing papers, which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, many also have supports available to help students develop learning and test-taking strategies.

Libraries

Academic librarians can help you find supplemental information to help you better understand your course materials. Many students forget that their public library can also be a great resource. In addition to providing access to resources and study space, many offer free computer training if you do not feel that you are up to speed on programs like Word, PowerPoint, or Excel. Or, if you need to put together a presentation and want to use video, audio, or graphics see if your public (or academic) library has a Makerspace where you can use professional-quality video, sound, and editing equipment for free. Again, these services will have librarians or other staff on hand to help you out.

Other Campus Resources

Being a good student is not just about learning how to study well. It is also about achieving balance and well-being in other areas of your life too, including physical and mental health. Most universities have services dedicated to helping students succeed. Check your university's website or calendar to see what is available, such as counselling or psychological services, advising, a tutoring centre, a career centre, fitness classes, peer support, a student advocacy office, or services for students with disabilities.

A Note About Asking for Help

Asking for help can be intimidating, and sometimes students walk away from a meeting with their professor or a support service feeling like they did not get what they needed. Our best advice is to prepare ahead of the meeting.

Professors are more than happy to clarify class materials to help their students succeed, but it is the responsibility of students to keep up with the course readings and lectures. A great starting approach is to first read the syllabus and course materials, re-examine lecture materials, and then make note of questions you still have after accessing the available information. If you have missed class, make sure you check the course syllabus to see what was covered that day and then obtain notes from a classmate, or make notes based on the assigned readings before you visit professor's office hours for further clarification.

Academic support services can also provide you with help on course assignments and with exam preparation. If you want a librarian to point you in the direction of scholarly sources for your paper topic or you are hoping for assistance writing a paper, be sure to seek help well in advance of the due date and try to prepare some specific questions or concerns. Bring draft notes and ideas to demonstrate your efforts in advance of the meeting.

Finally, the best way to get the productive help you need is to be clear about what it is you are looking for. Try coming up with answers to these questions as you prepare for a meeting or appointment:

- What am I trying to accomplish?
- Where am I getting stuck?
- What have I already tried?
- What do I already know?
- What would help me move forward?

CHAPTER 2: WRITING EXAMINATIONS

2.1 Introduction to Writing Examinations

Exams vary considerably by course, level, and professor. An introductory psychology course might require students to write two midterms and a final, all of which consist of a combination of true-or-false, multiple-choice, and short answer questions, while a third-year psychology course might consist of lengthy research assignments instead of midterms, and the final exam might consist of one or two in-class essays. Some exams will test you on all the information covered over the whole semester (known as *cumulative* exams), while others will test you only on what was assigned since the last exam (known as *non-cumulative*). Different types of exams require different types of approaches when preparing for and writing them, which is why it is so important to determine as early in the term as possible what type of exams you should expect to write. This information can usually be found in the syllabus.

This chapter covers different types of exams and how to best prepare yourself to succeed at taking them.

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2.2 How University-Level Exams Work

Exam Content is Your Professor's Decision

Some professors prefer to give multiple-choice exams, while others prefer to give essay exams. Some deliver a final exam meant to test your knowledge of the entire course, while for others, the final exam focuses mostly on content learned in the last part of the course. In high school, teachers must follow a specific curriculum, and many of the final exams that high school students write in their last year are standardized across the province, state, or region, but this is no longer the case in university. Professors update and make substantial changes to their course content and exams from semester-to-semester, and professors teach their courses in unique ways such that classes vary from professor to professor. Therefore, it is important to consult your syllabus and your professor if you have questions about your exams. Do not rely on information you get from someone who is in a different course section or who had the same professor in a previous year.

Anything Assigned Over the Semester is Fair Game

Again, this marks another difference between writing exams in high school and writing exams in university. In high school, your teachers made sure to use class time to cover everything that would be on the exam. In university, there is an expectation that students will be responsible for more of their own learning, so if it is part of your assigned reading or viewing but is not covered in a class lecture, you might still be responsible for knowing it. Some professors provide students with detailed information about what to study for exams, such as providing learning objectives or practice quizzes, but this is likely to be the *exception*, not the rule.

2.3 Multiple-Choice Exams

Multiple-choice exams are the preferred exam method for many professors for several reasons. They are a relatively objective assessment tool, they can be used to cover a comprehensive range of topics, and their scores are quick to calculate, which is helpful to professors who have multiple course sections to teach and a very narrow timeframe in which to grade them. Many course textbooks also come with question banks that professors can access to help them compile midterms and finals. Whether using a test bank or creating questions from scratch, or doing a combination of both, professors can also easily modify multiple-choice exams to add or remove areas of assessment, shorten or lengthen the exam, or change the questions or the answer key for each class or semester.

Multiple-choice exams also make it easier for students to budget their exam time. Most of the time, a multiple-choice exam will be designed so that there are about as many questions as there are minutes for the exam (e.g., a 50-minute exam will have around 50 questions, an 80-minute exam will have around 80 questions). Even if yours does not quite conform to that ratio, though, you should easily be able to determine the average amount of time you will have for each question. The other benefit for students, especially if the exam is put together using a publisher's test bank, is that the wording used on the exam is likely to be similar to that used in the textbook, which can help with recall if students have been using the textbook to study.

Myths About Multiple-Choice Exams

Myth 1: Multiple-Choice Exams are Easy

Students tend to give a collective sigh of relief when they find out that their final exam will be multiple-choice, but especially as students move into university-level courses, these exams become harder. There is usually a right answer, along with one or two answers that *could* be right if one were to look at things a certain way but that are not the *best* answers, along with one or two that are wrong. The author of the exam questions might anticipate the types of wrong or not-quite-right answers you might think of and include them to test whether you are *certain* of the right answer or just looking for something that *seems* like it could be right. Also, our brains tend to want to look for information that looks familiar to us, so in an exam setting where we are naturally a little stressed, we are especially vulnerable to tricky multiple-choice questions.

Myth 2: Multiple-Choice Exams Test Only for Surface-Level Knowledge

This one usually comes from how people conceptualize Bloom's (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, which has been used by many educational professionals to understand different types of learning and assessment. Remembering, understanding, or applying concepts is sometimes considered a less complex form of learning, whereas analysis, evaluation, and synthesis or creation is deemed to involve deeper, more complex forms of learning. Today, most educators recognize that learning is much more complicated and that it is not so easy to say that one "type" of learning or assessment is less involved than another. For example, an emergency-room doctor must demonstrate direct application of knowledge very quickly, but there is an awful lot of analysis and evaluation that must go into that knowledge application, and one could hardly argue that it counts as a "less-complex" form of learning and knowledge demonstration. Similarly, multiple-choice exams can be designed so that students use very high levels of critical thinking to demonstrate comprehension or application, so do not be lulled into believing that just because an exam is multiple-choice, it will be easy.

Myth 3: Multiple-Choice Answers Can Be Predicted By a Pattern

It might seem like there is a pattern to your multiple-choice exam, where there is an even distribution of *A, B, C,* and *D* answers so that there are never too many of one answer in a row. This might be true for an entire exam bank for a textbook, but only a fraction of those questions will be selected for the exam you write (and the instructor likely modifies those questions or

makes up additional ones to correspond to lecture materials). When preparing exams, your professors focus their attention on the overall length of the exam, how many questions are dedicated to each unit or section of course content, and how well the questions align with the learning objectives they have set out for the course and included in the syllabus. It is unlikely that your professors have paid any attention to the pattern of responses until after they have finished putting the exam together. One of the authors makes up an exam with extra questions and then whittles them down to create a suitable exam, so what might start off as a more even distribution will not be the case for the actual test. She makes up an answer key after the exams have been printed, so any patterns that do emerge are entirely coincidental and should never be relied upon to guide your answers.

Types of Multiple-Choice Questions

Knowledge-Based Questions

These usually prompt a student to name a theorist, recall a fact, or define a concept from lectures and assigned readings. For example:

_____ is credited with having coined the term *sociology* and is considered the founder of sociology.

   a) Max Weber.

   b) Herbert Spencer.

   c) Emile Durkheim.

   d) August Comte.*

   e) C. Wright Mills.

According to the Census, slightly more than _____ of Canadians are bilingual.

   a) 58%

   b) 42%

   c) 36%

   d) 17%*

   f) 5%

_____ are collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a given culture.

 a) Beliefs

 b) Norms

 c) Values*

 d) Assumptions

 e) Expectations

Comprehension Questions

These test your ability to interpret key ideas and are often found in multiple-choice questions that involve summary or explanation. For example:

Which of the following statements accurately summarizes Robert Merton's (1968) strain theory?

 a) Repeated violations of cultural norms lead to labeling and the eventual development of a permanent deviant identity.

 b) The discrepancy between emphasized cultural goals and the legitimate means for obtaining them can lead to less conventional modes of adaptation such as stealing. *

 c) The positions in a society that are most important require scarce talent or extensive training and thus should be the most highly rewarded.

 d) Deviance is functional for society because it can promote boundary clarification and social unity.

 e) People tend toward crime and deviance when they are relatively free of conventional bonds to society in the form of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

Application-Based Questions

These usually involve questions that ask you to select the best demonstration of how a concept, perspective, or theory works in a real-life context. Sometimes you will have to use logical reasoning to infer the correct answer, or you might have to choose the best one based on the specific conditions presented in the question. An application question may even test critical thinking through the analysis of relationships or connections between events and ideas, as shown here:

Canadians may believe in the practice of *monogamy,* but many of them cheat on their spouses. This demonstrates a discrepancy between:

　　a) ideal and real culture. *

　　b) material and nonmaterial culture.

　　c) folkways and mores.

　　d) formal versus informal norms.

　　e) popular versus high culture.

Choose the best example of a *prescriptive norm*:

　　a) talking to your friend while your instructor is lecturing.

　　b) looking at a friend's paper during an exam.

　　c) putting up your hand to ask a question in class. *

　　d) not reading a magazine during class time.

　　e) giving a friend a dirty look for talking to you in class.

Émile Durkheim is to _____, as Karl Marx is to _____.

　　a) social facts; alienation *

　　b) natural selection; social disorganization

　　c) means of production; social consensus

　　d) value-free; meritocracy

　　e) power; equality

Tips for Writing Multiple-choice Exams

Cover the Answers and Try to Answer the Questions

This is especially important when you are answering *knowledge-based questions* because in those cases, there is only one right answer, but other possible answers may look similar (e.g., one will use the word *disease* and the other will use the word *disorder*, but they will otherwise be the same), or they might be the correct answer to similar other questions in the exam. If you read them before you have had a chance to think about the question yourself, you are more likely to be thrown off by

these almost-right answers. If you have been using sound study strategies, however, the answer you think of on your own before you look at the answers provided is likely to correlate more closely to the lectures and readings, and it is therefore more likely to be the correct one. If you are answering a comprehension- or application-based question, it may not be possible to think of the correct answer before looking at the options provided (e.g., if it is a question that starts with "which of the following is the best example of...", you *have* to look at the answers to know which is correct), but you can still pause for a moment to consider what you know about the topic before considering each answer.

Be Wary of Tricky or Distracting Words

Questions framed in the negative using words like *not* often trip students up if they do not take conscious note of them (e.g., *Which of the following is not an example of _____?*). Also, watch carefully for qualifier words like *always, usually, sometimes, often, never, simplest,* or *fastest.* These are clues to you that several answers will be right in certain contexts, but you are being asked to consider the right answer based on the qualifier or condition that has been placed on the question.

Use a Systematic Process of Elimination if Unsure

Uncover each answer one at a time and determine whether you think it is correct, incorrect, or possibly correct. If you are able to write in your exam booklet, it sometimes helps to put a notation beside each answer to indicate which you think it might be (e.g. circle it if you think it is right, cross it out if you think it is wrong, and put a star beside it if you are not sure). If you do not see what you think is the correct answer, but you have identified others as incorrect, this is good news! You will have to make a guess between those you are unsure of, but by eliminating at least one or two answers, you have increased your odds of guessing correctly.

Wear a Watch and Distribute Your Time Appropriately

Not all exam rooms have a functional or correct clock, and you will not be permitted to look at your phone or use a smartwatch, so wear a basic digital or analog watch to your exam. Use the number of questions on the test and the total exam time as a gauge to estimate how much time you have per question. Most of the time, you will have on average about a minute to answer each question, but bear in mind that some questions will be shorter and simpler and will take less time, and others will be more complex and lengthy and will require more time to process. Rather than pacing yourself minute-by-minute or question-by-question, look at your watch every ten or so questions to make sure you are keeping a good pace overall.

Lightly Mark Answers and Move On

This way, you can easily erase your answer later if you come back to the question and change your mind, but if you do not have time to come back to the question, you have still marked down a guess. This also ensures you do not lose your place on your answer sheet and accidentally mess up the rest of your answers in the test!

Mistakes to Avoid When Writing Multiple-choice Exams

Changing Too Many Answers

As mentioned above, most multiple-choice exams have a correct answer, and then there will be another answer that could be correct but is not the best. The more you go back to re-examine your responses, the more likely it is that you will think yourself out of the correct ones by over-analyzing and becoming distracted by these second-best responses.

That said, there are some cases in which it does make sense to change an answer, but if you are well prepared for your exam, you should only have to do this once or twice in the whole exam. For instance, you might realize that you misread a question or an answer and need to make a correction. Or, you may have encountered information in a subsequent question that jogged your memory and made you realize you got something wrong. These situations should be fairly infrequent, though, so do not go *looking* for changes to make once you have made up your mind.

Marking Up the Answer Key

Most multiple-choice exams are scored by a computer, and if you put pencil marks outside of the intended answer selections or fail to erase an answer completely when you change it, the computer detects "extra lead," assumes you gave more than one response, and marks the question wrong! If permitted, put extra marks or comments on the actual question booklet or some scrap paper rather than the answer sheet.

Leaving Answers Blank

A blank answer is a throwaway. You are better off guessing than leaving an answer blank because even if you are not sure, there is still a chance you might select the right answer.

Making Completely *Random* Guesses

To be sure, a random guess is better than no guess at all, but if you do have to guess, try to at least use a systematic process of elimination to narrow your choices down to 2 or 3 potential answers. Start by identifying any answers you know are wrong. Then, when weighing out the remaining answers, consider that the correct answer tends to be the longer or more specific choice, a grammatically correct statement, a value that is not extreme, or an example that is not a special case or exception (unless the question states that you are looking for a special case or exception). Here are some examples:

What percentage of Canadians support the legalization of marijuana?

a) 13%

b) 68%

c) 80%

d) 100%

An _____ variable is the cause in an experiment.

a) independent

b) moderator

c) predictor

d) dependent

In the first question, you could immediately eliminate 100% as an answer because it is an extreme value, and it is improbable that 100% of a large and diverse population would agree on anything. Also, legalization would probably never have even been considered by the Canadian government if only 13% of Canadians agreed with it. Thus, you can narrow the answer down to either *b* or *c*. When making a guess between those two, *b* seems more reasonable because most accurate percentages are precise numbers, whereas 80% seems too round a number.

In the second question, *a* is the only answer that fits grammatically into that blank space, so it would be your most reasonable guess.

2.4 Essay Questions

Essay questions are used on exams when professors want students to provide a thoughtful, critical response to a complex issue. These questions almost always call on students to go above and beyond the points made in the class lectures and texts, so students need to be prepared to apply information in new ways, to draw new connections between ideas, or to take positions that they can back up with lots of good evidence and rationale. Essay exams may be given as take-home or in-class exams, the latter of which may or may not consist of question options that are provided ahead of time.

Take-Home Essay Exams

A take-home essay exam has the benefit of giving you more time to think about your essay carefully, to look up relevant research and examples, and to organize your ideas. That said, with more time for preparation and writing comes greater expectations, so treat these essay exams like you would a research paper. You will usually be expected to synthesize and analyze information from many sources, including your lectures, readings, and additional research, and chances are good your professor will expect a polished paper. Use the advice presented in Chapter 3 on writing essays to guide your efforts for a take-home essay exam.

In-Class Essay Exams

The pressure is on when you sit down to write an in-class essay, and that can make a lot of students freeze up or draw a blank. If the questions are provided ahead of time, refer to the following tips, plus the tips in the next section that are specific to papers where you are given some time to plan. If you are not given the questions beforehand, though, do not worry—there is still a lot you can do to make sure you stay focused, organized, and on track:

Do a Quick Outline

Outlines are helpful when you sit down to do any type of essay or longer piece of writing, but they are crucial for helping you stay on track when you are under pressure in an exam setting. Your outline does not need to be highly detailed, but it should include your thesis statement (a direct answer to the question that is stated in one or a couple of sentences), a list of the major points you plan to make, and the examples, evidence, or rationale you plan to present to support each point. At this stage, brief notes written on the inside cover of your exam booklet are fine.

Brainstorm and Freewrite

Freewriting is when you just start writing what you know and think about a topic to get your thought processes moving. In an in-class exam, you may find that allocating yourself just a few minutes of freewriting or brainstorming time helps you to get over the initial writers' block that some students experience in these kinds of exam scenarios. When freewriting, you are not worried about how you are organizing or presenting your thoughts, and if it all comes out in one huge run-on sentence, so be it. The caveat here, though, is that you want to put some parameters around your freewriting time so that you do not accidentally get lost in the flow and forget to write an essay, and you also want to make sure your professor is not going to mistake your freewriting for your essay itself. If you have scrap paper, use that instead of your exam booklet, or use the back page of your booklet for your freewriting and draw a line through it when you are done and write something like *FREEWRITING: DO NOT MARK* at the top.

Brainstorming is another method you can use to help you get your ideas down and draw connections between them. Start by writing what you know about the topic and putting a circle around each of those points. Then, as you think of more things related to each idea, write it down in another circle with a line connecting them. Soon, you will start to be able to see which

ideas have multiple points or parts to them, and you will start to also see relationships between major ideas, like cause and effect, emphasis, or contrast. This will help you start to see how your response to the essay question should be organized.

Budget Your Time

Planning time will include the time you take to brainstorm and to create an outline. There is no exact science here, but if you have an hour to write your paper, try to spend no more than about five minutes in the planning stages.

Prioritize the Body of the Paper, Not the Introduction and Conclusion

Lots of students get stuck trying to think of a good first sentence to kick off their paper, but in an exam, your priority is to get your response down, not to work on the next great Canadian novel. If you find yourself hesitating to get that first line down, just move halfway down the page, write your thesis, and get to work on the body paragraphs to support that thesis. You can go back at the end to write a few introductory sentences once the rest of the pieces are in place. If you run out of time to finish your introduction or conclusion, you will likely lose fewer marks than if you spent too much time on these pieces and were not able to fully argue your thesis and answer the question.

Write a Clear Thesis

Write a clear thesis that shows the order in which you will present your ideas in your paper, and make an extra effort to write very clear topic sentences that relate back to that thesis. The reason this is particularly effective in an in-class essay setting is that it helps to keep you on track as you write, and it also helps your instructor to quickly and easily see that you have done what you set out to do. When it comes to marking final exams, most professors are under a serious time crunch to get all of their grades in to the university by a specific date, and they are not going to have the time to comb through your paper closely, so the easier your argument is to follow, the better.

Keep Your Writing Simple and Straightforward

Aim for simpler transitions and signal phrases and a more basic paragraph style: Point, proof, discussion/explanation. When we write research papers at home, we have more time to add some flair or panache to our writing, but in an exam scenario, simpler is better. Ensure that each paragraph starts with a focused topic sentence that gets right to the point of the paragraph. Then, provide supporting evidence or rationale, and then explain why this evidence or rationale supports the point and why the point supports the thesis or overall argument of the essay. Use strong signal phrases, too, which include transition words or phrases that show the relationship between ideas (e.g. *in addition, furthermore, for example, in contrast, however*). Also, if you tend to struggle a bit with grammar and punctuation, aim for shorter, simpler sentences instead of longer, complex sentences. You may not win any awards for style, but it is more likely that your professor will be able to understand what you are saying than if you write too many long-winded sentences with lots of errors that inhibit comprehension. Again, the easier you make it for your professor to follow along, the easier it will be for them to give you credit for your ideas.

Leave Space When Writing

Double-space your writing and leave a good amount of margin space to accommodate revisions if you have time for them at the end. Leaving space makes your writing more legible and gives your professor room to make notes, but it also allows you to make larger revisions at the end if you need to, such as crossing out and rewriting sentences or inserting arrows to direct your instructor to a new point you added in the margin.

Polish Your Writing Only if There Is Time Left Over

Proofread closely for grammar, punctuation, and spelling last, and only if there is time. Your professor needs to be able to read and understand your ideas, so it would be misleading to say that mechanics do not matter at all, but your professor is unlikely to be looking for perfection in an in-class paper. Your development and organization of ideas is more important. Students often try to focus on grammar and punctuation too early in the editing process, finding it easier to focus on more tangible errors like comma splices than on harder-to-solve issues like poor argumentation or underdeveloped ideas. Chances are good, though, that your grades will suffer less from a good idea expressed with a few spelling errors than from a perfectly punctuated logical fallacy, so focus on the bigger issues first and worry about the minutiae last.

Tips for When Questions Are Provided Ahead of Time

In-class essays usually are not graded as heavily as take-home exams or term papers for spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, and tone, but in the case of essay exams in which the questions are provided ahead of time, it is expected that students will do some preparatory work to ensure that their essay responses are well thought-out, organized, and appropriately supported with examples and evidence. Use the following tips to help you prepare for essay exams when the question options are known:

Determine How Many Questions You Need To Prepare For

It is common for professors to provide a few potential essay questions and to say that you will have a more limited choice for the exam itself. For example, you might get a list of five possible questions, and then when you go into the exam, you will be given a choice of three essay questions. In that case, you will need to prepare for at least three possible essay responses to ensure that at least one of the options given on exam day will be a question you have prepared for.

Prepare an Outline, Not a Full Essay

Time and again, we have seen students who have written their whole essay ahead of time and expect to be able to memorize and reproduce it verbatim in the exam. This is the wrong approach for a couple of reasons. First, most people are not going to be able to remember that much detail for the exam, so it is a waste of energy to focus on *memorization* instead of *understanding*. Second, you want to be able to be flexible enough in your response that you can draw on new information you remember as you do other sections of the exam or that come to you under the pressure and excitement of the exam itself. Instead, it is better to write an outline and make sure that what you are prepared for is the *process* of presenting your answer in a way that is organized, well informed, and persuasive, with lots of examples from your readings, lectures, and research at the ready to support your position.

Think of Specific Examples You Can Use

It can be hard to remember details and specific scenarios when we are in an exam setting, so take some time as you prepare for your in-class essay to find specific supporting examples you can use to help augment or illustrate your ideas.

Draw on Course Lectures, Readings, and Supplemental Material

An in-class essay is a great opportunity to pull together content covered as part of the course, so make sure that you do not forget to review the content broadly. Lecture notes, readings, recommended readings, guest lectures, group activities, and videos or podcasts or other media assigned or referenced in the class are all potential sources of great essay material.

Remember Where Your Content Came From

Some in-class essays are open book, where students can bring in notes or textbooks, which makes it a lot easier to cite sources. Some exams are not open book, though. In those cases, it is common for professors to assume that the information you include comes from your textbook and lectures, but if you do happen to use the unique argument, viewpoint, or findings of a certain scholar or theorist, you will want to be able to signal that in your paper (e.g. "This argument is supported by Chen's long-range study of this population, which suggested that…"), even if you are not expected to stick to a rigid citation style or reference specific page numbers or publication dates.

2.5 Open Book Exams

Open book exams require a *lot* of preparation and planning. Lots of students make the mistake of thinking that they do not have to do as much to ready themselves for an open-book exam, but those who look at their textbook or notes for every question will be unlikely to finish the exam on time, so it is still important to study the content well in advance of the open-book exam. In addition, you will want to get well acquainted with how your resources are laid out, so you can find what you need, when you need it during the exam.

Tips for Preparing for Open Book Exams

Know Your Textbook's Table of Contents and Index

The table of contents will help you remember which chapters relate to question topics, and the index can help you target the locations of specific keywords in the text. You can also add your own key terms and words to the index and note the page numbers that have useful, relevant information.

Understand the Layout of Each Chapter

Many textbooks structure their information in specific ways. For instance, each chapter might start with an anecdote, followed by some information about why it is relevant. Then, each section might begin with key terms and definitions, followed by a case study, followed by a discussion. Is there a predictable pattern to how your chapters are laid out? Knowing this will help you quickly locate specific types of information, such as an example to use in a short answer response.

Limit Your Use of Flags, Bookmarks, or Sticky Notes

If your textbook has too many flags and sticky notes in it, you may find that you need to spend too much time flipping through all of these marked pages looking for something specific. Reserve your use of these highly visible markers for key information that you are likely going to have to refer to several times throughout the exam or for extra-special pieces of information that are highly specific and difficult to find using the contents and index pages, like examples, images, or quotations.

Use Margin Notations to Point to Other Helpful Sections

This is another useful way of cutting down on distracting flag or sticky note clutter. A quick "see page ___" note in a margin is an easy way to ensure you do not miss other helpful sections of the text and for you to remind yourself of good connections between ideas and content.

2.6 Special Exam Considerations

Accommodations

In some cases, students have disabilities that require exam accommodations. Most universities will have some sort of disability services office that can answer any questions students or professors may have and that can help coordinate appropriate accommodations. For example, someone with a visual impairment may need to have exam materials transcribed into braille or audio formats and may need to write their exam in a space that allows them to use audio equipment. Or, a student with a learning disability may require a quiet exam room and extra time to write so they can better process the questions without distractions. A *temporary impairment*, such as a wrist or hand injury, may also require accommodations, such as the use of a scribe or voice-to-text software. Some students may also be eligible for ongoing support from a specialized tutor or learning strategist who can help identify specific study strategies that are best suited to their needs.

It is the *university's responsibility* to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations in cases where students have diagnosed and documented disabilities. In many cases, though, it is the *student's responsibility* to provide documentation or proof of a disability if they wish to access accommodations, to follow the appropriate process of requesting accommodations, and to provide the disability services department and their professors adequate time to make the necessary arrangements. There are many students who require accommodations, and some accommodations take considerable time to prepare for, especially if special exam spaces and supervisors need to be schedule, if software needs to be licensed or set up, or if alternate formats need to be prepared. In some cases, getting the necessary proof of a disability requires appointments with health professionals, which can also take time. Therefore, it is extremely important that you contact your professor and your university's disability services department *as early in the semester as possible* to get the required paperwork in order. If you do not know what documentation you need, your disability services office should be able to provide you with information. If the semester is already underway and you are faced with a temporary impairment or have only just been diagnosed with a disability that requires accommodation, contact your professor and disability services office as soon as possible after your injury, illness, or diagnosis.

Exam Deferrals

Each university has its own exam deferral policy, but exams are typically deferred only under exceptional circumstances, such as a death in the family or severe illness. You will want to consult with your own university's policies surrounding exam deferrals as you may need to follow a number of procedures and protocols such as contacting your instructor within 48 hours, obtaining documentation to support the absence, completing official paperwork to apply for a deferred exam, or paying a fee to set up the deferred exam.

2.7 Exam Anxiety

Exam anxiety is common among university students, and we have encountered numerous successful students over the years who have suffered anxiety prior to and during exams. If you experience what you feel to be unmanageable forms of anxiety, please consider seeking professional advice early, well before the next exam (or class presentation) because interventions take practice and time to be maximally effective. Students with exceptionally severe anxiety may be eligible for certain exam accommodations through the student disability office.

Here is some general advice to those who are prone to exam anxiety.

Some Anxiety is Normal and Healthy

Before an exam or presentation, most of us feel a surge of adrenaline. This helps us feel alert and ready to react and respond to situations quickly, which is helpful to us when we need to be focused and engaged. If we bring this adrenaline under control and frame this state as excitement rather than fear, it can help us ensure we perform at the top of our game. However, if we are reacting too strongly to this excitement, we can lose control of our physical state and experience things like increased heart rate or dizziness, and we can lose control of our thought processes and see patterns of negative or fearful thinking start to take over. Other times, we might freeze altogether and find that we cannot focus on anything at all. The good news is that in many cases, we *can* learn to keep this kind of anxiety in check.

If you experience mild anxiety symptoms, try closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths. If you are worried that you are not prepared enough, think about all the time you have spent studying before the exam and throughout the term. Picture yourself finishing the exam and handing it in calmly, knowing that you have done well. Sometimes, all it takes is a few moments of space to ease the stress on our nervous system and to consider more positive (and likely) outcomes than those that are causing us to react fearfully to a situation.

Self-Care Helps Our Ability to Cope with Stress

We certainly want to make sure that we are alert for an exam, but caffeine and other stimulants can also excite our nervous systems to the point where otherwise-normal symptoms of anxiety become amplified and harder to control. If you are prone to exam anxiety, consider minimizing caffeine and use of other stimulants that might make you jittery. At the very least, keep your consumption within the range that is normal for you instead of adding a few extra cups of coffee to your morning routine, as the last thing you want is an unexpected jolt of energy that your system is not accustomed to. Other conditions can also enhance anxiety, such as being sleep-deprived, not eating well, not getting enough exercise, or neglecting to take some time to wind down. In the weeks or days leading up to your exam, make sure to include a little extra self-care in your routine.

Those of you who are reading this book have already taken steps to learn how to be academically prepared for your exams, which is great! Your university may also have a tutoring centre, learning support centre, or academic success services department that can also help you develop good study and time management habits. Being proactive about caring for yourself and managing your learning early will go a long, long way in preserving your future mental health when the pressure starts to increase.

When to See a Counsellor or Psychologist

If you are prone to having anxiety that you cannot seem to manage on your own and that inhibits your ability to perform well in school, we recommend you seek help from a psychologist or counsellor who can assist you in getting to the root of your anxiety and help you develop appropriate strategies to bring things back under control. These may include talk therapy, self-regulation strategies, learning assessments, medication, or other treatments. There are lots of options available, and a mental

health professional can discuss your symptoms with you to help you determine which interventions are most appropriate for you.

Most universities will have an on-site counselling service for students to use, so check your student services listing to find out how to access these services on your campus.

CHAPTER 3: WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS

3.1 Introduction to Writing Academic Papers

Writing is one of those activities most people tend to either love or hate, but no matter how you feel about it, the fact remains that it is the primary mode of communication used in academia, which is why all students must learn to become proficient academic writers, regardless of their discipline of study. In the context of higher education, the purpose of writing essays is to communicate our exploration of an idea, problem, or question purposefully and in depth. We do this by conducting primary research or by closely examining the relevant research other scholars have done, determining what the available evidence suggests when taken together, and then sharing our findings so that others may in turn respond to or expand upon them. Specific methodologies may be used to guide how you conduct, interpret, and present your research, but all academic writing serves the same purpose of sharing knowledge and adding to the scholarly conversation.

This chapter covers some of the key skills needed to write an academic paper, including strategies to narrow down a topic, outline ideas and ensure academic integrity.

See Appendix A for a sample essay written by an undergraduate student.

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3.2 Types of Essays

Academic writing can be just as varied as other forms of prose. The following briefly describes the most common types of essays undergraduate students are asked to write, as well as the purpose that each serves.

> Note that introductory courses in the social sciences frequently require students to write an argumentative essay or two over the course of a term, while upper-level courses may require students to complete more substantial research essays, often detailing their own original research. Much of this, however, depends on the program and how an instructor has developed the course.

Explanatory or Expository Essays

These are intended to inform the reader about a specific topic or issue. They should usually provide as unbiased an account as possible, without taking a position. Think of this as being almost like a detailed encyclopedia entry. Though some university students may be required to write expository essays, most university-level essays will require students to formulate and argue a thesis, or position.

Book Reports or Precis

The function of a book report or precis is to summarize a book's main purpose and ideas and perhaps comment on who the book might be of interest to or how it will relate to a specific research topic. In some cases, students may need to critically examine the work as well, commenting on how well it achieved its aims. Again, this type of writing is less common in university-level courses with the exception of perhaps some introductory courses, or if a precis or book report is assigned, it is often intended to be one component of a larger research project that will eventually call for a more scholarly research paper to be written.

Critical Reviews

These include some summary of a source, but they go a step further and critique or evaluate the source using certain criteria, such as the author's methodology, use of evidence, or potential for bias.

Literature Reviews

Literature reviews summarize many sources at once, providing an overview of some of the key sources related to a topic, including which scholars' works appear to be most influential within the field, how our understanding of the topic has changed over time or what themes are prevalent in the literature, what conclusions can be drawn from the body of literature, and what questions remain unanswered by it. Literature reviews may be written on their own, or they may be one component of a research paper, used to establish context for the research by helping to explain what gaps the researcher intends to address or why they chose a particular methodology over another.

Research Reports

As discussed in more detail in [Chapter 7](#), research reports report the findings and significance of an author's own primary research. They typically include a literature review to help establish what is already known about the topic and how this research will help fill a knowledge gap in the field, and then they provide the reader with information about the methodology used, the variables accounted for and the limitations of the study. They then report findings from the study and discusses the significance of these findings and directions for future research. The function is to detail as clearly as possible the research process and findings so that a reader can determine whether the results are reliable, how the findings help to answer the research question and add to our knowledge of the subject, and what questions might remain that further research can help to answer.

Argumentative Essays

These are essays where the researcher a stance on an issue (i.e., presents a thesis) and provides supporting evidence to argue that thesis. In this case, the function of the essay is to present a compelling argument or viewpoint that is clearly articulated, easy for the reader to follow, and uses sound reasoning and fair representation of research sources. That said, argumentative essays can be dangerously misleading in their apparent simplicity, with many undergraduate students underestimating the complexity of some of these features that make up a good academic argument.

Here are a few things to keep in mind about argumentative essays:

- **"Compelling" does not mean "right" or "above criticism."** *All* academic work is subject to critique. That is the point of academia—to engage in healthy debate and critical discussion. You can write a well-executed essay about why a government's policies on immigration are in need of revision, but a reader may still disagree with you if they believe the evidence you have used points to a different conclusion, if they are viewing the issue through a different theoretical lens than you, or if they are aware of other information that disrupts your argument. Academics are continually engaging in a sort of *scholarly conversation* with each other through the essays and articles that they write, and this is why you must always think critically about the sources you read and be open to changing your position if new information comes to light.
- **"Easy to follow" does not always mean "simple."** It is fair to assume that your reader is a capable reader who can comprehend complex writing. It is not fair to assume, however, that your reader is going to automatically draw connections between your ideas for you or to give you the benefit of the doubt when you have not fully explained something. Your job as a writer is to present your ideas in a logical sequence, to use paragraphs or section headings to clearly signal when you have moved from one idea to another, to use appropriate topic sentences that make each point clear to your reader, to use appropriate transitions to indicate the relationship between your sentences and ideas (e.g., to add emphasis to a previous point, provide contrast, or illustrate an idea), and to observe the rules of grammar and punctuation so that what you intended to say is the same message the reader receives.

Sound reasoning and fair presentation of ideas are a big part of academic writing. At the university level, constructing an argument is not as simple as making a claim, thinking of three supporting points, and cherry-picking a few good quotes to support each point. As you start to make decisions about what your supporting points are going to be and what evidence you are going to use to back them up, pay attention to whether any of them might contradict each other, whether they complement each other enough to feel cohesive instead of like a list of disparate points, whether they have not just *some* evidence to support them but whether they have *good* evidence to support them, and whether you have adequately considered and accounted for other possible conclusions. It is often the case, too, that we begin the research process with one argument in mind but come to change our position when the research reveals another answer, and it is our ability to base our arguments on the evidence that is available rather than on the evidence we *want* to see that is a mark of good scholarship.

Along those same lines, you need to make sure when using research sources that you are taking your sources into account in their entirety, even if you are using only part of a source as evidence. Research is an exercise in understanding and purposefully using sources, not in scanning a few articles for a few good quotations to throw into a paper. Pulling one sentence or idea out of an article to support your claim when the full context of the article suggests something different

or when that one idea reflects only a very minor part of the article does not make for a fair representation of your research sources.

3.3 Structuring an Essay

The following briefly covers what is included in a typical student essay in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020).

Most student essays present a thesis statement at the end of an introduction, followed with a series of arguments to support that thesis in the body of the paper, which are backed up with secondary research, and a conclusion. However, the structure of an essay varies depending on disciplinary conventions as well as specific assignment requirements that your instructor may ask for, so if you do not know what your professor wants, be sure to ask.

> See Appendix A: Sample Essay for an example of a student essay.
>
> Refer to Chapter 7 and Appendix B for detailed information on putting together a more formal research report sharing findings from original research.

Formatting Your Paper

Title Page

The title page should include the following elements starting about four double-spaced lines down the page:

> **Title of Your Paper in Title Case Bold Text Centered**
>
> Your Name (one double space below the title)
>
> Name of Your University
>
> Course Code: Name of Course
>
> Name of Instructor
>
> Date Essay is Due

Page numbers should appear in the top-right corner of each page, starting with the title page.

Including the title of your paper IN CAPS in the header (also known as a "running head") is only necessary in student papers if required by your instructor. See Chapter 7's section on title pages for information on how to add this.

Text of Your Paper

Start your paper with the title at the top, in title case, bold and centred. (Only start your paper with an abstract if required by your instructor.)

Each paragraph of your paper should be aligned to the left, with the first sentence indented one tab.

Text should be double-spaced throughout.

Headings should be centred and in bold text, while sub-headings should be aligned to the left and in bold text.

References

A list of all works referenced in your paper should be listed at the end of your paper. These should begin on their own page with the heading "References" centered and in bold text.

See Chapter 5 for additional details on how to format references.

Introduction and Thesis Statement

The purpose of an introduction is to situate your paper within its context and establish the direction for the rest of your paper. After reading your introduction, your reader should understand what specific angle of the topic you will be exploring, why it is important or what problem you are trying to address, what kind of essay you have written or what kind of research you have done, and what your overarching conclusion or argument is (also known as your thesis).

Your thesis statement is normally found at the end of your introduction, and it presents the main argument for your paper. This sounds simple, but many writers find thesis statements to be difficult to construct. There is not one way to write a thesis statement, but the following tips and examples may help.

Clearly State and Explain the Position or Argument

Thesis statements can be quite simple and straightforward, stating a position and listing a couple of reasons for it:

> Vaccination of healthy children should be mandatory because vaccinations reduce the health care costs associated with preventable diseases, they provide the herd immunity necessary to protect vulnerable children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, and they substantially reduce the number of childhood deaths from preventable disease and illness.

They can also be more complex:

> While the medical and social benefits of vaccination may outweigh concerns for personal autonomy when it comes to policies that require vaccination for children in public schools, the practice of coercion through policy should not be allowed on principle. Such policies allow institutions to establish standards of personal duty and to enforce exclusion from necessary public spaces without offering any alternatives for those who do not comply, effectively stripping away personal choice in practice, even though legal recognition of such rights has not changed. Thus, vaccine policies for public schools contribute to the normalization of institutional coercion that could threaten citizens' rights in other contexts as well.

In both examples above, the author's position is clearly stated, and the reader has a sense of how the essay will unfold from there.

Also note that these thesis statements are *arguable*. They are not just a statement of fact (e.g., *many public schools are proposing vaccination policies to prevent outbreaks of preventable diseases*), nor are they just a statement of opinion, assumption, or generalization (e.g., *schools that implement vaccination policies do not care about individual rights*).

Thesis Statements Can be Lengthy-*ish*

In many cases, one sentence may be all that is needed, but contrary to popular belief, there is no rule stating that a thesis statement *must* be one sentence. In fact, for heftier projects like a dissertation, honours- or masters-level thesis, the thesis statement may be presented over a whole chapter!

That said, for most undergraduate-level work, one or a few sentences, or *possibly* a brief paragraph will be plenty of room for a well-developed thesis statement. If you find it difficult to summarize your argument and rationale, you are likely including too much detail and not being specific enough about what your core argument really is, or you are trying to cover too many things in a single paper.

Thesis Statements Can Change and Evolve

Until you are ready to submit your final draft, you should consider whatever thesis statement you have written down as a *working thesis*, subject to change, and you should always revisit your thesis after you feel the rest of your paper is finished to make any last-minute edits to it that may be needed.

Though we often think of writing as the process of communicating pre-formed ideas, it is a thought process in and of itself. As you write, it is perfectly natural to also be thinking through your points, coming up with new ideas you had not thought of previously, or considering your research in a new light. You may also hit points in the drafting process where you realize that you need to go back and do some additional research or that there is a better source for you to use than the one you had planned on using. The point is that writing is *non-linear*, which means we continuously move back and forth between the research, thinking, writing, and revising processes rather than doing each one after the other. This means that by the time you are done writing, it is entirely possible that you might have to change the order in which your thesis presents your rationale, or that your argument may have shifted entirely, and that is totally normal!

Body

The body of your paper is where you expand upon and fully flesh out the rationale for your position or argument. Each paragraph focuses on one idea, with the usual paragraph structure following a *point, proof, discussion* format.

Point
The point, or main idea, is usually stated as the first sentence of a paragraph, also known as a topic sentence. For instance, the idea that economic instability is the motivating factor leading young men in Canada to commit property crimes.

Proof
The proof is the evidence that supports the point made in the topic sentence. This is where you will provide arguments or information you have found in your research sources. Here, you might discuss

findings from studies that have investigated whether the occurrence of auto theft correlates with poverty levels and the age and gender of those who have committed this crime.

Discussion

The discussion explains the significance of the evidence and why it supports the point you are making in that paragraph, or how the main point of the paragraph helps to support the thesis of the paper. For instance, your research may lead you to conclude that poverty levels alone are inadequate to explain all types of property crime committed by young men.

In high school, students become familiar with the basic five-paragraph essay structure that includes an introduction with a thesis statement, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. As your writing assignments grow in length and complexity in university, so will the number of paragraphs you will write in your essays. Your introduction or conclusion may be longer than a single paragraph each, and chances are good that you will have more than three points to make in your papers, or you may require several paragraphs to fully explain one point that you are making. With length and complexity of writing, transitions become especially important.

Transitions help your reader understand how one paragraph feeds into another and how one sentence moves into another. In a five-paragraph essay, using transitions can be as simple as starting each topic sentence with *First …, Second …,* and *Third* or *Finally ….* However, unless you really are presenting an itemized or sequential list of some sort, these transitions are not very precise, and they do little to help the reader understand the *relationship* between your ideas.

When you write your topic sentences, use transitions to make it clear if the next paragraph presents a new idea entirely (*Another way in which vaccination policies are used is . . .*), if it is adding to the argument addressed in the previous paragraph (*The lack of alternatives becomes even more problematic when one considers that . . .*), or if it is presenting an opposing view (*The implementation of such policies is justified by . . .*) or disputing it (*What this justification fails to take into account, however, is . . .*).

Remember to transition between sentences too! The same kinds of transition phrases can be used sentence-to-sentence. Words and phrases like *however, in addition, furthermore,* or *conversely* all go a long way in connecting your thoughts and clarifying your intentions as a writer.

Conclusion

Generally, your conclusion will revisit your thesis and summarize the main arguments you have made to support your thesis. Conclusions are also often used to identify areas for further research or to reflect on the significance of the topic. That said, your conclusion should usually be quite brief, and you should avoid introducing *new* information here. It is mostly just there to signal to your reader that you are wrapping things up and pulling everything back together again after expanding on your ideas in the body of the paper.

Essay Checklist

❑ Separate title page at start

❑ Text double-spaced throughout

❑ Start of new paragraphs indented one tab

❑ Headings centered and sub-headings aligned to the left, each in bold text

❑ Introduction includes thesis statement

❑ Points and discussions in body of essay supported with evidence

❑ Proper citations are included with quotations and paraphrases (ideas you have summarized or reworded)

❑ Conclusion summarizes main points to support thesis and may identify areas for future research

❑ Reference page at end lists all references noted in the text, properly cited

3.4 The Writing Process

Selecting and Narrowing a Topic

Sometimes, your professors will give you a topic that you must write about, but more likely than not, you will be given a choice of many topics to write on, or you may be asked to formulate a topic all on your own. Whether you are given a topic or are coming up with your own, however, one of the most commonly encountered challenges students face is how to narrow and focus the topic into something that is manageable. If your topic is too narrow or niche, you may have difficulty finding information about it. If it is too broad, you will find yourself overwhelmed with information and may find it hard to figure out how to pull it all together into a cohesive paper.

There is no one way to select and narrow a topic, but here are some tips to help you along the way:

Pick Something You Are Interested In

Even if there is another potential topic that looks less complicated, you are likely to write a better, more engaging paper if the topic allows you to explore a question or issue that you are genuinely interested in.

Talk It Out

Your professor is usually the best person to talk to if you are having trouble figuring out how to focus your research or if you want to know if the narrowed topic you are thinking of is in line with their expectations. This is exactly the sort of thing your professor's office hours are for. However, it can also be helpful to talk about topics with peers, since it is the process of talking it out that often leads us to see new directions we would not have otherwise thought of.

Draw a Mind Map of What You Already Know

Start by writing down everything you know about a topic and then circle and draw arrows between ideas that you think are connected. The following illustrates connections between the cleaning service industry and low-wage work, workplace injuries, union involvement, and the fact that workers in parts of this industry tend to be first-generation immigrant women. Drawing on these connections, you might decide to start researching how first-generation immigrant women are engaging with unions to improve working conditions, or you may focus on how family structures are affected by women's involvement in precarious low-wage work, or how examples of workplace discrimination are tied to the intersection of race, class, gender, and citizenship status (as an example, see Figure 2).
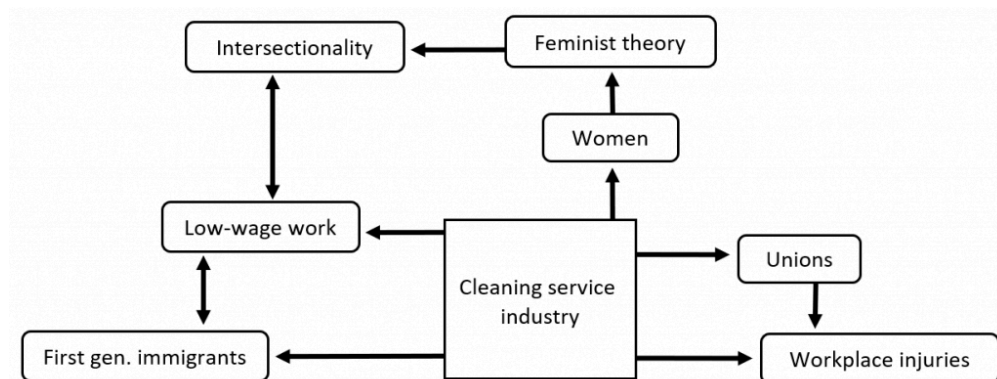

Figure 3.4.1 Mind map example

Do Some Preliminary Research

As we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, see an academic librarian about how to develop a search strategy, and then take some time to browse your university's catalog and databases to see what and how much has been written about your topic.

If your professor has provided you with essay topics to choose from, then you will want to look for different perspectives that emerge in the literature. For example, if the topic asks you to explore the issue of digital divide and how it relates to poverty, you will need to develop a focus for your topic because otherwise, you will have too much information to wade through. You could, for instance, write about the different effects digital divide has on rural and urban poverty in Canada, or you could write about how government policies that reduce digital divide can help to alleviate poverty, or you could explore how the relationship between the digital divide and poverty is different among different age groups. The key is to figure out what your paper is going to zero in on so that you can explore a narrowed topic in more depth and so that you can more easily determine which research sources are worth delving into.

Creating a Working Thesis

A working thesis is an answer to your research question that you use as a launching point to guide your research. This thesis will likely change as you complete your research and draft your essay, but it will at least keep you focused and grounded with a sense of direction.

For the sample topic above about digital divide and poverty, a perfectly reasonable working thesis might be something like, "There are many ways in which digital divide affects urban and rural populations differently" or "To reduce both digital divide and poverty, government policies must address both issues instead of assuming that solving one issue will take care of the other" or "Digital divide among younger populations is more likely to be correlated with poverty than digital divide among older populations."

Exploring Ideas

This is where you want to give yourself room for creativity. While you explore sources that look like they will support what you are trying to say, also challenge yourself to look at sources that look like they might say the opposite or something else entirely. Spend time sitting with and thinking about your research and what the significance of it is. See if there are common themes that come up in your readings that might point to well-established knowledge (or frequently referenced challenges and unknowns). Also, look at the citations and bibliographies that the authors of your books and articles have included to find some sources to expand your research.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the process of planning your paper and organizing your ideas. Often, prewriting takes shape as an outline, where you write your main thesis or argument at the top of the page and then write down your main arguments in point form:

Thesis

Point 1

- Supporting evidence

- Supporting evidence
- Supporting evidence

Point 2

- Supporting evidence
- Supporting evidence
- Supporting evidence
- Supporting evidence

Other ways you might do prewriting is by drawing mind maps that visually connect your ideas, by colour-coding your research notes (e.g., all notes highlighted in pink correspond to argument 1, all notes highlighted in blue correspond to argument 2, etc.), using sticky notes on a wall or desktop to move ideas around into different sequences, or by just quickly sketching out a couple of ideas on some scrap paper. The point of prewriting is to help you figure out the general layout and order of your ideas in your paper so that when you sit down to write, you have a good sense of where to begin and where to go from there.

Drafting

We are reluctant to say that there is a "best" way to do any sort of writing because every writer comes to develop their own process that works best for them, but, in general, try to not overthink your first draft of an essay. Most of the time, it is the revising, editing, and proofreading processes that will take up more of your time, and your first draft is just a kick at the can to get you going.

If you are finding yourself daunted or overwhelmed at the big paper-writing task ahead of you, just dive in and write without paying too much attention to things like flow, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The first thing you write will not be what you are handing in, but you need to get something on the page before you can work on improving it. At this stage, all you should really be worried about is putting your research and ideas into complete sentences and paragraphs.

Revising

Believe it or not, revising, editing, and proofreading are all separate processes. Revising is the big-picture stage, where you take a step back and reflect on the overall paper. Ask yourself:

- Do I feel like these arguments have fully supported my thesis?
- Are there any sections that still feel incomplete or underdeveloped?
- Have I made any unsupported generalizations or assumptions that require more evidence?
- Is everything presented in a logical order, or should I move some things around?
- Is my paper too long? Too short?

The key here is to focus on the big picture without getting bogged down by the details just yet. This is a good time to make structural changes to your paper where you move arguments around or perhaps decide that you need to do some additional research to fill in some of the remaining gaps.

Editing

Editing is where we might make some more decisions about style, tone, and flow. After you have revised your paper, read it again and ask yourself these questions:

- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
- Have I adequately explained my arguments and evidence?
- Have I cited all quotations AND paraphrases?
- Is the connection between my ideas clear?
- How well does my paper flow? Is the tone academic?
- Do I have a lot of unnecessary sentences or words?

Often, it is helpful at this stage to read your paper out loud to yourself. Other strategies include getting a text-to-voice program to read your paper aloud to you, or to get a friend or peer to read it to you exactly as it is written so that you can hear what it sounds like. It can even help to change the font and print it out so that it looks and feels different as you read. The point is to do what you can to get out of the same head space and viewpoint you used to draft and revise the paper because by this point, you have been looking at your own writing long enough that you are likely to miss a lot of things you would otherwise notice if you were looking at things through fresh eyes (or ears!).

Proofreading

This is where you can finally start fine-tuning your writing by poring over your essay for grammar and punctuation errors, spelling mistakes, better word choices, etc.

Writers do not move through these processes quite so methodically, and it is perfectly normal to find yourself doing some last-minute research and revising even if you have already proofread your paper once or twice. However, if you can manage to not sweat the small stuff until the very end, you are likely to use your time more efficiently because whenever you make larger changes, you are probably going to have to go back and proofread all over again, thereby increasing your work.

Like editing, proofreading is something that gets harder the longer you have been looking at something. If you have used any of the techniques suggested above for editing, it is almost certain that you have already done some proofreading too because you will have noticed certain grammatical mistakes or awkward sentences when you saw them in a new light.

For your final proofread, try taking things one step further and reading your paper from the end to the beginning. Start by reading the last sentence, then the second last sentence, then the third last sentence, and so on. When we read this way, we take our sentences out of context, which is important when we are reading for grammar and punctuation. If you are always reading beginning to end, you are likely to miss mistakes because you know what you *mean* to say, so that is what your mind sees. Reading from end to beginning disrupts this flow and makes us better able to see what is really on the page.

A Note About Writers' Block

Everyone suffers from writers' block from time to time, so if this is something you are experiencing, do not panic. There are lots of things you can do to help get the creative juices flowing. Here are some suggestions:

Freewrite. Freewriting is when we allow ourselves to write without the fears and restrictions of producing a product or getting it "right." If you cannot think of anything to say that is related to your topic and you are getting more and more frustrated, start writing about why you do not want to write this stupid essay. Or, start writing about the process you have followed up until this point. Just start writing *something* and let yourself keep writing for 5 or 10 minutes and see what happens. Often, it is when we remove the pressure of writing and just start writing *anything* that the thought process starts to move.

Talk. Try to explain your paper to a friend or family member. You can even explain it to your dog! Sometimes, it is hard to start writing if we feel we have not fully developed our ideas yet or if we feel like there is still a gap between our research process and our writing process. Talking about our ideas is a good way to help ourselves finish the thought processes that connect our research and writing.

Exercise. You would be surprised at how much thinking you can do when your blood is flowing, your lungs are full of fresh air, and you are releasing all kinds of pent-up frustration through physical activity.

Sleep on it. Sometimes, we have just been looking at something for too long and need to check out for a while before coming back to it. There is no shame in recognizing that you and your paper need a little time apart!

3.5 Integrating Evidence Into Your Writing

The following section on integrating evidence into your writing follows citation rules detailed the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), which we discuss in much more detail in Chapter 5. However, these approaches to integrating other people's works into your own work through quoting and paraphrasing apply regardless of which citation style you use.

Using Quotes

When you quote a source, you must indicate that you are taking an author's exact words by using *quotation marks* ("__"):

> Adler and Van Doren (1972) asserted that "you have not completed your interpretation of an important sentence until you have separated out of it all the different . . . propositions" (p. 125).

Quotations are helpful in many situations, such as when an author has said something so well that including their exact words would add insightful emphasis to your point, or when you are using the exact words that a research subject shared in a study you or someone else has conducted. However, many students rely *too heavily* on quotations in their papers, which can disrupt the flow of their writing because their paper starts to look like a big mashup of soundbites from different authors.

Another rookie mistake is assuming that quotations are self-explanatory, when in fact, they usually require some explanation so that the reader understands the context of the quotation and how it connects to the argument. See how in the following example, the quotation is contextualized and explained by the sentences before and after it:

> One common misconception is that students are automatically able to intuit and use the reference tools made available to them. As Adler and Van Doren (1972) stated, "Reference books are useless to people who know nothing. They are not guides to the perplexed" (p. 178). In other words, a certain level of knowledge and familiarity with reference sources and their subjects is required for students to know what to look for and how to navigate these resources to find that information.

Another mistake some students make is that they use quotations that, when taken by themselves, do not accurately represent what the author intended. A classic case of this would be when an author makes a statement, which a student uses as evidence in their paper, but in the actual article, that statement was followed by a big *BUT* or another key piece of information that changes the context of the remark.

Before using quotations in your paper, ask yourself:

- Is this quotation taken and used in the proper context?
- Is the author's wording important?
- Can the passage be summarized instead?
- Will the quotation require further explanation?
- Is the connection to my argument clear?

Paraphrasing

Much of the time, instead of quoting all of your sources, you should try to *paraphrase* them. Paraphrasing is a valuable skill to learn because it allows you to maintain consistent tone and flow in your writing, and it demonstrates that you have understood what you have read.

When you paraphrase an idea, you do not use quotation marks, but you do still include an in-text citation. For example:

> As Adler and Van Doren (1972) explained, a proper paraphrase captures an author's idea without relying on the author's wording, thereby demonstrating a thorough understanding of the passage.

Patchwriting

Where many students go wrong in paraphrasing is when they simply change a few words but essentially use the same sentence as the original source did but with a few synonyms thrown in. That is sometimes referred to as *patchwriting*, and it can be an academic integrity issue. For example:

> **Original Passage:** "The translation of one English sentence into another, however, is not merely verbal. The new sentence you have formed is not a verbal replica of the original. If accurate, *it is faithful to the thought alone*. That is why making such translations is the best test you can apply to yourself, if you want to be sure you have digested the proposition, not merely swallowed the words. If you fail the test, you have uncovered a failure of understanding. If you say that you know what the author means but can only repeat the author's sentence to show that you do, then you would not be able to recognize the author's proposition if it were presented to you in other words." (Adler & Van Doren, 1972, p. 126)
>
> **Patchwriting**: Paraphrasing a sentence is not only about words. The paraphrase is not a duplicate of the first sentence. If correct, it conveys only the thought. Therefore, making paraphrases is the best assessment you can do to ensure you have understood the idea, not just repeated it. If you do not pass the assessment, you will discover a misunderstanding. If you claim to understand the author but can only reproduce the same sentence to prove it, you would fail to identify the same argument if it were worded differently.

In the example above, the second passage may look slightly different than the original, but it follows the same sentence structure and syntax as the original, and words and phrases have simply been replaced with very similar words and phrases. Properly paraphrased, this passage would look more like this:

> **Paraphrase:** A proper paraphrase captures an author's idea without relying on the author's original wording, and it demonstrates that the reader has understood the idea and would be able to recognize it in other contexts (Adler & Van Doren, 1972).

When paraphrasing, focus on paraphrasing *ideas*, not sentences, and try following these steps:

- Avoid paraphrasing individual sentences as much as possible, as these are harder to paraphrase without using very similar wording to the original. Instead, try paraphrasing an entire paragraph, passage, or argument.
- Read the passage a few times until you are sure you understand what the author is saying.
- Without looking at the original passage, jot down the main points you want to highlight, using your own words.
- Draft a paraphrase from your notes.
- Compare with the original to ensure you have properly paraphrased and change any portions that look like *patchwriting*.

Remember, paraphrasing is a skill that takes time to develop, so keep trying. Also, remember to cite your quotations *and* your paraphrases.

3.6 Academic Integrity

If you read any syllabus for any course at any university, you will almost certainly find some sort of statement about academic integrity. However, most students do not actually look up their university's academic integrity policies, and few professors spend time covering these policies in class.

In principle, academic integrity is the ability and willingness to act ethically as a scholar. Each university has its own academic integrity policy that will state the behaviours that constitute an academic integrity policy violation (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, or improper collaboration) and that will explain what the potential consequences of violating the policy are (e.g., a grade of 0 on the assignment, an F in the course, or expulsion from the university). Students are usually expected to be proactive in familiarizing themselves with their institution's policy, so they should not wait for someone else to explain the policy to them.

When it comes to writing papers, plagiarism and unfair representation are the primary forms of academic integrity violations that can occur. In essays, academic integrity means that:

- You have researched and written the essay yourself.
- You have included a references page or bibliography listing all the sources you have used.
- You have clearly indicated when you have directly quoted from a source (using quotation marks) and when you have modified a quotation (using square brackets to indicate that you have changed or added something, and ellipses to indicate that you have omitted something).
- You have cited all direct quotations *and* paraphrases from your research sources (remember, even if you have put an author's ideas into your own words, you must still cite the source of that information).
- You have not fabricated information or used an author's ideas out of context.

The reason it is so important to act with integrity as a writer is that as previously mentioned, scholarly writing is a *conversation*. Scholars research, write, and publish to facilitate academic dialog. If you are not citing your sources appropriately and presenting information truthfully and in good faith, you are not giving other scholars credit for their work, you are not giving your reader an opportunity to fairly evaluate your argument and judge for themselves if they agree or disagree, and you are not allowing others to expand upon your research or to respond to your argument. In other words, you have not written a piece that serves its scholarly function.

3.7 Tips for Writing Better

We are never finished learning to write. Instead, it is a skill that we are always learning to improve upon, no matter how good we are at it or how long we have been doing it. And, it is something we learn best by *doing*, not by being given a list of rules and processes and templates. Just as we can become better researchers and critical thinkers by doing research and thinking critically, so too do we become better writers by continuing to write and to learn a little more from each writing experience. With that in mind, there are a few things you can do to help yourself out.

Visit Your University's Writing Centre

One of the best ways to learn how to write is to get regular feedback on your writing and to discuss your drafts with others. University writing centres are spaces for students to get feedback on how their writing is received by a reader, to learn helpful strategies from other writers, and to get information that can help them make their own decisions about their revisions. Remember, however, that while utilizing these services can help inform how your work is structured and communicated, you are always ultimately responsible for your own writing and editing.

Read Read Read

It is no accident that most good writers are also prolific readers. Reading helps us to pick up on things like grammar, syntax, punctuation, tone, structure, language, and flow. If you are hoping to improve your academic writing, however, it is important to read *academic* sources and to pay attention to how the authors of these sources write and how their writing may feel different than that in other types of sources, like blogs or news articles. In addition to reading for content, also start paying attention to the rhythm, structure, and language of scholarly writing. Soon, you will get a sense of what kind of academic style and voice you like best, and over time, you will start to be able to emulate it in your own writing.

Review Feedback on Your Work

Lastly, pay careful attention to the feedback you receive on written assignments and essays. Professors take considerable time to include this feedback to help students understand *why* they got the grades that they did. If you tend to get papers handed back with question marks in the margins or comments like "unclear" or "please explain", it is a sign that you can expand further on some of your ideas or that some of your phrasing is unclear. If you tend to get papers back with comments like, "okay, but what about…" or "this is contrary to…," it may signal that you can strengthen your next paper by taking more time to consider potential counterarguments or that you may want to meet with a librarian for your next paper to help you ensure you take into account more of the available research. Whether you are satisfied with your grade or not, reading these comments and considering how you would make revisions based on them goes a long way in helping you further develop your academic writing skills and scholarly voice.

CHAPTER 4: DOING RESEARCH IN THE LIBRARY AND ONLINE

4.1 Introduction to Doing Research in the Library and Online

When doing research, it is important that the sources that you use demonstrate that you understand the topic that you are writing on, and that you have considered how your own work is informed by research done previously by others. This will produce an unbiased and sound paper that can have a meaningful impact on whomever reads it, while also helping to ensure that you get a good grade on whatever assignment you are working on. Finding appropriate sources for academic research in the social sciences requires both time and advanced research skills. It usually involves doing your research through an academic library, either in person or through its website, where you can access a wealth of high-quality information that you would otherwise have to pay for, as well as a variety of services that can help you with your research. The following chapter provides an overview of these services, as well as strategies for finding and evaluating information specific to the social sciences.
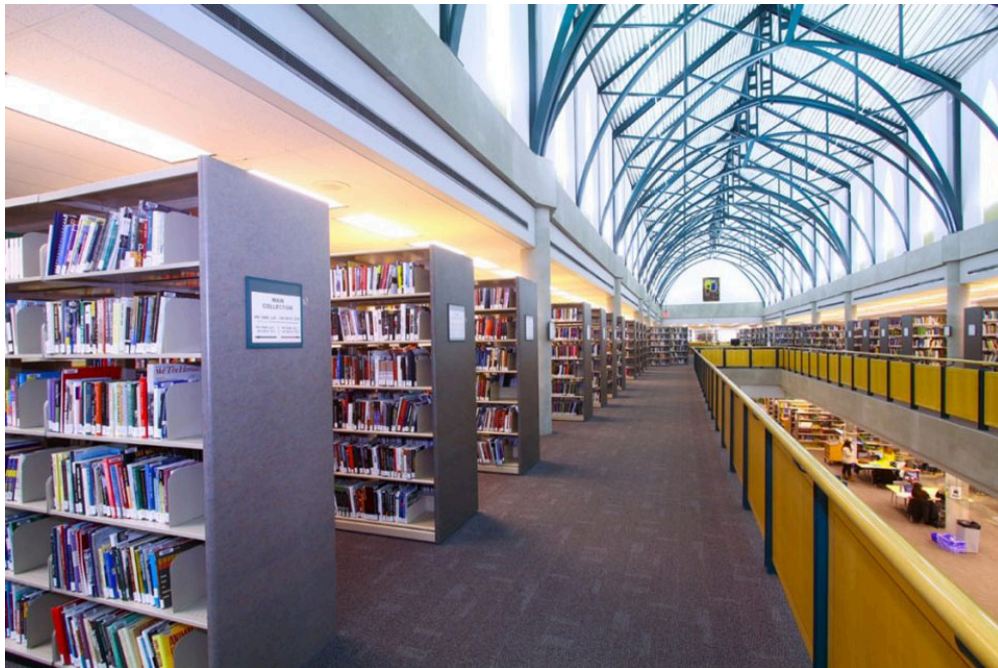
Image courtesy of MacEwan University Library under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) License.

4.2 How to Find Scholarly and Credible Sources

What to Search For

Most research assignments expect students to provide information from scholarly, academic sources including books and journal articles. Depending on the assignment, you may also find other sources like conference papers, theses, news sources, and government reports helpful. The following section describes each type of source and when each may or may not be helpful.

> ***** indicates sources that are usually authoritative and credible but should be used with caution depending on the specific information you are seeking, and the requirements laid out by your instructor in your assignment guidelines since they are not always suitable for inclusion in academic work.

Journal Articles

When a researcher is ready to share the results of their research, they typically write it up in a research paper not unlike the papers you are asked to write in class and submit it to a journal. The journal then sends the paper to experts in the same field as that researcher. These experts read it critically, often without knowledge of who wrote the paper to avoid bias and provide feedback that is then shared with the researcher. Sometimes the journal will decide to immediately reject or accept the article based on this feedback. More often, however, the researcher is asked to make revisions based on the feedback they have received and resubmit the paper for publication. This process is known as *peer-review*, or *refereeing*, and can take several months. Once published, these articles become part of a quality-controlled, specialized body of literature on a given topic that other experts can engage with, build upon, and cite in their own work. This is largely why students are encouraged to use these works above all others in their own papers to inform their own analyses.

> *Not Sure if an Article is Peer-Reviewed?*
>
> Peer-reviewed articles published by academic journals typically follow the structure of a research report, as described in [Chapter 7](#), including the following sections: Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion and References. They are usually relatively short (15-25 pages) and written by academics with advanced degrees, most commonly a PhD. If you are unsure whether an article is peer-reviewed, try the following:
>
> - Visit the website of the journal that published the article and read about its publication process. Usually this is detailed on the homepage. Look for words like *peer-reviewed*, or *refereed*.

> - When using a research database, see if it has an option to limit results to just peer-reviewed content. Just be careful to avoid editorials and book reviews since this content, also produced by academic journals, sometimes remains in search results even after filtering out other non-peer-reviewed works.
> - Some libraries provide access to a database called Ulrichsweb where you can look up information about publishers.
> - If all else fails, ask a librarian or your professor.

Books

Books can take a long time to write and publish so they are not always the best source of current information. That said, books (including eBooks) published by academic presses are wonderful sources of in-depth information. They are especially useful if you need to research a specific theory, research methodology, or a complete history or broad overview of a given topic, school of thought, or significant scholar in your discipline.

Encyclopedias/Dictionaries*

If you are new to a topic, theory, or research method, encyclopedias and dictionaries are a useful source for doing "pre-research." Academic libraries provide access to encyclopedias and dictionaries that have been written by experts around specific subjects, including research methods, social theories, gender issues, and so on. While not something you would typically cite in a research paper, these sources can play a major role in helping to orient you to whatever topic you are researching and writing on. They also often cite books and peer-reviewed articles that you may find useful.

Theses/Dissertations*

Most universities host repositories of theses that are freely available online. These lengthy research reports completed by students at the end of undergraduate honours, master and doctoral degrees are rich sources of information, however, they are also considered the work of *experts-in-training* and are not technically peer-reviewed. If you have an assignment that requires that you only use peer-reviewed sources and come across a thesis that is relevant, ask your instructor if it is OK to use it in your paper and make sure to carefully evaluate the information it provides for accuracy and reliability. Also, as with encyclopedias, look at the sources that the authors have cited. This can lead you to relevant sources that *are* peer-reviewed and may be more suitable for inclusion in your paper.

Conference Papers*

Researchers frequently take their work on the road, writing up preliminary results from their research and sharing it in person with colleagues to solicit feedback before formally reporting it in an academic journal or book. Conference organizers often share these findings openly online and through research databases ensuring that research results are shared widely long before this work becomes formally published. These works are also great places to discover additional, peer-reviewed sources on your topic by exploring cited sources, however, they are not themselves completed, peer-reviewed research reports and may not be the most reliable sources of information to cite in your own work.

Newspapers*

These can be great sources of information on current events. For example, if you are writing a paper on social movements and you want to include information on recent events to give some context to your work, a newspaper will provide you with facts and figures such as dates of protests, and how many people were in attendance. News sources usually do not cite sources or provide in depth information on a topic, however, nor are they written by an expert in that area or reviewed by experts before publication, so it is recommended that you only use news sources sparingly and where appropriate to give context to a topic.

Credible Information on Websites*

The most important consideration regarding the use of free content available through search engines like Google for class assignments concerns the wide range of questionable content lacking expertise and objective analysis available on the web. At the same time, some useful information that can add context to your work and evidence supporting your arguments is only available freely online, including research produced by not-for-profit organizations, professional associations, and governments. For instance, government agencies frequently release statistical data and reports that contain original research compiled by experts that are rich sources of information and analysis on public policy and legislation. Such sources are not peer-reviewed, however, and can often reflect the ideological biases of the organizations producing them so they are not necessarily the best sources of unbiased, academic information and should be read and interpreted with a critical eye.

Where to Search

Libraries pay a lot of money for access to academic articles and books that librarians carefully select to meet the needs of students and faculty researchers. If you were to try accessing this information using Google you would run into two major problems. First, you would have to sort through a lot of non-scholarly and often misleading, misinformed, commercial, and biased information since anyone can put information up on the Internet. Second, when you did find a scholarly article or book, you would in many cases be required to purchase a copy. To avoid this, always start your research from your institution's library website. If working from home, you should still have access to all digital resources linked from the library's website; you will just be asked to log in to view them.

Academic library websites usually provide the following options for locating sources. Each can be helpful depending on your specific needs:

Library Catalogues (or Discovery Services)

This is the main search box located on the library's homepage where you can search for sources by keyword, title, author, or subject. Some libraries only provide access to books using this search box, however, increasingly, libraries have expanded these search engines to provide access to nearly everything the library has access to, including books, articles, conference papers, theses, music albums, and DVDs. This is called a *discovery service*, and can be especially helpful if you:

- want to find practically *everything* that has been written on a topic,
- you are researching a very specific topic that has not been widely researched and want to search across all time periods, disciplines, and types of content to explore what might be out there, or
- you are looking for a specific book or article; searching here for its title will in most cases immediately reveal if the library has access to it or not.

Databases

Somewhere on the library website, you should find a link to databases that the library subscribes to. Whereas a discovery

service will search across content in multiple databases, each database on its own contains select content that is focused around a specific subject area (e.g., economics, political science, health), and type of resource (e.g., scholarly articles, news articles, data sets). Since most research topics in the social sciences are also studied in other disciplines using different approaches, it is recommended that you start your research using databases devoted to the social sciences to find relevant sources. A search for *abortion* in a discovery service, for instance, can lead to thousands of academic articles dealing with legal and medical considerations, historic perspectives, and even as it relates to other species. The same search in a social science database like *SocINDEX* or *Sociological Abstracts* leads to only a small fraction of those articles, each written by an expert in the social sciences and dealing more specifically with social, cultural, economic, and psychological aspects of abortion among human populations.

Perhaps you have a great article that sets the foundation for your paper. In addition to looking through the works it references, one of the best options for identifying additional relevant articles is to determine whether other researchers have expanded on this work since it was published. In certain databases, sometimes referred to as *citation indexes*, you can search for a specific article by title, and it will provide you with a list of later works that have cited this original source. Common citation indexes found in library's lists of databases include:

- Web of Science
- Scopus
- Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.ca), which is also freely available to search online, though you will need to either use it on campus or go into its settings to configure it to provide access to subscription content available through your library

Journals

While each of the above resources allow you to search multiple journals at the same time, you can also go through the library website to access a specific journal and only search through articles it has published. This is useful if you want to see what is being published in a specific research area in, for instance, a journal that specializes in research on qualitative methods, or Marxist theory, or crime in Canada, and so on.

Search Strategies

Before you start searching, make sure you are familiar with the following search strategies that work in most if not all advanced search options in library catalogues, discovery services, databases, and individual journals. Here are some of the most common, useful strategies that work well when doing an advanced search:

AND

Use an "AND" between different keywords and concepts to find *all* of those terms in each work that comes up in your search results:

teenagers AND *crime* AND *labeling theory*

OR

Use an "OR" between synonyms (terms with similar meanings) to find *any* of those words in your results:

> *teen* OR *youth* OR *adolescent* OR *juvenile* OR *minor*

"Quotation marks"

Put quotation marks around multi-word phrases to find those exact phrases in your results. This is also useful if you want to find specific articles or books by their exact title:

> *"juvenile delinquent" "labelling theory" "The Sociological Imagination"*

Asterisk (*)

Adding an asterisk towards the end of a word will find any possible truncation that may appear on that word in your search results:

> *teen** will find *teen, teens, teen*ager, *teen*agers

Search String Example

Combining these strategies, an effective database search might look like this:

> teen* OR youth OR adolescen* OR juvenile OR minor
>
> AND crime OR "juvenile delinquen*"
>
> AND "labeling theory"

Once you have done a search, make sure to use the limiters and facets typically located to the left of search results to refine your results by source type (e.g., academic journals; books; eBooks; news). Many databases also have a "peer-review" limiter that you can select, however, as noted above, remember that this will not filter out short editorials and book reviews that may also be published by a journal alongside peer-reviewed research papers. To find the latest research on a topic in the social sciences, try limiting the publication date to the most recent five to ten years, recognizing that research takes time to get published and it may not be possible to find more recent sources on a topic.

Accessing Sources

Physical Copies

If your search results turn up a physical resource you would like to access, such as a book, the record for that item will tell you where it is located and whether it is on the shelf, located at a different library, or currently signed out. If it is not available, look for an option to place a "hold" or an inter-library loan request on the item; you will be notified when it is available for you to pick up at the library.

Items on the shelf at most academic libraries are organized in accordance with the Library of Congress Classification system. As part of this system, each book is assigned a specific alphanumeric code called a *call number*. Books are organized in alphabetical order and by subject area based on these codes. When you find a book that you want in your search results, write down the call number provided in the record for that book and then find the section in the library where it lives based on the first letter (or letters) of the call number. For example, the *B* section is where you will find books in *Philosophy*, *Psychology, and Religion*, *H* is *Social Sciences*, *R* denotes *Medicine*, and so on. If you take a book off the shelf but decide you do not want to sign it out, let the library staff re-shelve it. This is not an inconvenience, and it ensures that all library users will find books in their respective locations, as indicated by call numbers.

Online Access

To access articles and other electronic sources in your search results, look for an access link in the item's record (e.g., "PDF" or "Read Online"). You can then usually email the item record to yourself to access it later, print it out, or download and save a copy to a USB memory stick or computer. If it is not available, look for an inter-library loan option to request a copy from another library. You will be notified when it is available, either in your inbox or for pickup at the library.

Accessing Sources After Graduation

While some alumni associations have partnered with libraries to provide graduates with access to some library resources, students typically lose their borrowing and online access privileges shortly after completing their degrees.

Here are some strategies for accessing academic resources when you are no longer a registered student:

- Most libraries allow walk-in users to access online content using guest login accounts and/or guest computers.
- Public libraries sometimes provide access to a limited number of academic research databases.
- Over the last decade, there has been a strong push towards making peer-reviewed research articles openly available to everyone online. There are currently thousands of *open access* journals that anyone with an Internet connection can access, which you can locate using the following options:

    ◦ The Directory of Open Access Journals (https://doaj.org).

- Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.ca).
- An Internet browser extension called Unpaywall (https://unpaywall.org), which will automatically identify whether an openly available copy of an article is available directly from a journal website or database record.

4.3 Evaluating Information Sources

Consider the following questions when evaluating the suitability and credibility of information sources:

WHO Is the Author?

Academic sources will often include not only the authors' names, but also their credentials (e.g., PhD), where they work, and their contact information. If an author's information is not clear in this manner, you can easily assess their expertise by looking them up using an Internet search engine like Google.

Other types of sources may list either an individual, institution or organization as the author. Be wary of any bias or inaccurate information the source may contain based on the position that the author or authoring organization may hold in relation to the topic discussed.

WHAT Type of Source Is It?

Peer-reviewed journal articles and books published by academic presses typically contain more reliable, credible, objective information than information that has been posted to a website maintained by, for instance, a lobby group, government, or professional association, all of which may have certain ideological biases.

Academic sources will also be free of grammatical errors, and clearly list references to the sources they cite, which can be verified if necessary.

Academic sources like conference papers, subject encyclopedias, and theses may have useful information but have not undergone peer-review so may be most useful in terms of learning more about a topic and finding additional sources by exploring what they have cited.

WHERE Was It Published?

Try to find sources published by well-known, recognized publishers or organizations that specialize in producing academic literature. If a work is in an academic library there is a very good chance that it already meets the criteria for being a credible and reliable source. If you are not sure, try looking up the publisher in Google to learn more about the types of works it publishes, and its overall reputation. If you are unsure whether a journal uses a peer-review process, this information can be found on its website. You can also often find this information using a periodical directory called Ulrichsweb if your library is a subscriber to this database.

WHEN Was It Published?

Because it can take anywhere from a matter of months to a matter of years to publish a journal article or book, try to find works produced in the last ten years if you are researching a contemporary topic.

If you are working on an historical topic, currency may not be as important, and older works may in fact provide you with a useful window into a specific time-period that you are researching. Additionally, older seminal works in a discipline, for instance those of Margaret Mead and Franz Boas in anthropology, Abraham Maslow and Jean Piaget in psychology, and Pierre Bourdieu and Max Weber in sociology, provide you with valuable insights into the very foundations of a discipline and how researchers continue to approach and study the social world.

If a source does not provide a date, use it cautiously, if at all, since the information it contains may no longer be relevant.

Reliable academic sources will always provide a year of publication on the work itself, and in a record for the work in a library database or catalogue.

WHY Was It Published?

When reading, keep an eye out for one-sided arguments, personal opinions, and gaps in research that can affect overall conclusions that can be drawn from the work. Government reports may, for instance, only talk about the economic and social benefits of oil pipelines and downplay the environmental risks. A newspaper commentary or blog post may criticize the healthcare system based only on the author's personal, anecdotal experience. An author of a conference paper may only refer to "initial findings" from a study that is still in progress on how climate change has affected Inuit communities for the intended purpose of receiving feedback from other academics, with plans to release more comprehensive findings in a refereed journal article at a later date.

Overall, try to avoid sources that are clearly trying to sell something rather than provide information as a public service, to share findings, or to foster an open debate based on evidence that is supported by research.

4.4 Tips to Kick Start Your Research Skills

Start Early

The process of researching, reading, and ultimately writing a paper can take a lot longer than expected. In terms of finding sources, recognizing this is especially important since the library may not have a source that you need readily available. The good news is that most academic libraries have inter-library loan lending programs that allow users to request materials from other libraries at no cost directly from the library's website. Usually, requested books can be delivered to the library for pickup, and articles can be emailed directly to whomever requested them. Users can also place holds on books from the library's online catalogue if another user has a book signed out. In either case, however, this can take a few days, or even a few weeks depending on the circumstances.

Know Where to Get Help

Do not be shy about asking your instructor to clarify assignment requirements either in class or during their office hours.

Be sure to also take advantage of library services. Academic libraries are set up to provide students with the tools necessary to succeed when conducting research. In addition to providing access to resources, libraries provide quiet and collaborative work spaces and services where students can get help with research. Often, these services are available at a research help desk in the library itself, as well as online through instant messenger and text message services, where trained experts can provide guidance on where to search, what search terms to use, how to refine topics, and citing sources.

Most academic libraries also have subject librarians that students can make an appointment with if they need more in-depth, specialized help researching a topic in a specific discipline.

Additional services may include a writing centre, and technology support.

Practice Using the Library

These include library catalogues, databases and standalone journals. Try using the search strategies detailed in this chapter to explore different ways you can manipulate search results to quickly find relevant sources.

There is an endless number of tutorials on how to do research available on YouTube and through library websites. Many academic libraries also offer research workshops that students are welcome to attend in person and sometimes also remotely online.

Develop Lists of Keywords

The comprehensiveness of the articles and books you find on a topic are directly impacted by the type of search terms you begin with. Make a list of terms and continue adding to it as you research.

Evaluate Your Sources

Wherever possible, try to make use of scholarly articles and books in your work as these are most often objectively written and reviewed by expert researchers, and the information they cite can be verified.

Track Your Sources and Cite Them Correctly

Research can involve searching through hundreds of sources to find the most relevant and appropriate to your topic. It is therefore important to have a plan for keeping track of where you have looked, keywords you have used, and what you have found. Programs like Evernote (https://evernote.com), Google Drive (https://www.google.com/drive), and Dropbox (https://www.dropbox.com) are especially helpful in this regard since you can store and access your notes, as well as PDF copies of articles, from multiple devices. Most library databases and catalogues also have an option where you can email sources to yourself so that you can easily access them later in your inbox.

If you are working on a major research project such as an honours thesis you may want to try a citation management program like Zotero (https://www.zotero.org), Mendeley (https://www.mendeley.com), or RefWorks (https://www.refworks.com). These products can help you collect, manage, and cite a large number of sources. Zotero and Mendeley offer free basic accounts, while some libraries provide their users with access to RefWorks at no additional cost.

Lastly, and most importantly, remember to cite your sources correctly, both in the text of your paper and in a reference list at the end, using whichever citation style required by your instructor. The next chapter discusses why citing sources is so important, and provides an overview of the American Pyshcological Association (APA) style, which is the citation style most commonly used in the social sciences.

Learn From Your Mistakes

When you get a paper back from your instructor, do not just look at the grade. Read the comments and think about ways you can do even better next time.

CHAPTER 5: CITING SOURCES USING APA FORMAT

5.1 Introduction to Citing Sources Using APA

If you are writing a paper or research report for a specific course, it is important that you check with your instructor in case they have a required citation format that you need to follow. You may be docked marks if your paper does not follow the correct format.

American Psychological Association (APA) style is the most commonly-used citation format in the social sciences. It includes a set of rules about how to cite sources within the text of your paper as well as how to list these references at the end of your work. This chapter provides a basic overview of APA format, followed by recommended sources to turn to for additional help and guidance with citing properly.

> These guidelines conform with the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020).

Image by *ElasticComputeFarmImage* under a *Pixabay License*.

5.2 Citing Sources in the Text of Your Paper

In accordance with the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), whenever you refer to information or data produced by someone else in a paper, you need to cite the original source in the text of your paper and in a reference list at the end so that the reader can follow up and learn more, while also giving credit to the author and avoiding accusations of plagiarism.

Paraphrasing

When you write information from someone else's work out in your own words, also known as *paraphrasing*, the APA style requires that you cite the last name of the author followed by the year of publication within parentheses:

> Dhungel (2017) found that day-to-day oppressions, or microaggressions, towards survivors of sex trafficking in Nepal are pervasive and make it difficult for these women to integrate back into their communities and family life.

Or at the end of the information you have paraphrased within parentheses:

> Evidence suggests that day-to-day oppressions, or microaggressions, towards survivors of trafficking victims in Nepal are pervasive and make it difficult for these women to integrate back into their communities and family life (Dhungel, 2017).

Direct Quotes

If you quote information exactly as it appears in a source that you are using, make sure to also include quotation marks and a page number:

> Dhengal (2017) categorizes microassaults into four themes: "use of derogatory language; denial of citizenship and treated as other; invisible demonstrations of rejection; and exoticization and sexual objectification" (p. 129).

Or...

> A recent study categorized microassaults into four themes: "use of derogatory language; denial of citizenship and treated as other; invisible demonstrations of rejection; and exoticization and sexual

objectification" (Dhengal, 2017, p. 129).

Works With No Page Numbers

For works without page numbers, such as websites, provide the reader with some other way to locate the information you are quoting. This is commonly done by including a paragraph number:

"..." (Blackmore, 2018, para. 6).

Another option is to include a section heading:

"..." (Hope Mission, 2019, Vision Statement section).

It is also acceptable to include a section heading *and* a paragraph number from within that section to help a reader easily locate the quoted information:

"..." (Hurley et al., 2020, Demographic Information section, para. 7).

If citing audio-visual materials like a YouTube video, TV show or podcast, include a timestamp where the quote begins:

"..." (McGregor, 2019, 4:15).

Multiple Authors

In the case of works by **two authors**, type "and" between their last names if referred to within the text, or use the "&" symbol if the citation is within parentheses at the end of a sentence in your paper:

Bowen and Murshid (2016) define intersectionality as an "awareness of identity characteristics, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, and the privileges or oppression these characteristics can incur" (p. 224).

Or…

Intersectionality can be understood as an "awareness of identity characteristics, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, and the privileges or oppression these characteristics can incur" (Bowen & Murshid, 2016, p. 224).

If a work has **3 or more authors**, only cite the first author followed by "et al." throughout the text of your paper:

"…" (Frenzel et al., 2014, p. 5).

Crediting Multiple Works

If you are citing two or more works by different authors that discuss the same topic or idea, list them in alphabetical order by the surname of the first author appearing on each work, and separate each one with a semicolon:

Recently, researchers have applied concepts of formal and informal social control when examining sex offender registries and the experiences of sex offenders (Cooley et. al., 2017; Frenzel et. al., 2014; Winters et. al., 2017).

Personal Communications

To cite information obtained through a personal communication, such as in a lecture or over email, list the author's initials and last name followed by reference to a personal communication and the date on which the communication took place:

An anthropology instructor explained that "symbolic communication is not limited to humans, as evident in various alarm calls depicting different predators made by African monkeys" (L. Mutch, personal communication, March 21, 2017).

Or…

L. Mutch, an anthropology instructor, explained that "symbolic communication is not limited to humans, as evident in various alarm calls depicting different predators made by African monkeys" (personal communication, March 21, 2017).

This type of citation occurs within the text of your paper, but is not included in your reference list at the end of the paper since this is not published information that a reader of your work could retrieve and explore further.

Quoting Research Participants

Note that you do not need to include an in-text citation or a reference entry when quoting information you have obtained from interviews with research participants. Do, however, be sure to protect anonymity and confidentiality by giving them a pseudonym, for instance, as typically required by research ethics protocols involving human subjects.

5.3 Citing Sources in a Reference List

As detailed in the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), if you cite information from someone else's work in the text of your paper, you also need to include a more detailed reference entry for that work in a reference list at the end of your paper.

Formatting Your Reference List

The reference list should start on its own page at the end of your paper (but prior to any tables, figures, or appendices) with a centred title in bold at the top that reads "References."

The list of references should be double-spaced (along with the rest of your paper) and arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names.

How to Create a Hanging Indent

All but the first line of each reference list entry should be indented (called a "hanging indent").

To format hanging indents in Microsoft Word, highlight your reference entries and then select the following keys:
– On a PC select: *CTRL + T*
– On a Mac select: *Command + T*

Author Information

Works with a single author

List the author's last name, followed by the first and middle initials of other given names that appear on the work:

> Lunny, A. M. (2017). *Debating hate crime: Language, legislatures, and the law in Canada*. UBC Press.

2 to 20 authors

List the authors in the order in which they appear on the work. For each person, include the author's last name, followed by the first and middle initials of other names given, separated by a comma, and an "&" symbol before the last author:

> Livingstone, D. W., Pollock, K., & Raykov, M. (2014). Family binds and glass ceilings: Women managers' promotion limits in a 'knowledge economy.' *Critical Sociology*, *42*(1), 145-166. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514532663

21 or more authors

List the first nineteen authors, followed by an ellipsis, then the last author:

> Schrijver, L. H., Olsson, H., Phillips, K. A., Terry, M. B., Goldgar, D. E., Kast, K., Engel, C., Mooij, T. M., Adlard, J., Barrowdale, D., Davidson, R., Eeles, R., Ellis, S., Evans, D. G., Frost, D., Izatt, L., Porteous, M. E., Side, L. E., Walker, L., . . . Rookus, M. A. (2018). Oral contraceptive use and breast cancer risk: Retrospective and prospective analyses from a BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutation carrier cohort study. *JNCI Cancer Spectrum*, *2*(2), Article pky023. https://doi.org/10.1093/jncics/pky023

Multiple works by the same author

In cases where you refer to multiple works by the same author, list the references by date, beginning with the earliest work. If works were published in the same year, add a letter to the year starting with "a" (this same letter should also appear in your in-text citation when referencing that work):

> Goffman, E. (1969a). *Strategic interaction*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
>
> Goffman, E. (1969b). *Where the action is: Three essays*. Allen Lane.
>
> Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Goffman, 1969b, p. 45)

Date of Publication

When citing articles and books, you only need to include the year of publication in brackets following author information.

For information from websites, newspapers, social media or magazines include (year, month, day), if provided in the source:

> Hughes, G. (2017, December 20). Montreal suspends pit bull ban, plans consultations. *The Globe and Mail*. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/montreal-suspends-pit-bull-ban-plans-consulations/article37393139/

If no date is given, include the following in place of a date: (n.d.):

> Canadian Association of Research Libraries. (n.d.). *Repositories in Canada*. http://www.carl-abrc.ca/advancing-research/institutional-repositories/repos-in-canada

Titles of Works

Only capitalize the first word of titles, the first word of any sub-titles that follow a colon, and any proper nouns appearing in the title:

> Sunga, S. (2017). Dealing with oppression: Indigenous relations with the state in Canada. *Ethics & Social Welfare*, *11*(2), 135-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2017.1293118

Format Descriptions

Describe the format in square brackets following the title only if the source you are citing is something out of the ordinary, e.g., [Data set] [Infographic] [Status update] [Tweet] [Video]:

> Polley, S. (Writer & Director). (2012). *Stories we tell* [Film]. Toronto, ON: Mongrel Media.

Publication or Retrieval Information

Digital Object Identifiers

Digital object identifiers (DOI) serve as tracking numbers that make it easier to locate online works.

Include a DOI at the end of a reference, if available. DOIs are commonly noted on the first page of journal articles, and in the front matter of eBooks.

Ensure that the DOI is presented as a link, preceded by http://doi.org/ or https://doi.org/. The link can be plain text or presented as an active link (typically in blue font, underlined):

Sunga, S. (2017). Dealing with oppression: Indigenous relations with the state in Canada. *Ethics & Social Welfare*, *11*(2), 135-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2017.1293118

Works Without a DOI From a Database or in Print

For articles without a DOI from a library database, or in print, do not include any additional information following the page numbers:

Frenzel, E. D., Bowen, K. N., Spraitz, J. D., Bowers, J. H., & Phaneuf, S. (2014). Understanding collateral consequences of registry laws: An examination of the perceptions of sex offender registrants. *Justice Policy Journal*, *11*(2), 1-22.

For eBooks from a library database without a DOI, or for books in print, only include the publisher following the title:

Lunny, A. M. (2017). *Debating hate crime: Language, legislatures, and the law in Canada*. UBC Press.

Freely Available Online Content Without a DOI

If a source is freely available online without a DOI, such as a news article or government report, include a link to the source. The link can be plain text or presented as an active link (typically in blue font, underlined):

Department of Justice Canada. (2017, August 8). *The youth criminal justice act summary and background*. https://web.archive.org/web/20190406015246/https://justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/yj-jj/tools-outils/back-hist.html

Pro tip: If you are worried about website information changing or becoming inactive over time, try creating a permanent link to that content using the Internet Archive's Save Page Now tool and include that link in your citation.

5.4 Reference Examples

Most of the information you need to include in your reference list is located within the first couple of pages of a book, or on the first page of an article.

As detailed below, APA citations each follow the same general pattern: Author, Date, Title, Location. The exact format, however, can differ slightly depending on the form of authorship (e.g., authors or editors), the type of source (e.g., book, article, website), and how the source was obtained (e.g., online or as a physical copy).

Books

The 7th edition of the APA publication manual (American Psychological Association, 2020) no longer requires including a place of publication. Simply include the name of the publisher at the end of a citation following the title:

> Lunny, A. M. (2017). *Debating hate crime: Language, legislatures, and the law in Canada.* UBC Press.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Lunny, 2017, p. 71)

Editions of Books

If the book has been reprinted as a new edition, the title should be followed by parentheses containing the relevant edition number:

> Powell, R. A., Honey, P. L., & Symbaluk, D. G. (2017). *Introduction to learning and behaviour* (5th ed.). Wadsworth/Cengage.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Powell et al., 2017, p. 43)

Edited Books

List the editor(s) in place of an author, followed with "(Ed.)" or "(Eds.)":

> Daniels, J., Gregory, K., & Cottom, T. M. (Eds.). (2017). *Digital sociologies.* Policy Press.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Daniels et al., 2017, p. 32)

Book Chapters

First list the chapter author(s), year of publication, and the chapter title. Continue with book editor(s), the book's title–in italics, edition (if applicable), and pages that the chapter spans preceded by "pp." indicating the page range; a single page would have just "p.". Note that the editor(s)' given name(s)' initials come before the last name, preceded by the word "In" and followed by "(Ed.)" or "(Eds.)":

> Tveit, A. D. (2017). Parental involvement in school: Applying Habermas' theoretical framework. In M. Murphy (Ed.), *Habermas and social research: Between theory and method* (pp. 109-121). Routledge.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Tveit, 2017, p. 111)

eBooks

If a book read online has a DOI (Digital Object Identifier), include it presented as a link following the title and publisher:

> Ross, L. R. (2016). *Interrogating motherhood*. Athabasca University Press. https://doi.org/10.15215/aupress/9781771991438.01
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Ross, 2016, p. 45)

eBooks found in electronic libraries or databases that do not have a DOI should follow the same format as a print book:

> Chi-ang, L. B., & Zheng, S. (2017). *Environmental economics and sustainability*. Wiley Blackwell.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Chi-ang, & Zheng, 2017, p. 9)

If an eBook is free online and does not have a DOI, include a link to the book:

> Little, W. (2016). *Introduction to sociology* (2nd Canadian ed.). https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Little, 2016, p. 23)

Journal Articles

Following the article title, list the journal title and volume number in italics, then include the issue number in parentheses, followed by the page numbers associated with the article. If the work was found online, including through a database, include a DOI for the work if provided–this can typically be found on the article's first page:

> Sunga, S. (2017). Dealing with oppression: Indigenous relations with the state in Canada. *Ethics & Social Welfare*, *11*(2), 135-148. http://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2017.1293118
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Sunga, 2017, p. 140)

If the article does not have a DOI, including physical copies and articles from library databases, no further information should be included following the page number range:

> Myers, R. (2017). "I accept that I have nobody": Young women, youth justice, and expectations of responsibility during reentry. *Social Justice*, *44*(1), 62-82.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Myers, 2017, p. 67)

Conference Papers

Include the date the work was presented, including the month and day, if available (you may need to search Google for this), as well as the name of the conference and its location:

> Valdez, L. (2014, March 1). *The use of coca leaves in the Peruvian central highlands before the Inka* [Paper presentation]. 42nd Annual Midwest Conference on Andean and Amazonian Archaeology and Ethnohistory, Milwaukee, WI, United States.
>
> In-text: ". . ." (Valdez, 2014, p. 6)

If the conference paper was formally published, be sure to include either the DOI, if provided, or a link to the paper, at the end of the citation:

> Sambamurthy, N., Sanchez-Pena, M., Main, J.B., Cox, M., & McGee, E. (2016, October 14). *Asian-American women engineering faculty: A literature review using an intersectional framework*

of race, class, and gender [Paper presentation]. Frontiers in Education Conference, Erie, PA, United States. https://doi.org/10.1109/FIE.2016.7757518

In-text: ". . ." (Sambamurthy et al., 2016, p. 3)

Magazine Articles

These references follow the same format as journal articles. Include a year, month(s) and day, if provided by the original source:

Buchner, J. (2018, January/February). Better together. *Today's Parent*, *35*(1), 16.

In-text: ". . ." (Buchner, 2018, p. 16)

News Articles

Online news articles follow a similar format to other types of periodicals. Again, include a year, month(s) and day, if provided:

Hughes, G. (2017, December 20). Montreal suspends pit bull ban, plans consultations. *The Globe and Mail*. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/montreal-suspends-pit-bull-ban-plans-consulations/article37393139/

In-text: ". . ." (Hughes, 2017, para. 4)

If the author of an article is unknown, start with the title followed by the date:

Homeless veterans in focus. (2017, May 9). *Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal*.

In-text: ". . ." ("Homeless Veterans in Focus," 2017, para. 3).

When using a news article from a physical copy of a newspaper, include the section and page number as indicated:

French, J. (2017, December 20). 27% of elementary students reading below grade level. *Edmonton Journal*, A3.

In-text: "..." (French, 2017, p. A3)

Websites

When citing information from a web page, you generally only need to include the author, date last updated or modified, title of the page, and retrieval link. If no author is given, include the association, company, or organization as the author:

Department of Justice Canada. (2017, August 8). *The youth criminal justice act summary and background*. http://justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/yj-jj/tools-outils/back-hist.html

In-text: "..." (Department of Justice Canada, 2017, p. 3)

For government reports, include a catalogue or report number in parentheses, if given:

O'Donnell, V., Wendt, M, & the National Association of Friendship Centres. (2017, March 21). *Aboriginal seniors in population centres in Canada* (Catalogue No 89-653-X). www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2017013-eng.pdf

In-text: "..." (O'Donnell et al., 2017, p. 6)

Social Media

If citing from social media, include the name of the account owner and exact date. In square brackets, include the account's username, and form description as shown:

Notley, R. [@RachelNotley]. (2017, September 30). *Raising Alberta's minimum wage to $13.60 will boost the spending power of low-income people, which supports Alberta's economic recovery* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/RachelNotley/status/914134389264498688

In-text: "..." (Notley, 2017)

Videos and Television

Like most website content, audiovisual materials are usually not considered scholarly, but may be used in your paper as illustrative examples or data, and still need to be cited if referenced.

YouTube videos follow a similar format to other forms of social media noted above. If no person's name is given, only include the account or screen name without brackets. The title should be in italics:

CBC News. (2017, October 25). *How much do refugees and immigrants get in social assistance?* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtube.com/watch?v=13aml32ujw0

In-text: ". . ." (CBC News, 2017, 2:04)

If citing a film, list the director as author as shown. Citing online copies of videos requires that you include a retrieval link:

Polley, S. (Director). (2012). *Stories we tell* [DVD]. Mongrel Media.

In-text: ". . ." (Polley, 2012, 3:56)

Polley, S. (Director). (2012). *Stories we tell* [Film]. Mongrel Media. https://www.nfb.ca/film/stories_we_tell/?films_list_en=feature_1

In-text: ". . ." (Polley, 2012, 3:56)

If citing a specific episode from a TV or documentary series, include the writers and director as authors, and executive producers following the title of the episode, and then the series title as shown. If the episode is on a website that requires users to login, include only a link to the homepage:

Benjamin, E., Yorkey, B., & Asher, J.. (Writers), & Yu, J. (Director). (2016). Tape 6, side b (season 1, episode 12) [TV series episode]. In B. Yorkey, D. Son, T. McCarthy, J. Gorman Wettels, S. Golin, M. Sugar, S. Gomez, M. Teefey, & K. Laiblin (Executive Producers), *13 reasons why*. Netflix.

In-text: ". . ." (Benjamin et al., 2016, 13:31)

Music

When citing from song lyrics, the recording artist(s) should be listed as the author(s):

Beyoncé. (2016). Formation [Song]. On *Lemonade*. Parkwood; Columbia.

In text: "..." (Beyonce, 2016, 2:12)

5.5 Additional Help with Citing

For more advice on how to complete your references, including how to write references based on other types of sources not included in this chapter, refer to the following:

- The 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), carried by most academic libraries.
- *APA Style Blog* (https://apastyle.apa.org/blog).
- Librarians and writing centre staff at universities are happy to help if you have questions. Many also provide their own help resources online for APA and various other citation styles.
- Many research databases provide computer-generated citations for works. These are a great starting place. Make sure to compare the examples provided to the actual APA formatting guidelines, however, since these reference entries often contain errors.

Reference Management Software

There are several software products available that can help you collect, manage, and cite sources.

These programs typically interact well with research databases, websites, and word processing software such as Microsoft Word, allowing you to insert references "on the fly." They can also automatically generate a list of references for you at the end of your paper, using the style you select (such as APA). These products include:

- *EndNote* (https://endnote.com);
- *Mendeley* (https://www.mendeley.com);
- *RefWorks* (https://www.refworks.com); and
- *Zotero* (https://www.zotero.org).

Some academic libraries provide users with access to RefWorks, while anyone can sign up for a basic account with Mendeley or Zotero with limited storage capacity.

As an undergraduate student with assignments requiring that you only cite a limited number of sources in each paper, you may find this type of software to be too cumbersome to learn. However, if you are writing a substantial honours project paper, or beginning a graduate-level degree, we encourage you to explore these options. There are numerous online tutorials to help you learn these products, and most academic libraries have staff that can teach you the basics.

APA Checklist

Formatting Your Paper

❏ The entire document is double-spaced.

❏ Each page has one-inch margins.

❏ Page numbers appear in the top-right corner of each page.

❏ If required by your instructor, the header of the document includes a "running head" (see Chapter 7's section on title pages for information on how to add this).

Formatting Your References

❑ All sources cited in the text of your paper appear in the reference list.

❑ The reference list starts on a separate page.

❑ The reference list has a centered title in bold font that reads "References."

❑ References are arranged alphabetically by author last name for each entry.

❑ The first line of each entry is flush with the left margin; additional lines are indented five spaces (this is called a "hanging indent").

❑ Each reference entry conforms with the rules detailed in this chapter, and in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020) more generally.

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

6.1 Introduction to Developing a Research Proposal

A research proposal is generally a requirement in a third-year psychology or sociology methods course because it teaches students how to investigate an area of interest, design a research methodology, and communicate ideas through a detailed report. A research proposal is the starting point for what may later become an honour's thesis or an advanced independent study project. The proposal includes a working title, an introduction and literature review, a method section, an anticipated outcome section, and prospective references. Since it includes all the main research components except for the collection, analysis, and discussion of actual data, a research proposal may be sent to a research ethics board or a funding agency for consideration before the study commences. This chapter describes the main parts of a research proposal and outlines ethical concerns involving research with human participants.

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6.2 Structuring a Research Proposal

A research proposal is typically structured as follows:

- Title Page
- Introduction
- Method
    - Unit of analysis
    - Setting and materials
    - Procedures
    - Main variables
- Ethical concerns
- Anticipated results
- Prospective References

6.3 Title Page

The first page of your research proposal is the title page and it includes a centered and double-spaced title that is about 10 to 12 words long and is located about half way down the page. Come up with a tentative or "working" title that best describes what you anticipate finding or exploring in the proposed study. Choose a title that gives the reader a sense of the central topic and research question. For example, you might have noticed an increased presence of transgender and nonconforming lead characters in popular television series and may wish to examine whether this move beyond the traditional dualisms of gender and sexuality is also evident in advertisements shown on prime-time television. Your working title could be *Recent Changes to Gender Representation in Television Commercials Shown During Prime Time*. If your eventual research indicates that little or nothing has changed over time, you can later modify the title to reflect this when you write up the findings in a more formal research report (see Chapter 7).

The title page is an identification source for your work and it includes your name, your student ID number, the course name for which the proposal is assigned (or the instructor's name that the proposal will be turned in to), and the date the proposal is due. These items are usually located near the bottom of the title page, preferably on the right-hand side. If you refer to the "Home" tab in a word document, in the "Paragraph" section, you can "Align Left" and then highlight the text and click the tab key on your keyboard so that this section occupies the bottom right-hand corner of the page.

Title Page Checklist

❑ Separate title page, numbered

❑ Working title, centered, starting about half-way down the page

❑ Several blank lines

❑ Near the bottom of the page in the right-hand corner

- Author's name
- Student Identification number
- Course name and/or instructor's name
- Date

6.4 Introduction and Literature Review

Sometimes research proposals contain a separate introduction and literature review, or this section may be combined and simply referred to as the "Introduction." If the introduction is separate it is usually a couple of paragraphs in length and it provides an overview of your research interest and the purpose of the present study. This section would then be followed by a more extensive literature review that provides an overview of the relevant literature in relation to the purpose of the present study. The literature review provides a context for the present study by indicating what is already known on the topic and what is not known or where there are gaps or discrepancies in the existing literature that will potentially be filled or explained by the present study.

The introduction section should be double-spaced and numbered page two, with the title "Introduction" centered at the top of the page. This section begins with a general statement that identifies your area of interest. For instance:

> Canadians continue to spend much of their leisure time watching television.

Try to narrow the focus over the next couple of sentences and end the paragraph with the key statement you wish to investigate. As a made-up example:

> A recent report by John Doe (2019) indicates that the average Canadian watches three hours of television a day and during this time, views as many as 60 advertisements. Concerns involve what kind of messages are sent via television programming since television content is largely determined by advertising profits. As an agent of socialization, television, including paid advertisements, conveys images about gender – the "behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits associated with a particular sex, within a certain culture, at a given point in history" (Symbaluk & Bereska, 2019, p. 136). This study examines the portrayal of gender in commercials shown during prime-time television.

The literature review typically provides an overview of relevant prior research on the topic. As another made-up example:

> A recent meta-analysis on the content of television commercials shown in Canada indicates that men and women are portrayed very differently when they are depicted as central characters within a commercial (Doe & Smith, 2018). Women are much more likely to be shown in the traditionally feminine role of primary care-giver while men are more likely to be depicted as the main provider in an occupational role outside of the house.

It is also important to discuss and integrate the main issues and findings within a theoretical context. For instance:

> A feminist perspective emphasizes the influence of patriarchy, or male dominance in advertising, pointing out that most producers are successful, white males in their fifties and most central

characters in television advertising are males engaged in stereotypically masculine roles (Doe, 2019).

Lastly, this section notes the contributions of the present study to the existing literature and introduces your working hypotheses or more refined research interest. In this case, you note how this study adds to, clarifies, or expands upon existing research:

This study contributes to our current knowledge through an examination of gender representation by the central figure, location, setting, and product type of television advertisements.

A working hypothesis is a statement about the relationship between variables. It provides a prediction of what the current study might determine, such as:

This study predicts that prime-time television advertising continues to over-represent males (and under-represent females) in the central characters, but to a lesser extent than it did ten years ago. Finally, this study predicts that the sex of the central character is a stronger indicator of gender-stereotyped differences than location, setting, and product-type.

Introduction Checklist

❏ Starts on a separate page, numbered as page two

❏ Title "Introduction," centered

❏ Double-spaced

❏ Identifies the area of interest

❏ Defines the main concepts

❏ Summarizes key research in the area

❏ Establishes the theoretical context

❏ Introduces a working hypothesis (if applicable)

❏ Notes the contributions of the present study

6.5 Method

The method section details who your prospective participants will be (or what your sample will consist of and how you will select it), and provides information on the setting and materials, procedures, and main variables for your study (Symbaluk, 2019). Sub-headings are often used to separate these sections, which typically include the following:

Participants

Begin with your proposed *participants.* For example, if you are interested in success strategies used by struggling students, you might want to examine views of university students who successfully transitioned off academic probation and you might want to recruit volunteers through invitations sent out via student newsletters (e.g., see Giampa & Symbaluk, 2018). If you were instead conducting a content analysis of gender representation in television programming as depicted above, your proposed unit of analysis might be a random sample of commercials shown on major networks during prime time that contain central characters that are human.

Setting and Materials

After describing your participants and how you will recruit them (or your sample and how you will select it), list the setting and materials needed to carry out the study. For example, if students are your participants, the setting might be the regular class room for an introductory psychology class, and the main material required might be a standardized questionnaire. Alternatively, the setting for an observational study of aggressive behaviour among children might include a daycare, a playground, or a more controlled environment (e.g., a play lab set up with a variety of toys and one-way glass for viewing). Materials for this kind of study may entail a more extensive list of items such as particular kinds of toys, climbing apparatuses, mats, plastic slides, a coding instrument that lists the toys, and timing devices.

Procedures

The procedures section explains in as much detail as possible the kind of information you plan to gather from your participants, how you intend to carry out the study (in terms of the type of methodology you will employ), and the rationale for choosing the methodology. Suppose you are describing your intention to observe children at play in a daycare setting to determine what kind of toys are preferred as a function of age and gender. You would need to detail what constitutes an observational session, how toy preference will be determined, and how and for how long each child will be observed. Likely, you can obtain information on the children's biological age and gender from their parents or guardians.

Perhaps you intend to have two observers assigned to each child in the day care (so you can later look at inter-rater reliability). An observational period might be a two-hour block of unstructured play time from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Every toy in the day care can be itemized on a coding sheet and the observers are trained in advance of the observation session to ensure familiarity with all the toys. Observers use code sheets to record the onset of play with a toy and the amount of time spent using that toy. All sorts of coding rules are established ahead of time to determine how to deal with situational variants such as the use of multiple toys, cases where a toy is put down and then immediately picked back up, or ways to record incidents when a child takes a toy away from another who did not wish to give it up. If possible, you should cite the authors of methodology-based textbooks for rationale on the techniques and procedures you plan to include in your study (e.g., for why you selected an observational method, for how to code variables, and/or for ways to establish inter-rater reliability).

Main Variables

Try to list and describe the main variables you plan to examine in your study. Dependent variables are what you plan to

measure in your study. Preference for toys, for example, might be a dependent variable that is measured via the *length of time spent with a toy* as recorded to the nearest minute using a stop watch that commences when a child picks up a toy and ends when the toy is abandoned.

Method Checklist

❏ Title section "Method," in bold text and centered

❏ Double-spaced

❏ Participants and how they will be obtained or Units of Analysis

❏ Setting and Materials

❏ Procedures

❏ Main Variable(s)

6.6 Ethical Considerations

When the research you propose to undertake includes human or animal participants, is funded by an institute, or uses the assets of an institution (e.g., you plan to carry out the study at a University in one of the classrooms), it needs to be approved by a Research Ethics Board. Most universities and colleges that offer degree programs have an internal research ethics board consisting of faculty with research experience. This group of qualified researchers examines a written description of your anticipated research (such as this very research proposal) and makes recommendations based on whether key ethical standards have been met with respect to human dignity, informed consent, and privacy and confidentiality. Your institution can provide you with more details about how you go about the ethical review application process.

In writing your proposal, you need to discuss the relevant ethical concerns and how you plan to address them. Here are some questions to consider that may help you determine how ethical issues pertain to your study:

- Who are the participants for your study and how do you plan to recruit them?
- What kind of information are you collecting?
- Will you ask participants any kind of sensitive or personal questions?
- How will responses be kept confidential?
- How will information about individuals in the study be safeguarded?
- Does participating in your study involve any risk of injury?
- How might the procedures of your study pose psychological implications for participants?
- Is any kind of deception necessary in the procedures for carrying out your study?

Most Canadian research ethics boards adhere to the *Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al, 2018), also known as *TCPS 2*. Outlined next are some of the major ethical issues incorporated in the policy.

Respect for Human Dignity

The core value of the TCPS 2 (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al, 2018) is respect for human dignity meaning that all research involving humans as participants must be planned and conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the worthiness of individuals such that their safety and overall well-being is paramount. For example, a study should be designed in a manner that minimizes the potential for harm. Harm may be in the form of physical injury, as might be the case if the study entails a physical activity or exercise. But it can also take more subtle forms that are difficult to define, measure, or even predict in advance as in the case of psychological stress or strain. For example, in a study about driving, you might want to interview motorists about behaviours they engage in. A participant in your study might answer a question and later regret having done so, or the participant might feel discomfort while recalling a careless driving episode. Every effort must be made in the research planning process to identify potential sources of harm and include means for mitigating them (e.g., participants are told they do not have to answer all questions and they are reminded of this at various stages). An ethics committee considers, among other questions, whether the benefits of the research outweigh the potential risks of harm and whether participants knowingly and willingly agree to take on any potential risks. Finally, participants need to understand that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw their participation at any time without penalty.

Free and Informed Consent

All participants give informed consent prior to the onset of the study. Informed consent means that potential participants agree to participate in the study only after learning about the requirements and possible risks of participation. This information is typically outlined in a consent form that the participants read and then sign. For example, a consent form could note that students are being asked to participate in a fifteen-minute study on mood and violence in television programming. Requirements would include filling out a very short questionnaire assessing their current mood, watching a two-minute video clip that depicts a shoot-out from an old Western movie that is rated PG, and then filling out another short

questionnaire. Subjects are ensured that their participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw that participation at any time without penalty.

In the case of a proposed observational study of aggressive behaviour among children, consent would need to be obtained from the children, the day care director, the day care staff, and the parents or legal guardians of the children since they are under the age at which they can legally consent to participating in such a study. The proposal would need to clearly outline the objectives of the study (i.e., the intended uses of the information gathered), how the participants would be observed (e.g., via trained observers unobtrusively standing behind the one-way glass viewing area oblivious to the children), and so on. Although it increases reliability in the coding of aggressive behaviour, recording the children would likely not be a recommended method of observation since it poses additional risks (e.g., privacy concerns) to an already vulnerable participant group. Lastly, note that consent is an ongoing process. Hence, while consent may be given in advance of participation, participants also need to be aware that consent is freely given and thus can also be revoked at any time without penalty.

Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

Another ethical concern related to participating in research centers on privacy and confidentiality. Privacy is protected by legislation, for instance the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in Alberta (https://www.servicealberta.ca/foip), and it must be handled in accord with existing guidelines. Confidentiality means that although a researcher may be able to identify a given respondent (e.g., perhaps the participant in a case study was a former prostitute who is known to the researcher who interviewed her), the researcher promises not to do so publicly. In this case, the researcher may report some of the conversation shared in the interview but promises not to release any details that might identify the individual interviewee.

Use of Deception and the Need for Debriefing

In rare cases, some details of a study are initially withheld from the participants. In an experiment, for example, it may be essential to leave out details about the procedures to successfully manipulate an independent variable that tests a causal relationship that cannot be explored with full disclosure. For instance, a researcher may wish to study students' reactions to a request for course assistance by another student who is a stranger (e.g., a fictitious student). If the researcher informed participants in advance that someone unknown to them was about to ask for their course notes (i.e., the independent variable or manipulation in an experimental design), the psychological process would be compromised. In this case, the researcher explains the need for deception in the research proposal and outlines that participants would be notified of the deception and its purpose at the end of the study (e.g., immediately after the decision to lend or not lend the notes becomes apparent).

All of these considerations are weighed out in advance by ethics review board members who ultimately determine whether the study can proceed as described (i.e., it receives ethical approval), that procedures or other elements of the proposed study need to be modified before proceeding, (i.e., conditional approval), or that potential harm exceeds the overall benefits of the research (i.e., the study is not granted ethical approval and cannot be carried out as described). Consult with your instructor about ethics and the need to undergo a review process if you plan to conduct research involving humans as participants. Most universities have online resources such as templates and checklists for assisting in the creation of consent forms and completing an ethical review application form.

6.7 Anticipated Results

Your proposal can also include a short section that details what you expect to find in this study. You might suggest that based on the earlier review of the literature, you anticipate that those identified as boys are more likely to choose toys that are loud, fast, and action-based (e.g., cars, trains) while children identified as girls may prefer toys related to social roles (e.g., doctor's kit, doll and carriage, etc.). You can also try to explain the implications of your research, should the findings turn out the way you anticipate, such as:

> Despite claims that we are becoming less gender-focused in how we rear our children, males and females are still behaving in gender-stereotyped ways as evident in their preference for toys.

6.8 Prospective References

End your proposal with a list of any materials (e.g., scholarly articles and books) you cited in the introduction. Since the study is still in a preliminary stage, students sometimes refer to this as a list of "Working References" or "Prospective References." In this case, the list can also include references you plan to include (perhaps in the discussion), or that you currently think are relevant. This helps your instructor and others such as members of a research ethics board determine your familiarity with the key theorists, research, and methodologies relevant to the proposed area of study.

Please refer to Chapter 5 for a detailed description of how to properly reference the work of others.

6.9 Additional Resources

For additional information on ethical considerations, please refer to the *Tri-Council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans* (TCPS 2) located at: http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca (archived version).

As a graduate student you may be eligible for funding towards your post-secondary research. One of the leading funding agencies for the Social Sciences is the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Visit: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca to learn more about opportunities.

For assistance on how to complete an ethical review process, you can access application guidelines and templates through your university. Here is an example of those available at MacEwan University: https://www.macewan.ca/wcm/OfficeofResearchServices/Ethics/index.htm (archived version).

CHAPTER 7: WRITING A RESEARCH REPORT

7.1 Introduction to Writing a Research Report

Conducting research and writing a formal research report as part of your graded coursework generally rests on four main objectives. First, you learn how to develop and refine a social research question of interest along with an appropriate research approach. Next, you learn how to locate and evaluate research literature on a topic of interest. Research involves not only conducting a study but understanding the area of interest and being familiar with the work done by others so that you can design a research study that contributes to the existing literature. The third main objective is to teach you about research design by having you develop and carry out original research. Finally, the task culminates in writing a formal research report that demonstrates what you have learned through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of actual data. This is an opportunity to disseminate your findings and to integrate your study within the existing literature.

By following the suggestions provided in this section, you can write a research report that impresses your instructor, provides the structure for a possible honour's thesis, can be used as a sample of your work for potential entrance into a graduate school, helps prepare you to design more advanced research (e.g., a master's thesis), and gets you into the practice of using a format required for publication in most scholarly journals.

> See Appendix B for a sample research report written by an undergraduate student.
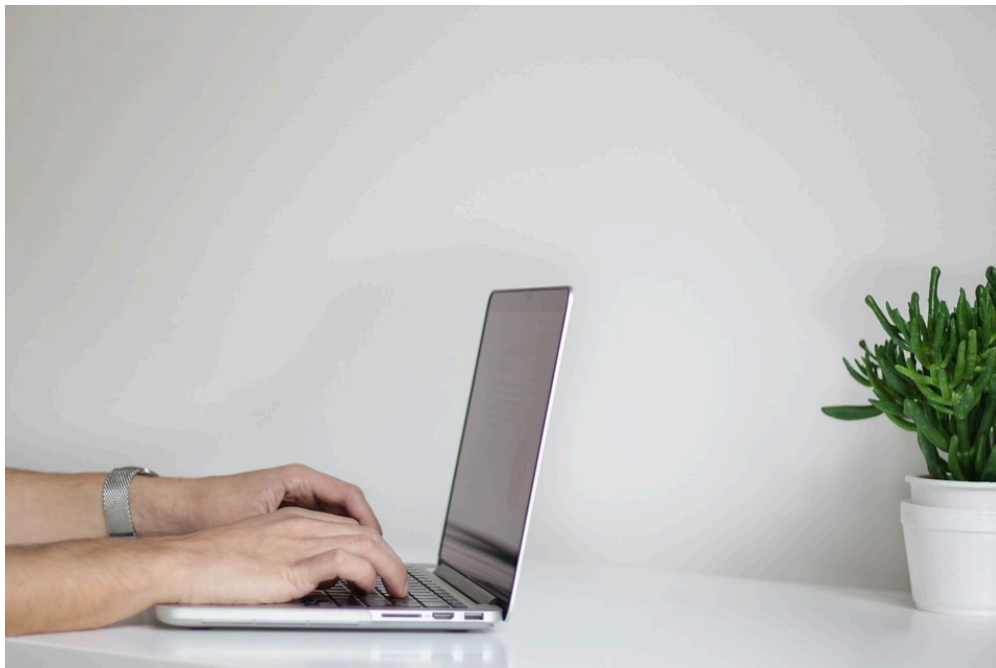
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7.2 Structuring a Research Report

A research report is typically structured as follows:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Method Section

  - Participants (or Sample and Sample Selection)
  - Procedures
  - Design
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Tables
- Figures
- Appendix (optional)

7.3 Title Page

Let's begin with the first page of your research report – the title page. The most obvious function of this page is to label your work.

Running Head

Your title page has many components including a *running head* in the top left-hand corner, which is a requirement when submitting work for publication, and is sometimes required by professors in student research reports.

The running head is a mini-title that you can insert as a "header" to the top-left of every page of your research report. According to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), it should be no more than 50 characters long, and appear IN ALL CAPS. If your title is already less than 50 characters you can include the entire title; if it is longer, provide a shortened version. For example:

Running head:
PAIN MEDIATORS

Full title of report:
Social Modeling, Monetary Incentives and Pain Endurance: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Pain Perception

The running head helps to quickly identify your work and piece it back together in case the pages get dropped or another assignment gets mixed in with yours.

A page number should appear after your running head as part of the same header, aligned to the right of the page.

Title

A title is used to convey the focus or underlying topic for your study. Try to create a title that gives the reader a sense of what the study is about (e.g., *Affirmative Action* is too vague while *Affirmative Action Hiring Practices by RCMP Utilized to Reflect Community Diversity* tells us what to anticipate in the actual study).

The full title is as many as 10 to 12 words long and appears in **Bold Title Case**, centered on the title page, about 4 double-spaced lines down from the top of the page.

Author Information

The author line is one double-spaced line beneath the title. The author line includes your name and the names of anyone else who was directly involved with your research (e.g., if it was part of a group project with a group mark, you would include everyone's names). Below this, note the institution your research is affiliated with (i.e., your school's name).

Towards the bottom of the title page, centre the words **Author Note** in bold. If a research grant was used in any way to support your study (e.g., interview participants were compensated for their time, a software license was paid for by your program of

study, or you applied for and received a travel grant to support a poster presentation of your findings at a conference), the source of the funding should be cited here on its own line.

Also, under the "Author Note" line, you need to include the name of a main contact person with an email address so that interested parties can correspond with that person for more information about the study. (Unless someone else headed up a group project that you participated in, you would put yourself down as the main contact person.)

Title Page Checklist

❑ On a separate, first page of your report

❑ Identifier title ("running head") in the top-left hand corner IN ALL CAPS

❑ Page number in the top-right hand corner

❑ Full title in title case, centered, bold text, starting about 4 double-spaced lines down the page

❑ Author line a double-space down from the full title

❑ Institutional affiliation below the author line

❑ Funding source, if applicable, and corresponding author and contact information noted in an "Author Note" section near the bottom of the page.

7.4 Abstract

An abstract is often the most crucial page of a research report because a potential reader is likely to skim over it first to determine if the article is relevant or merits further examination. An abstract is a very brief overview of the research. It notes the main research interest or central hypothesis under investigation, describes the participants (or sample), outlines the design, highlights the main findings, and notes implications for future research.

A research abstract should answer the following questions:

- What is the main research interest?
- Who are the participants or what comprised the sample?
- What is the research design?
- What are the main findings?
- What conclusions are reached?

Although the abstract is located at the beginning of your report (after the title page, on a separate page, with the word "Abstract" centered in bold text at the top of the page), you should write this last since it is an overview of what the study was about and what the results showed (i.e., past tense). Do not guess at what you will find in advance before completing the actual study. When you are ready to compose the abstract, it is a good practice to list everything you want to include in it and then rework it until it is very precise and concise (i.e., less than 250 words).

Keywords

You can also include a couple of keywords one line below the abstract that describe the literature or identify the main area of research. These should be indented 0.5 in., each separated with a comma, and preceded by *Keywords:* written in italics (e.g., *Keywords*: affirmative action, hiring practices). Keywords help track your published study electronically and via various library systems. Thus, anyone searching databases for affirmative action strategies, for instance, will be able to find the article.

Abstract Checklist

❑ On a separate page

❑ Begins with the heading "Abstract," centered in bold text at the top of the page

❑ Single-paragraph (not indented)

❑ Double-spaced

❑ Short (e.g., less than 250 words)

❑ Numbered as page two

7.5 Introduction

At the top of page three, start your introduction with the title of your paper centered and in bold text. The text of your introduction should then start on the next line, aligned to the left, with the start of each new paragraph indented by one tab key. Text should be double-spaced.

An introduction states the purpose of your research and gets the reader interested in your study. This section outlines the literature and includes a statement of the central purpose of your research.

Questions that will help you develop your introduction:

- What is the central research question or problem under investigation?
- What does the literature say about this area of research?
- How does the present study contribute to the literature in this area?
- If your study is quantitative in nature – What are the main hypotheses?

Start your introduction with a very general statement that establishes the area that your study relates to. For example:

> "Pain is a fundamental fact of life" (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 258).

Continue narrowing the focus until you have described the problem under investigation and located it in the relevant literature. Also, make sure you write in the present tense throughout the introduction unless you are referring to what other researchers have found or done in their studies. For example:

> "People are constantly faced with minor aches and pains due to overexertion, headaches, dental problems, and other conditions. . . An important question concerns the conditions that regulate endurance of pain. . . Research in the social psychology of pain has demonstrated that social modeling can be used to increase (or decrease) pain tolerance (e.g., Craig, 1986). Extrinsic reinforcers (e.g., monetary incentives) have also been shown to increase people's endurance of a painful event (Cabanac, 1986). . ." (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 258).

Finally, describe how your study contributes to the literature and note the main objective of your research. For example:

> "Research concerned with social modeling and its effects on pain behaviour is well established, but few studies have focused on pain mediators. The primary goal of the present study is to assess whether the effects of social modeling on pain endurance are mediated by self-efficacy expectancies, by pain perception, or by both of these processes" (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 258).

If your study is quantitative in nature, be sure to state your hypotheses as precisely as you can and relate them back to the earlier literature. For example:

> ... consistent with Cabanac's (1986) early research, the present study predicts that people who are paid $2.00 per 20 seconds, will endure isometric sitting longer than participants who receive $1.00 or no payment in the control condition.

Introduction Checklist

❏ Follows the abstract

❏ Begins with the title in bold and centered at the top of page 3

❏ Double-spaced

❏ Indented new paragraphs

❏ Format conforms to an hour-glass shape

7.6 Method Section

This section follows the introduction (without a page break) and begins with the centered title "Method." The method section essentially tells the reader in considerable detail exactly what materials were needed to set up the study and how it was carried out.

Questions to ask yourself as you create your method section:

- Who were the participants or what comprised the sample?
- What supplies were needed to carry out this study?
- Were the procedures described in a manner that is so clear and straight-forward that anyone reading it would be able to replicate the study?
- Was there a precise explanation for how the main variables were conceptualized?

It is useful to use sub-headings in this section to identify the components you need to explain (see the checklist below). The methods section usually begins with a short paragraph that indicates how many people participated in the study, describes the participants in the research, notes how they were selected, and describes what they did in the study. For example:

> One hundred and twenty-three students from an introductory sociology course at the University of Alberta volunteered to participate in a study on attitudes toward tobacco use. The class was randomly selected from a computer-generated list of all the courses offered during that fall session. All participants completed an online questionnaire designed to examine views on smoking.

If your study was based on the examination of personal information included in Instagram posts (as opposed to information you gathered directly from participants), you would instead describe the sample and how you obtained it. For example, Modrall (see Appendix B) described her sample as:

> . . . personal information gathered from 10 user profiles and five posts from each of these profiles that were created between January 1st 2017 and December 31st, 2017." She went on to explain how her sample was selected by noting that "the principal researcher analyzed a total of 10 user profiles and five posts from each of these profiles on Instagram, using the hashtag filter "#trending". Due to the large quantity of posts using this filter, a systematic random sampling approach was used to select the initial post from which the corresponding profile could then be found. This same approach was then used to select five posts from each of these profiles. The principal researcher used a random number generating tool Stat Trek (https://stattrek.com) to limit the number of user profiles and posts that were available to be selected. User profiles were chosen from the first 100 listed while the posts within these profiles were selected from the 20 most recent entries within the specified timeframe (January 1st, 2017 to December 31st, 2017). Both profiles and posts were identified by counting from left-to-right, top-to-bottom. If a profile had fewer than five posts or was identified as an advertising profile, a new number was generated to select a different profile. (Modrall, 2018, pp. 6-7)

The methods section also includes a paragraph that lists the setting and necessary materials used to conduct the study (e.g., the location, supplies that had to be purchased in advance, and/or any kind of equipment that was needed to record

information). This information helps a reader understand exactly what would be needed to replicate a study of this nature. For example:

> Focus groups were conducted in a seminar room at the University of Alberta. Necessary materials included a digital recording device and MAXQDA software used to help analyze the qualitative data.

Next, you want to include a very detailed description of the procedures for carrying out the study. This section literally walks the reader through the study as the participants would have experienced it. (Again, you might consider using sub-headings to ensure that you document every step undertaken in this research project). For example, if the experimenter needed to prepare some materials in advance of the study such as a script to ensure that all participants were given identical instructions before commencing the task, the first heading might be "background preparation." The next heading could be called "starting the session" and here you can summarize what the participants were told about the study and what their role would entail. For example:

> "Upon arrival for the experimental session, each participant was greeted by a female researcher (E1) and taken to a small laboratory. Participants were seated at a table in front of a television monitor and asked to fill out a pre-study questionnaire and to watch one of six standardized presentations on videotape" (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 260).

The procedures section essentially details the independent variable(s) in an experiment (since this is what the research manipulates). For example:

> The videos allowed for the manipulation of social modeling. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three modeling conditions (intolerant, tolerant, and no-model control condition). Individuals in the intolerant condition saw the male confederate in the isometric position wearing a heart rate monitor. The confederate. . .acted according to a script that called for him to collapse after 60 seconds. . .Cue cards were used to tell the confederate what pain estimates to call out and what signs of pain to display." ... Pain was displayed by facial expressions, moans, clenched teeth and hands, and shaking legs... A similar procedure was used to create the tolerant model condition. . .but the final pain estimate was not reported until he endured 240 seconds of isometric sitting. (Symbaluk et al., 1997, pp. 260-261)

If the study was based on a qualitative approach as would be the case if a study utilized in-depth, qualitative interviews, the procedures would instead detail how the interview process unfolded. Alternatively, if the study was based on a technique such as content analyses, this section would explain how data was coded by the researcher. In a report that is based on the examination of existing records (i.e., secondary data analysis), the methods section might be considerably shorter as in this article on the effects of temperature on temper among baseball pitchers. Here, the entire methods section is described in one concise paragraph as follows:

> Microfilm issues of major daily newspapers were consulted to obtain data on weather and major

league baseball games. Random samples of games were taken from three major league baseball seasons: 1986; 1987, and 1988. The 1986 sample included every 10th game played during the season (n = 215 games). Every 7th game during the season was included for the 1987 (n = 304) and 1988 (n = 307) samples. For each game sampled, the number of players hit by a pitch (HBP) was recorded. Within the same newspaper issue, the high temperature (F°) in the home city of the day of the game was also recorded. The numbers of walks, wild pitches, passed balls, errors, home runs, and fans in attendance in each game were recorded as control variables. (Reifman et al., 1999, pp. 308-309)

The research design is usually described under a sub heading within the methods section. This section very succinctly describes the overall form of the study (although a reader should also be able to infer this from the previous description provided in the procedures section). For example:

"… the design was a 3 X 3 factorial experiment that crossed three levels of social modeling (no model, intolerant model, tolerant model) with three rates of payment ($0, $1, and $2 per 20 s of exercise)" (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 262).

The last sub-section lists the dependent variable(s) and describes how they were measured. For example:

"Dependent measures included pain threshold and pain endurance. Pain threshold was recorded as the number of seconds to the first report of pain. Pain endurance was the total number of seconds of isometric sitting" (Symbaluk et al., 1997).

Method Checklist

❑ Follows the introduction

❑ Begins with the heading "Method," centered and in bold text

❑ Page numbering continues from the previous section

❑ Double-spaced

❑ Indented new paragraphs

❑ Includes sub-headings in bold text aligned to the left, such as:

- ◦ Participants
- ◦ Setting and Materials
- ◦ Procedures
- ◦ Design
- ◦ Dependent Variables

7.7 Results

The results section directly follows the method section with a centered title in bold text called "Results." Here, the type of data analysis is mentioned along with any rationale needed to justify a given statistical procedure. For example, *Analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated a main effect of social modeling on pain endurance*. This section highlights the main findings of the study in a technical manner without elaboration; do not discuss whether hypotheses were or were not supported – that is for the discussion. For example:

> Participants in tolerant condition lasted significantly longer than individuals assigned to control and intolerant conditions. . . There was no main effect of monetary payment on endurance (Symbaluk et al., 1997).

The findings are generally noted as they pertain to the dependent measure(s) and are presented in the order in which the variables were introduced in preceding sections. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020) is very clear about how to present the information including abbreviations and symbols from specific statistical analyses (e.g., correlations, t-tests, ANOVA, etc.) so make sure you refer to this guide when you are writing this section of your report. A few examples are given below.

> **Descriptive Statistics.** A comparison of the means showed that participants who recited the information aloud with a friend performed better on the exam (M = 83.5%, SD = 12.3.) than those who did not verbalize their notes (M = 78.8%, SD = 15.0).
>
> **Correlation.** Early trouble in school was moderately associated with job instability, r (236) = .56, p < .001, and alcohol abuse, r (236) = .60, p < .001.
>
> **Analysis of Variance.** Findings showed that athletes in the low-weight class had lower body masses (M = 20.4, SD = 1.7) than those in the high-weight class (M = 25.3 SD = 0.8), F (1, 12) = 13.31, p < .01.

You may want to include a table at the end of your report that summarizes the findings by listing the means (and standard deviations) for key variables. Make sure you use a transitional sentence that refers to your table, and works it into the report. For example:

> As shown in Table 1, participants in the tolerant condition endured pain longer than those in control or intolerant conditions or Participants in the tolerant condition endured pain longer than those in control or intolerant conditions.

Alternatively, you may wish to include a figure that displays the main results pictorially as a graph or chart. You can construct a figure using various computer programs (e.g., Microsoft Excel can produce a chart that is a pie, column or line graph). In this case, the independent (or predictor) variable is plotted on the horizontal (x) axis, while the dependent (or outcome) variable is plotted on the vertical (y) axis. Make sure you include labels so that it is clear what information is being conveyed. Again, you want to use a transition sentence that refers to the figure in the results section For example:

> Participants in the tolerant condition endured pain longer than in the intolerant or control conditions as shown in Figure 1.

Note that both tables and figures should go at the end of your paper, as discussed later in this chapter.

Results Checklist

❏ Follows the method section

❏ Begins with the heading "Results," centered and in bold text

❏ Page numbering continues from the previous section

❏ Double-spaced

❏ Indented new paragraphs

❏ Main findings are reported

❏ Optional Table at end of paper lists data in columns and rows

❏ Optional Figure at end of paper shows the main results

7.8 Discussion

This section follows the results with the centered title "Discussion" in bold text. A discussion elaborates on the main findings and notes the implications for future research.

Discussion questions to consider:

- Did this section provide an overall summary of the study?
- Was the study situated within the relevant literature?
- Were all the key findings described?
- Are the main findings related back to the literature?
- Are there any alternative explanations for the findings?
- Is the importance of the study evident?
- Are limitations of this study introduced?
- Were suggestions provided for ways to improve this research?

Results are generally discussed as they pertain to the research questions or hypotheses posed in the introduction. In this case, each finding is discussed in some detail as you note whether the result is in accord with the original hypothesis (and thus lends further support to the area of research you are building on) or you might speculate why you did not find what you expected. For example:

> Results indicated that monetary reward had no significant effect on pain endurance. . . Money may have become less salient in the context of the social modeling manipulation. On the post-experimental questionnaire, most individuals reported self-esteem or competitiveness as their motivation for participating, rather than the money. (Symbaluk et al., 1997, p. 266)

Finally, note any limitations of the present study and how you might improve upon this research. Perhaps you used a small sample and now you would like to replicate the study with a larger group, or a different group, to see if the findings hold true. The discussion ends with a conclusion to your report that briefly sums up the study and its importance. *(The present study makes it clear that. . . This study has shown that . . .Future research is needed to . . .)*

Discussion Checklist

❑ Follows the results section

❑ Begins with the heading "Discussion," centered in bold text

❑ Page numbering continues from the previous section

❑ Double-spaced

❑ Indented new paragraphs

❑ Main findings are described

❑ Findings are situated in the relevant literature

❑ Implications for future research are noted

7.9 References

The list of references should begin on a new page and have a centered title in bold that reads "References.". This section is double-spaced and includes a reference to anyone else's work that is described, paraphrased, or otherwise utilized in your report. Please see Chapter 5 on how to correctly cite and list references.

References Checklist

❏ Title "References" centered and in bold text

❏ Separate page

❏ Double-spaced

❏ APA format unless otherwise noted by your instructor or the editor of a journal (see Chapter 5 for an overview of APA)

7.10 Tables

Although you most often use tables to display your main findings discussed in the results section, the actual tables are typically located each on their own page after the reference section of your report unless your course instructor, or a journal publisher, instruct you to do otherwise.

Tables are placed in their own section because they sometimes detract from the text of your report. In addition, when you send an article to a publisher, the editor reserves the right to fit your table into the text of the document where it is most appropriate given the space limitations and page setup of the actual journal. You can refer to the table in your results section by stating, for instance, "as shown in Table 1" or "(see Table 5)."

Each table you include in your report should have a table number (Table 1, Table 2, and so on) noted above it in bold text and aligned to the left. One double-spaced line below this include a table title in italics. You can then also include notes beneath the table as needed to describe its contents.

Tables Checklist

❑ Referred to in text (e.g., as shown in Table 1; see Table 4)

❑ Included at end of your report, if there are no figures or appendices

❑ Each table on a separate page thereafter

❑ Aligned to the left margin

❑ Table number in bold, and title in italics one double-space below

❑ Notes section beneath the table explaining contents (optional)

❑ Double-spaced

❑ APA format (unless otherwise noted by your instructor or the editor of a journal)

❑ Limited amount of information

7.11 Figures

Readers might find it useful if you include figures that show some of the main findings as a graph, chart, or other diagram. Similar to tables discussed in the previous section, you can refer to figures in your results section by noting, "as shown in Figure 1" and then include actual figures on their own pages at the end of the paper, including figure numbers in bold, and titles in italics below the figure number. Like tables, figures should be aligned to the left of the page. In addition to including an optional note below the figure explaining its content, you may also need to include a legend either within or below the figure image to explain things like shading, symbols, or line styles.

Figures Checklist

❏ Each figure on a separate page thereafter

❏ Aligned to the left margin

❏ Figure number in bold, and title in italics one double-space below

❏ Legend in or below figure explaining shading, symbols or line styles (optional)

❏ Notes section beneath the table explaining contents (optional)

❏ Double-spaced

❏ APA format (unless otherwise noted by your instructor or the editor of a journal)

❏ Limited amount of information

❏ End of your report, if there are no appendices

7.12 Appendix

The appendix is an optional section for most research reports and would not normally be counted in the total number of pages if there is a page limit on the assignment. The appendix is the place to include extra information that would be useful to the reader (or someone who might want to know more details about your study to replicate it). However, it is not essential to the actual report. For example, if you used a questionnaire to find out people's views on capital punishment, you could include the actual survey in this section. Other documents that would be appropriate for inclusion in an appendix might be a coding instrument or a set of coding rules, a script used by the researcher in an experiment, a consent form, an observation checklist, or some background information distributed to participants.

Appendix Checklist

❑ Includes extra documents that might be of interest to a reader

❑ Begins with the heading "Appendix", centered at the top of the page

❑ Double-spaced

CHAPTER 8: GRADUATE STUDIES AND YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

8.1 Introduction to Graduate Studies and Your Curriculum Vitae

Although it may seem a long way off when you begin your first degree, it would be advantageous for you to start acquiring the skills and requirements now that you will need to have in place should you hope to be competitive later for entrance into a preferred graduate program or desired career in your field.

In this chapter you will find information on graduate school requirements and putting together a curricular vitae (CV).

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8.2 Graduate School Requirements

Kaplan (2011) identifies four core requirements considered universal to gaining entrance into graduate school including:

- High grades
- Relevant research experience
- Strong letters of recommendation
- A letter of intent

Master of Arts programs in Sociology, for example, typically necessitate an overall grade point average of 80% or more based on all previous courses taken or, in fewer instances, grades from the last two years (Duffy & Symbaluk, 2019). If possible, consider enrolling in an "honours" undergraduate program since this designation is preferred for subsequent entrance into a Master of Arts program and it provides you with opportunities to gain research experience.

Research-related experience is also a core component of graduate school admittance and the skills acquired through research or field-related experiences can sometimes help to mitigate for less than stellar grades (Kaplan, 2011; Mumby, 2012; Niemeyer & Stevenson, 2008). Speak with your instructors about the potential for serving as a teaching assistant (e.g., tutoring students who need assistance or proctoring exams), a research assistant (e.g., conducting database searches or assisting with data analyses), and/or inquire about the possibility of taking an individual study course (wherein you might conduct research under the supervision of an instructor). Students also gain valuable experience through the dissemination of course-based research in the form of a poster presentation, conference talk or even a publication in an undergraduate journal. These activities can be described more fully for the admissions committee in letters of recommendation provided by former instructors or research supervisors and in your letter of intent.

You will need at least two letters of support from previous instructors or field-supervisors (Kaplan, 2011; Mumby, 2012). To obtain the strongest possible recommendations, it is essential that you do well ideally in more than one of their courses and that you develop rapport with these instructors, so you can share ideas and information that would be relevant to include in the letters about your academic interests and related skills. When seeking approval from an instructor to write a letter of recommendation, supply that individual with a reminder of which courses you took and when you took them, note how you did in the courses and provide additional information that would help inform an academic impression of you (e.g., your academic transcript, letter of intent, Curriculum Vitae). Letters of recommendation are highly subjective and detailed in a manner that can prove to be more important than prior grades for helping the selection committee understand how and how well you are suited to the preferred program of study (Mumby, 2012; Neimeyer & Stevenson, 2008).

To gain entrance into graduate school you will also need to write a letter of intent (also called a letter of purpose or personal statement) that details why you are seeking entrance into that program and provides additional information on your relevant attributes such as grades, research-experience and/or research interests that may be of assistance to the selection committee for determining your overall suitability for the proposed program (Asher, 2008). Carefully proofread your letter of intent as errors and omissions will provide a less than favourable impression of your writing ability and academic preparedness. Note that uniqueness is viewed as an asset, so it is acceptable to elaborate on how your prior life experiences have helped to shape your current interests in the program. Finally, graduate schools also sometimes ask applicants to submit a sample of their prior work (e.g., an essay or research report) and like prospective employers, many schools now require applicants to enclose a Curriculum Vitae (Duffy & Symbaluk, 2019).

8.3 Creating a Curriculum Vitae

Beyond school, careers paths available to a graduate with a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Education typically commence with the submission of a Curriculum Vitae (CV), usually to a human resource department in response to an advertisement for a job. A CV documents your personal contact information, educational background, work experience, and academic achievements (e.g., awards, publications). *A CV is different from a resume.* If you have ever applied for a part-time job or a summer position, you probably developed and submitted a resume. A resume means "abbreviated" or "summarized" in French, and it provides employers with a short version of your education and work experience. It is typically no more than one page in length. A CV, on the other hand, means "course of life" in Latin, and it is a more comprehensive list of your accomplishments that can span several pages.

A CV is also a work in progress. Even when you gain entrance into graduate studies or secure a permanent position with some organization, your CV should be updated on a yearly basis to reflect current achievements and ongoing development. You can expect to be asked to produce a CV on occasion throughout your career, sometimes with very little notice. For example, you may be asked to provide a supervisor or department chair with a copy for peer review or evaluation purposes. A CV is generally included in an application for promotion to an administrative position or a tenured position within an academic department. Many research funding agencies ask for a CV along with a grant proposal. Importantly, keeping your CV updated helps you keep track of your teaching and research experiences, your scholarly awards and accomplishments, volunteer work in your community and other forms of service you engage in as well as changes to important contact information sources such as personal references.

You will be amazed at how and how much your academic profile builds over time. A talk you gave in an introductory psychology class on *"The Subsystems of Memory"* in the fall of 2019 might start a list of professional presentations. The next year you might add a poster session you gave on *"Declarative Memory"* at an annual conference of the American Psychology Association. In 2020, you might present your own research on *"Semantic Memory"* at your university's annual research day and revise your CV to include this as your third professional presentation entry.

You never know when your dream job will appear in an advertisement or some great opportunity will arise on short notice so be ready. *Start collecting relevant information, dates, and achievements for your CV right now!* Open a file on your computer and call it *"Your Name* Curriculum Vitae." The rest of this chapter provides you with step-by-step advice for ways to translate what you have done into a CV that demonstrates your knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments.

What to Include in a CV

> Note that there are no steadfast rules about what to include in a CV or how to order these items, so feel free to modify these suggestions to suit your own style.

Contact Information

The first page of your CV generally includes personal contact information and describes your educational background. Begin with the centered title "Curriculum Vitae." Beneath this, insert your full name. On the next line, place your mailing address. Underneath this, include your work or home phone number, and your email address. The personal contact information should stand out on your CV, so it is okay to put this in bold, italics, or use a specialized, but easy-to-read font.

Education

The next section of your CV is your educational background. List your academic accomplishments, beginning with your highest degree and/or most recent one. Put the year you earned the degree, flush with the left margin, followed by a space and then the title of the degree, along with any areas of specialization, the educational institute that issued the degree, and if applicable, a title that indicates the topic of research conducted to complete, for instance, a thesis or dissertation.

Education

1997 Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology (Criminology; Social Psychology)

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

An application of the General Theory of Crime to Sex Offenders

1993 Master of Arts, Sociology (Experimental Social Psychology)

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

Money, Modeling and Pain: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Pain Perception

1991 Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Major: Sociology)

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

Activity Anorexia and its Implications for Amateur Wrestlers

Perhaps at this point you only have a high school diploma and are working towards your Bachelor of Education degree. List the degree you are working on in progress with an expected completion date, followed by your high school diploma.

Education

2020* Bachelor of Education (in progress)

Elementary Specialization: K to Grade 3

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

Expected completion year

2016 High School Diploma

Bev Facey Community High School, Sherwood Park, Alberta

If you have any additional certificates, awards, or acknowledgements that show you have other academic or employment-related accomplishments and skills, include them next so that they stand out to the reader. These could include technical certificates, diplomas, professional development or program completion certificates, as well as titles you have earned (e.g., Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate, Victim Services Trainer). Include a title that best fits the types of accomplishments listed such as:

Certifications and Professional Development

- Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE), May 5, 2018
- Basic First Aid with CPR, St. John's Ambulance, March, 2018
- Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate, January, 2018
- Academy of Leadership and Training, April, 2017
- Toastmasters International, July, 2016

Scholarships, Awards and Grants

If you have ever received money in the form of a grant, scholarship, award, travel subsidy, or sponsorship, include the name and a brief description of the award in a new section. Some people indicate the actual monetary value of the award and/or the applicable dates when the funding occurred. You may also include subsidized trips to another city to read an essay in a contest or to play a sport in a championship game, or an award from a church or community group. If you received the same award more than once, you can indicate the multiple years in which you received it. If you have multiple awards, consider dividing them into a few sections as shown below.

Scholarships and Awards

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council Fellowship ($30,000), 2017 – 2019

Province of Alberta Graduate Scholarship ($3000), 2017; 2015

Department of Sociology Research Assistantship ($1200), 2014

Jason Lang Scholarship for GPA exceeding 3.2, ($1000), 2014

Research and Travel Grants

Arts and Science Divisional Research Grant ($1750), 2019.

Clifford H. Skitch Travel Award, 2018 ($450); 2016

Sociology Graduate Travel Award ($150), 2015

Work Experience

The next section of your curriculum vitae details your work experience. Indicate your recent employment history by naming the places of employment, your job titles, years of employment, and the main duties or applicable skills required for the positions. If possible, list some of your individual accomplishments. All jobs have accompanying duties – what special skills did you learn that a potential employer might be interested in? If you have a long listing of prior work experience (and most is not applicable to the job or graduate program you are applying for), consider only including the most recent.

Recent Work Experience

2018 –present Hostess
Earl's Restaurant, Edmonton, Alberta.

- Greeting and seating customers, handling gift certificates, helping to clear tables
- Special skills: supervised staff members, designed promotional events

2017– 2016   Cashier
London Drugs, Sherwood Park, Alberta

- Processing customer transactions, shelving stock, dealing with customer inquiries, electronic payment processing
- Special skills: service recovery, retail communications

Teaching and Research

Since this is an academic CV, the focus is on teaching and research. If you are an undergraduate student, you likely do not have direct teaching experience and limited research experience. In this case, incorporate some of your accomplishments from classes that you have taken. For example, create a heading "Professional Presentations" and itemize class presentations you have given, along with any other talks you have given as part of your work, committee, or extra-curricular activities. List your name as the author (and include the names of others if this was part of a group presentation), the title of the talk, its purpose, where it took place and the date it occurred.

Professional Presentations

Michaels, C. "Why we need to use animals in research." *Presentation given in Experimental Psychology,* MacEwan University, Fall, 2019.

Michaels, C., Adams, L. S. & Tate, P. "Stress: What is it and how can we manage it?" *Group Presentation for Introduction to Psychology,* MacEwan University, Winter, 2018.

Michaels, C. "The Ice Breaker." *Short Speech at Bowman Toastmasters Club,* Sherwood Park, Winter, 2017.

How can you get some teaching experience? As an undergraduate, consider asking a former instructor of yours if you can help proctor a final exam or provide any other course support to gain some experience. You can even note that you are trying to build your CV and are looking for activities that relate to teaching. Many university departments offer teaching assistantships to graduate students who give guest lectures, help proctor and mark exams, and tutor undergraduate students for a designated course and professor. These experiences can all be included in your CV as shown below.

Teaching

Guest Lecturer. "Truth and Reconciliation: An Overview." Introduction to Indigenous Studies (INDG 100). University of Regina, Winter, 2019.

Exam proctoring for Dr. Huntz. Social Psychology (Sociology 241). MacEwan University, Fall, 2018.

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Wiess-Brooks. Introductory Sociology (Sociology 201). University of Calgary, Fall, 2017.

Eventually, you can replace the guest lecture and assistantship experiences with actual teaching appointments.

Instructor: Introductory Sociology (Sociology 100). Faculty of Arts and Science, MacEwan University, Winter, 2019

Instructor: Psychology of Aging (Psychology 3120). Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Lethbridge, Fall, 2018

Laboratory Instructor: Introduction to Social Statistics (Sociology 210). University of Alberta, Fall, 2018

Include a separate section for your research experience. Ideally, you want to include publications that demonstrate your scholarly work. If you do not have a publication at this point in your life, you can create a list of essays and research reports. For each paper, include the title to indicate the area of research and the course name to reveal your program of study. You can also list formal presentations you have given such as a poster presentation or a talk during a student research day (see Appendix C for a sample poster). To demonstrate your abilities, emphasize when you have conducted data analyses, carried out research, and employed different methods, as shown in the examples below.

Research

2017 *Research Assistant – NorQuest College, Edmonton, AB*

- Conducted one-on-one interviews with clients from various community agency partners using effective communication and interpersonal skills (i.e., The Mustard Seed, DECSA, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers).
- Transcribed focus group proceedings and wrote brief summaries of key findings.

2015 *Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewer (CATI) – Population Research Lab, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB*

- Conducted surveys over the phone to gather views from respondents for academic research purposes.
- Recorded and transcribed responses and comments from participants.

Professional Presentations

Giampa, L. "A Successful Transition Off Academic Probation: A Qualitative Analysis." *Oral Presentation given at the 1ˢᵗ Annual Student Research Day, MacEwan University, April, 2017.*

Giampa, L. "Social Media, Targeted Advertising and the Impact on the Consumer and Business Owner: A Qualitative Analysis on Students' Views." *Poster Presentation given at the 1ˢᵗ Annual Student Research Day, MacEwan University, April, 2017.*

Scholarly Papers

Cheng, T. "A Jungian Approach to Dream Interpretation." *A 10-page expository essay* turned in for 30% of the grade in Psychology of Consciousness, MacEwan University, Winter, 2019.

Cheng, T. "Capital Punishment is not a Deterrent to Violent Crime." *A 15-page argumentative essay* submitted in a Criminology course, MacEwan University, Fall, 2018.

Data Analyses

- ◦ Conducted data analyses using a variety of statistical packages including: SPSS, Excel, and MAXQDA

Research Methods Course (Sociology 315)

- ◦ *Survey Research:* Created a questionnaire to assess people's views towards street prostitution that included open-ended items, 5-point Likert scales, and forced choice responses.
- ◦ *Experimental Methods*: Designed an experiment for testing taste preferences among cola drinkers.
- ◦ *Research Report:* Wrote a 20-page research report on gender representation in advertising based on content analyses.

Laboratory-based Course (Biology 107)

- ◦ *Biology Laboratory:* Completed 36 laboratory hours with final exam.
- ◦ *Laboratory Applications*: DNA synthesis, DNA electrophoresis, microscope skills, proper laboratory etiquette and composing laboratory reports.

Davidson, B. *The effect of temperature and solvents on the amount of betacyanin released from living beet cell (Beta vulgaris) samples in a controlled laboratory environment*. Two-page laboratory report for Introduction to Cell Laboratory, MacEwan University, Fall 2015.

Davidson, B. *The effect of smoke extracts, cigarette butt extracts, and unsmoked cigarette filter extracts on functioning cilia in Tetrahymena*. Six-page laboratory report for Introduction to Cell Laboratory, MacEwan University, Fall 2015.

Davidson, B. *The colours of light best absorbed by a spectrophotometer and the effect of different coloured light and different herbicides on photosynthesis*. Nine-page laboratory report for Introduction to Cell Laboratory, MacEwan University, Fall 2015.

Publications

If you have scholarly publications, list the most recent publication first. When you become fairly established and you have multiple publications, you can start to subdivide this section into books or manuals, book chapters, scholarly publications, research abstracts, and so on as needed. A sample from one of the author's publication records is given below.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Books

Symbaluk, D. G. (2019). *Research Methods: Exploring the social world in Canadian contexts*. Canadian Scholars.

Symbaluk, Diane G., & Bereska, Tami M. (2019). *Sociology in action: A Canadian perspective* (3rd ed.). Nelson Education.

Powell, R. A., Honey, P. L., & Symbaluk, D. G. (2017). *Introduction to learning and behavior* (5th ed.). Wadsworth/Cengage.

Journal Articles

Duffy, M. E. & Symbaluk, D. G. (2019). Sociology graduate school requirements and competitive advantages. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth, 11*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29405

Symbaluk, D. G., & Howell, A. J. (2018). Character strengths of teaching- and research-award winning professors. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *29*(1), 5-26.

Giampa, L. M. & Symbaluk, D. G. (2018). Successful transition off academic probation: A qualitative analysis. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth, 10*(1), 73-97. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29343

Committees and Associations

Committee work is a form of professional service that is expected in many areas of employment. Committees can take a multitude of forms including voluntary organizations, planning groups, church groups, and associations. Everyone is expected to take their turn in helping their department develop new policies, hire new faculty, and operate within the larger institution. Committee membership has all sorts of benefits: exposure to new ideas, learning about policies and processes, and working with different people. A prospective employer may take notice of this section of your CV because committee membership also conveys more latent attributes such as the likelihood that you are a team player, that you are willing to take on additional service for the betterment of others, that are people-oriented, that you can work well in a group, and/or that you can get along with others.

Committee work often involves administrative tasks and functions that can teach you important skills needed for eventual promotions (e.g., from a teacher to a vice-principal, from a faculty member to a department chair, or from an associate to full professor). Similarly, volunteer experience is a great way to obtain career-related skills, learn about potential employers and develop contacts that can help you secure a permanent position. Committee and volunteer work also demonstrate that you have other interests and affiliations. Networking achieved through these memberships can also help to further your career aspirations. Lastly, committee and association members as well as volunteer organization supervisors also constitute a great source for obtaining references, so embrace these opportunities as soon as possible.

Administrative/Committee Experience

Member, Council on Student Life,
University of Alberta, 2018-2019.

Elected Vice-President, Sociology Graduate Students' Association,
Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, 2017-2018

Chair, Corporate Challenge Planning Committee
MacEwan University, Winter, 2017

Secretary, Toastmasters Pros Club
Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2015-2016

Volunteer Experience

Centre for Autism Service Alberta
Program Volunteer, Edmonton, AB

- Peer-mentored teens and young adults
- Coached and worked with children through imaginative play
- Worked to help build social and interactive skills in children

University of Alberta Hospital
Cardiac Patient Resource Centre Volunteer, Edmonton, AB

- Assisted patients and family members with questions and concerns
- Created and distributed information packages and condolence packages
- Provided general assistance (e.g., welcoming, helping with directions)

References

The last section of your CV usually includes a current list of personal references. When building a list of people willing to provide you with a positive reference, try to cover a range of academic, work, and community-based affiliations. At least two references should be from people who are qualified to speak about your academic or work competencies and abilities (e.g., the department chair, your manager or supervisor, an instructor that knows your work well). In each case, include the person's name, organization, job title, and relationship to you. Some sample references are provided below:

John Smith, Ph.D. (MacEwan University – Chair, Psychology Department).
Dr. Smith is currently the department chair.
Phone: (780) 555-4432
Email: smithjohn@macewan.ca

Tom Kurt, Ph.D. (University of Alberta – Professor of Sociology, and Director, Centre for Experimental Sociology).
Dr. Kurt was my academic supervisor for the honours program at the University of Alberta.
Phone: (780) 555-5485
Email: kurttom@ualberta.ca

Jane Doe, R.N. (Grey Nuns Community Hospital)
Ms. Doe was my main supervisor when I served as a volunteer on a General Unit from 2015-2017.
Phone: (780) 555-5768
Email: doejane@macewan.ca

Other Considerations

How Long Should Your CV Be?

There is not a page limit on a CV, but you should try to keep it concise. One way to do this is to replace earlier work with more substantive accomplishments. For example, years from now you might replace your list of essays with abstracts and refereed articles that you published in scholarly journals. An early talk given in a class can be replaced with a teaching appointment. Keep an original long version CV that has every single one of your accomplishments in it even if it grows to ten or more pages. You can always create new, shorter CV's from the original file, depending on the nature of a request. Perhaps you wish to emphasize your teaching experience for a possible position at a university. In this case, you might include information on every presentation, guest lecture, and teaching-related task you have done in the past. Alternatively, if you are applying for a research-based position at a university, you might abbreviate the teaching section but expand on your publication history.

Presentation Counts

If you need to make copies of your CV, use a high-quality printer and copier. Avoid the use of colour and fancy graphics.

Include a Cover Letter

Usually your CV accompanies a cover letter. The cover letter should be directed to the department head or individual in charge of hiring (e.g., a Department Chair or Director of Human Resources). In two-to-three short paragraphs, indicate what the position is you are applying for (and quote the competition number if applicable), why you are interested in the position, in what ways you meet the qualifications and that you have enclosed a copy of your curriculum vitae.

What Not To Include In Your CV

While composing the above sections of your CV, try to avoid including any of the following:

- A cute email address in your contact information such as: funchick@hotmail.com
- Any interests or hobbies, unless they are directly relevant to the job you are applying for.
- Your religious or political beliefs, marital status, age, etc.
- Reasons for leaving any jobs.
- References from friends or relatives.
- Long paragraphs – try to use point-from whenever possible.
- Any negative words or descriptions.
- A photo.

CV Checklist:

❏ Name and Contact Information

❏ Education

❏ Certifications and Professional Development

❏ Scholarships, Awards and Grants

❏ Work Experience

❏ Professional Presentations

❏ Teaching

❏ Research

❏ Publications

❏ Committees and Associations

❏ References

Additional Resources

- For additional information on how to write a CV, including how to condense a CV into a single page or two pages with samples, we highly recommend McGill University's Guide located at: https://www.mcgill.ca/caps/files/caps/guide_cv.pdf
- To learn more about the categories or sections you can include in a CV, you might want to check out the information provided by University of Toronto's Academic Advising and Career Centre at: https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/aacc/curriculum-vitae-cv
- For more information on the differences between resumes and CVs, including sample templates, you can examine information posted by University of Victoria's Co-operative Education Program and Career Services at:

https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/career/applications/resumes/index.php

- For additional help on how to write a statement of intent, visit Berkeley's Graduate Division "Writing the Statement of Purpose" page found at: http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/statement-purpose

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Appendix A: Sample Essay

Sample Essay by Rebekah Fortier (2017)

The sample essay included in this guide as Appendix A was written by Rebekah Fortier in her fourth year as an undergraduate student at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta. The essay was turned in as part of the course requirements for Sociology 463: Advanced Topics in Canadian Society, taught by Dr. Fiona Angus in the Fall of 2017. The essay was nominated by her instructor as an example of high-quality undergraduate writing for inclusion in this manual to assist other students in writing scholarly papers (see Chapter 3).

Appendix B: Sample Research Report

[Research Report Example by Melanie Modrall (2018)](#)

The research report in Appendix B was written by Melanie Modrall as part of her course work for Sociology 315: An Introduction to Research, taught by Dr. Diane Symbaluk at MacEwan University during the Winter of 2018. Notably, Melanie was conducting research and writing up the results in a formal manner for the first time (like you might be doing), and her accomplishments earned her the Department of Sociology's Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award in May of 2018. This appendix shows the reader how an actual study using basic research can be written as a formal research report (as explained in [Chapter 7](#)).

Appendix C: Sample Research Poster

[Poster Example by Brenan Molzahn (2017)](#)

As part of the course work for Sociology 315 in the Fall of 2017 at MacEwan University taught by Dr. Symbaluk, Brenan Molzahn examined the content on websites containing information on cancer and how to respond to grief related to the loss of a loved one to identify local resources available to children and family members who have experienced the loss of a parent to cancer. He later disseminated his findings in a poster presentation that he developed in the Winter of 2018 for Student Research Day at MacEwan University. This is an example of how to share research findings with an academic community while developing presentation skills that can be included in a curriculum vitae (see "[Creating a Curriculum Vitae](#)" in Chapter 8).