

Common Writing Errors

Contractions

In professional papers, spell it out all the way!

“Do not” is preferable to “don’t”.

“Cannot” is preferable to “can’t”.

Commas

Use them to separate clauses

Use them to separate coordinated adjectives describing exact same noun

Do NOT use commas between two verbs in the following manner:

I decided to go to the party, and then fell asleep.

I called my best friend, and he picked up on the second ring.

APA numbers

Numbers under 10 need to be spelled out (two instead of 2)

Numbers above 10 can written numerically.

APA Author Citation

Proper format is (Pope & Wright, 2001, p. 284).

More than two authors: (Pope, Wright, & Winters, 2001) the first time cited, and then (Pope et al., 2001) every time after that.

Tense agreement

“I had always known I want to be a social worker”—this is not consistent

Awkward Phrasing

“I cannot agree on which to think on this”—grammatically incorrect and very awkward

Run-on and Long Sentences

“I talked to Jimmy for two hours, he was really easy to talk to.”—These should be separate sentences OR two independent clauses separated by a semi-colon

“I talked to Jimmy for two hours; he was really easy to talk to.”

“The article demonstrates the ability to provide instrumental insight into prejudice, as well as providing readers the opportunity to not only experience a different perspective, but also to examine different theories that might have relevance for various areas of study, including psychology, sociology, and social work.”—This could easily be chopped up a little more.

Professional Language

“Weird” does not sound professional (unless you are quoting someone).

-“Peculiar” sounds more professional

Quotations marks and other punctuation

If a quote is at the end of a sentence, the period goes before the end quote

- You might say something like, “Our agency received a call from someone concerned about your children. I would like to discuss that concern with you.”

If a quote goes before a comma in a sentence, the comma goes after the end quote.

- Yet, in many areas of practice, the majority of client contact is “in the field”, which typically means seeing a client someplace other than your office.

Overall Tips

Read through your paper before you turn it in. You must pay attention to details.

Ask another person to read through your paper and give you some tips.

Don’t rely on spell check—it is often wrong and usually obvious.

Consult the APA manual or another helpful site, like the OWL at Purdue.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Ask for help if you are not sure how to cite something.

A proper paragraph is 3-5 sentences.

We like to write how we speak—resist this urge and strive for the professional!