

## 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!**