

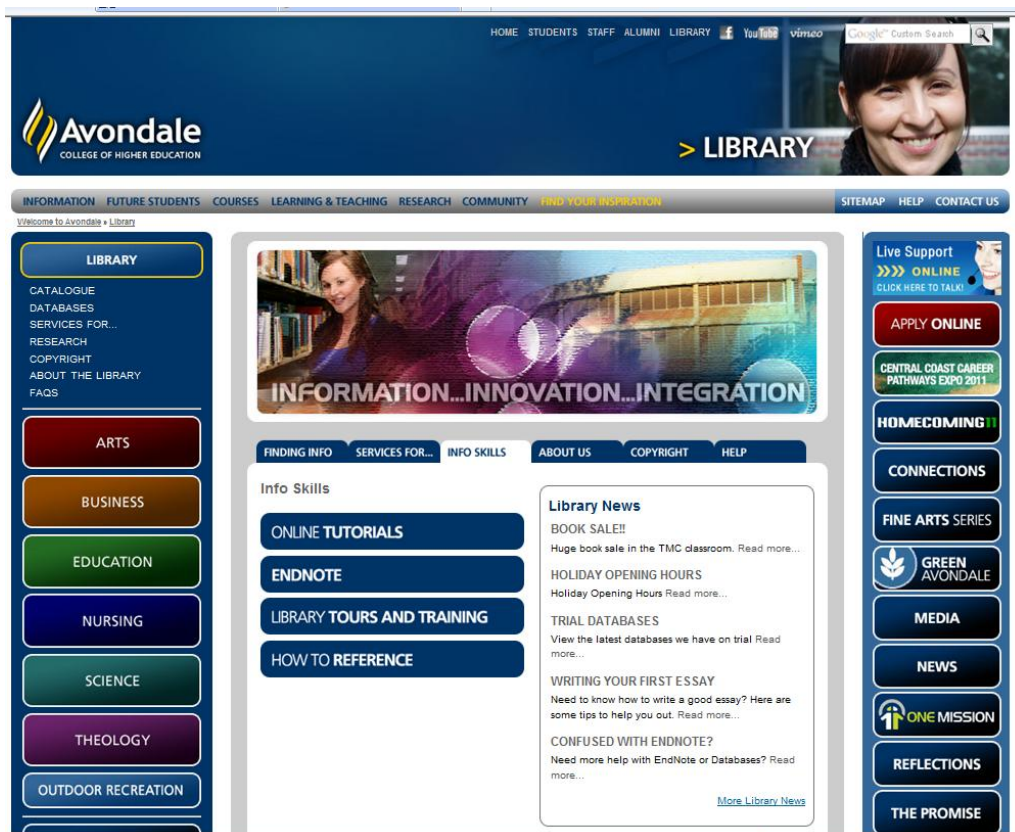


FACULTY OF NURSING AND HEALTH

GUIDE TO ASSIGNMENT WRITING,

AND PRESENTATION

For 2011-212: Referencing Book (Pocket Guide to APA Style) new edition available from Bookshop
APA Style to be used for all referencing



Student

Revised July 2011

1. ASSIGNMENT WRITING and PRESENTATION

There are **three major areas to be considered** when preparing an assignment at tertiary level - **content, format and referencing**. This booklet has been prepared to give you guidelines in these three areas.

CONTENT

When writing a formal assignment, it should not have headings, should not be written in point form, but should follow a series of logical steps.

ANSWER THE ESSAY TOPIC:

The first step, when writing an assignment, is to make sure you understand the essay topic and identify the main points to be answered within the paper. Take careful note of the wording of the topic statement and ensure you include the information requested. In particular, note terms such as outline, describe, discuss, contrast, compare, analyse, what?, why?, and present the information accordingly. Establish the points that the question allows you to leave out of the assignment.

BE WELL INFORMED:

Read widely, using several sources relating to the essay topic. Be sure to look at both sides of any issue, and avoid bias. Choose the material you include in the essay carefully. Do not include material just because it is interesting, rather, make sure that it is relevant to the topic. As a rough guide, a 2000 word assignment should contain a reference list of at **least** seven sources, using both books and current journal articles, if possible.

There are a number of options for locating relevant information for your study. This includes not only web sites accessed on the World Wide Web in the public domain, but also databases that are accessible to you as a student of Avondale College.

The following two pages give some examples of ways of accessing that information. For some of these sites you will need your student log-in and password.

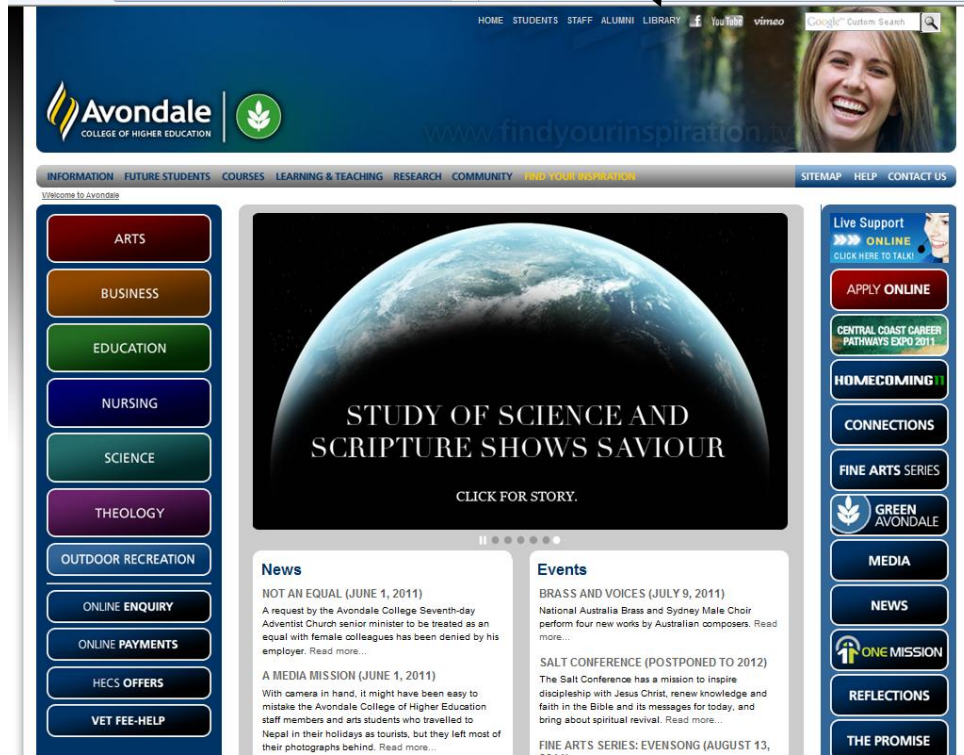
1. Accessing Learning Resources on Avondale's web site

This illustrates how to make best use of the Avondale Library resources. You can access this from any computer that has an internet connection.

Accessing Learning Resources on Avondale's web site.

Step 1: Open the Avondale web page

Step 2: Go to the top menu list and select Library



Step 3: Select either the catalogue (from menu on screen) OR

Select a database or serials collection for journal articles



BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL TRAPS WITH WEB BASED MATERIAL

If accessing web sites, ensure that the material is from a reputable site. For example if you are researching for diabetes care, a “Google” search will bring up a list of a wide range of sites. This site at <http://www.lifescan.com/diabetes/> is a company sponsored site and is therefore not as reliable as this site from the Australian Diabetes Society (<http://www.racp.edu.au/ads/>).

As another example, a search in Google can bring up sites that look reputable but are quite different to each other when you explore further. A search may bring up sites labelled as **Diabetes Australia** and would appear to be reliable sites but are not evidence based, nor unbiased. The following two examples show what may appear as a result of a search. Both are titled Diabetes Australia but are quite different with the first one being of unknown origins (no detail is given on the site and this should make you suspicious) but the second is a professional association and is therefore more likely to have reliable information.

Diabetes Australia

Learn What Foods Affect Your Blood

Sugar. We Are On Your Side!

(<http://www.diabetes-symptoms-and-supplies.com/diabetes/diabetes-supply.html>)

The above site is **NOT** as reliable as the following example but both are titled similarly.

Diabetes Australia

Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) <http://www.adea.com.au/> ...

Dietitian’s Association of Australia

(<http://www.daa.asn.au>. Diabetes Centre)

ORGANISE IDEAS LOGICALLY:

Utilising data collected from various sources, present the information in logical steps so that it is easy for the reader to follow your ideas. Link ideas together and ensure that you show clearly how the information presented relates to the overall topic. Do not just take slabs from various references, place them in sequence, and then add a conclusion. Make frequent use of *transitional phrases* to help keep the reader informed of the direction you are taking.

COMPLY WITH THE WORD LIMIT:

Make sure you meet the word limit, but do not exceed it. Usually a latitude of 10% either side is allowed. The total number of words is made up of the actual essay itself and does **NOT** include the title page, abstract, references used in the actual essay, reference list or appendix. Direct quotes are also excluded from this count.

ABSTRACT (or Synopsis): Written on a separate page.

You may be asked to include an abstract or synopsis in the assignment. An abstract is a concise and simple statement of the assignment topic and is placed before the actual essay. It usually consists of approximately 100-150 words in length, states the purpose of the essay and provides a clear and brief summary of what is written. As well, it indicates the purpose, direction, main arguments and conclusions of the paper. It is not merely an introduction, nor is it a list of the contents of the paper - it needs to indicate the direction taken, the main

themes and the conclusions reached in your discussion of the topic. Remember, it is not a proposal but a summary, therefore it is written in past tense.

Many articles and research papers in journals contain abstracts. Take the time to review these for in so doing you will be able to determine what constitutes an effective abstract. The abstract (or synopsis) is written after you have finished your paper/essay, thus it is a true reflection of the completed work.

STRUCTURE THE CONTENT:

The essay should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion:

The introduction forms the first paragraph and it should clarify the topic of the essay, define major terms and outline what **will be** presented in the essay. It should be written in such a way that it encourages the reader to read on.

The body of the essay is where the topic statement or question is actually answered. The main points of the topic should be presented in logical order and each point elaborated on separately. Consider the appropriate balancing of main points - at times they may need to be weighted equally within the assignment, at other times some points may need more elaboration than others. Factors such as relevance, word constraints and the purpose of the essay need to be kept in perspective when making such decisions.

The conclusion of the essay constitutes the final paragraph and should bring together, in summary, the major points presented in the body of the essay. The purpose is to sum up and reflect on the information found in relation to the topic, therefore no new ideas should be presented in the conclusion. The conclusion should be a concise statement of meaning drawn from your presentation and should show how it has answered the question. In addition, the conclusion rounds off the assignment, so that it does not finish abruptly. Avoid concluding with a quote.

WRITE CORRECTLY:

Tertiary assignments should be presented as professional papers, therefore you must take particular care with the use of formal language, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling and tense.

Formal Language: Use formal language and terms in essays, avoiding jargon, cliches and slang. When identifying people in the text of the essay do not refer to them by first name only. Surnames may be used on their own or first names may be used with surnames, if desired. As a rule, write essays in the **third person**, avoiding the use of first and second person pronouns such as 'I', 'we', 'us', 'our', etc., unless the topic asks you to share your own experience. Use **gender neutral language** as appropriate.

Punctuation: Ensure that all punctuation is correct. This also applies to use of punctuation marks when identifying sources and in the reference list. Please carefully follow the guidelines given in the referencing section to ensure that this is done correctly.

Special care needs to be taken with the use of **apostrophes**, especially in relation to their use to depict ownership. Remember to place the apostrophe after the actual owner/s. For example, the nurse's uniform versus the nurses' uniforms. Be aware also of the use of an apostrophe in the word it's. It's refers to "it is", whereas, its refers to "the possessive case singular of it". Take care to also differentiate between your (pertaining or belonging to you) and you're (you are).

Sentence Structure: As a general rule, material in tertiary essays should be presented in complete sentences and presentation of information in point form should be avoided. Ensure that correct **grammar** is used, and check that each sentence contains a **subject** and a **verb** and is constructed as a complete sentence.

Spelling: There should be no spelling errors in the submitted assignment. Use a dictionary or spell check to ensure that all spelling is correct. Be consistent with the form of spelling used - do not mix American and Anglicised forms.

Tense: Avoid changes of tense within an assignment, and certainly within the one paragraph. Write in the tense that is appropriate to the particular topic. For example, an essay on an historical topic should be written in past tense, whereas one which is describing the status quo should be written in present tense.

FORMAT

An assignment should be submitted in a form that makes it a pleasure to read and grade. Untidy presentation and inconsistency in format can reduce the ease of reading the assignment and therefore make it difficult to assess the content. This can result in a reduced grade. The following guidelines should be followed when preparing the final draft for submission.

ABBREVIATIONS:

Abbreviations may be used but only after they have initially been identified in full when first used. For example:

.....the blood pressure (BP). His BP was subsequently.....

APPENDIXES:

Material which is deemed necessary to support information in the text of the assignment but which is not considered appropriate for inclusion in the actual essay may be included as an appendix. Generally such items as letters, tables, graphs, questionnaires etc. would be placed in the appendix. Appendixes are placed at the back of the assignment, after the reference list. Each appendix included in the assignment must be referred to in the actual text of the essay.

BINDING OF ASSIGNMENT:

Make sure that the pages of your assignment are **firmly** stapled together. With a title page as a cover sheet (see p. 9 for details on a title page) so there is no risk of any pages going missing. It is preferred that a folder/plastic sleeve with a transparent front, be used as this allows immediate visibility of the title page.

CAPITALISATION OF WORDS:

Any proper nouns such as names of medications, ward areas, medical procedures etc. should

begin with a capital letter when referred to in the assignment.

FOOTNOTES:

Using the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style, content footnotes are used only for the purposes of providing additional discussion or clarification of information. If used at all they are to be restricted to explanations which the writer may feel it necessary to make. This does not replace in-text referencing. Copyright permission footnotes acknowledge a particular source for example, when reprinted table or figure is used with permission of the author.

HANDWRITING:

Handwriting is not acceptable in a piece of academic work. Assignments should be submitted as typed papers. The submitted assignment should not contain any cross-outs or liquid paper corrections. The **Font Size** used should be **12 point**.

LINE SPACING:

Typed assignments must be **double-spaced**. The only exception to this is with quoted material which is 40 words or more in length. Such quotes are to be single spaced and indented (check the section on quotes on next page for further information regarding this).

MARGINS:

A margin of approximately 2.5 centimetres all round, on the left and right edges of the page, as well as the top and bottom, is essential.

NUMBERING PAGES:

Pages of an essay must be numbered. Page one should commence with the first page of the actual essay (after the title page and abstract page).

NUMBERS AND NUMERALS:

In the text of the essay, spell out rounded numbers less than 10 and any numbers used to commence a sentence, otherwise numerals are used.

ORDER OF SECTIONS:

The various sections of an assignment are to be bound (firmly) together in the following order:

- Title Page
- Abstract (if required)
- The actual essay (commence page numbering here)
- Reference List
- Appendix/es (if applicable)

PARAGRAPHS:

Make sure that you clearly indicate where a new paragraph has commenced. This can be done by putting an extra line space between paragraphs.

Correct paragraph structure is an important part of good essay writing. Look critically at your paragraphs. A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops one main point or idea. Generally, the idea is introduced in the key sentence and the successive sentences explain or

illustrate the point that the paragraph is making. Ensure that there is continuity between paragraphs with one paragraph flowing logically on from the previous one. ***Do not have paragraphs which consist of only one or two sentences.*** A paragraph should be approximately 100 words in length, although a range of about 50 to 150 words is acceptable.

PHOTOCOPIES:

As a general rule, do not include photocopied material in an assignment. If it is necessary to include such material, ensure that it is referenced correctly. It is usually appropriate to include photocopied material as an appendix rather than part of the actual essay. Please be aware that under **no circumstances** are you able to **copy medical records or patient notes**.

It is important to keep a photocopy of each assignment you submit. This allows you to refer to the material if necessary and it ensures that a second copy is available if the submitted copy is inadvertently misplaced.

QUOTES:

All quoted material must be identified as being quoted. Direct quotation occurs when you use “word for word material directly quoted from another author’s work” (APA, 2010, p. 173). There are two methods of doing this depending on the length of the quote.

Where a quote is **shorter than 40 words** in length it is to be included normally in the text of the essay and identified by **double** quotation marks at the beginning and end of the actual quoted material. The source of the quote must also be given within the sentence or at its conclusion. Please note the placement of the full stop at the end of the sentence. For example:

It is stated that “falls are frequently reported adverse events in the adult inpatient setting” (Perry, Potter, & Elkin, 2012, p. 37).

Alternatively, the author’s name can be used as part of the actual sentence.

For example: (Note also the use of et al as the authors have previously been cited above)

Perry et al. (2012, p. 37) state that “falls are frequently reported adverse events in the adult inpatient setting”.

Quotes which are 40 words or longer in length are to be indented. Quotation marks are not used in this instance. For example:

It is emphasised that:

Assessment of respiratory function is one of the most critical assessment skills because alterations can be life threatening. Routine assessment is essential; changes in respirations or breath sounds can occur quickly as a result of a variety of factors, including immobility, infection, and fluid overload. (Perry et al. 2012, p. 37)

Quotes should not be used in excess. They should be reserved for such items as definitions, brief extracts that cannot be expressed adequately in another way, or for special emphasis. As

a general guide, quotes should constitute less than 10% of an essay.

When quoting, copy the original wording **accurately** and use the same spelling and punctuation as is used in the original. If there is an error in the original this can be identified in the quote by placing [sic] after the error. When including a quote in the text of an essay, make sure that the sentence is grammatically correct. If it is necessary to include an extra word or phrase in a quote to ensure correct sentence structure, place the word or phrase in square brackets.

If you omit part of the original work within a quote then indicate this with three ellipsis points as such ... with another full stop added if this is at the end of a sentence or between two sentences.

PLAGIARISM:

Please familiarise yourself with Avondale College policy on plagiarism (see www.avondale.edu.au under information/policies/academic integrity). The APA guide for referencing (APA, 2010) clearly indicates that you cannot present another's ideas as your own. It must be noted that "Whether paraphrasing, quoting an author directly, or describing an idea that influenced your work, you must credit the source" (APA, 2010, p. 172). This infers that the reader should **never** be confused or in doubt as to where the information or ideas have been sourced. It is best to reference more often than not.

Usually, it is more appropriate to paraphrase the information into your own words, avoiding plagiarism by identifying the source of the paraphrased material and by providing a page number or paragraph number (APA, 2010, p. 175).

If you fail to adequately reference in an academic paper, you may be required to re-submit the paper after you receive some educational instruction from your lecturer. Please be aware that academic penalties may apply for a resubmission and increase in severity as you progress through your degree.

TITLE PAGE:

A title page is to be placed at the front of the assignment and must include the detail below **as well as the required signed statement regarding plagiarism and ownership of work:**

Student Name:

And/or Id Number:

Subject:

Title:

Word Length Submitted:

Date Submitted:

Lecturer:

This is followed by the statement regarding plagiarism and ownership of work

Please list the details in the same order as above or alternatively use the Assignment Title Page supplied by the Faculty office on either campus.

TYPING:

As much as possible, assignments should be presented as typed papers, preferably done on a word processor. The submitted assignment should not contain any cross-outs or liquid paper corrections. Always use **double spacing** for typed assignments. Type on one side of the paper

only.

NOTE: The **Font Size** used should be **12 point**.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments should be submitted by the due date to either the lecturer or into the assignment box located at the secretary's office, Faculty of Nursing and Health at Wahroonga. Once submitted the assignment is stamped and dated to verify when it was received.

Postal submission of assignments is permitted but you should use an Express Post bag as you will be given a receipt that verifies postage and can track the item if it is lost in the post.

Postage of assignments from within Australia for the Sydney Campus should be to the following address.

Lecturer's Name
Avondale College
Faculty of Nursing and Health
185 Fox Valley Road
WAHROONGA NSW 2076.

Electronic submission of assignments must be pre-arranged with the lecturer. If agreed by the lecturer you can submit an assignment electronically (via e-mail) but cannot assume the assignment is received until a confirmation message is sent back to you from the lecturer. The lecturer reserves the right to request a printed copy if the electronic version is not correctly formatted.

A signed declaration regarding plagiarism and the indication that this is your own work must still be submitted.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Concise rules of APA style* (6th ed.). Washington DC: author.
- Perry, A. G., Potter, P. A., & Elkin, M. E. (2012). *Nursing interventions & clinical skills*. (5th ed.). St Louis, Missouri: Elsevier Mosby.

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