

## Point of View

Eliminate *I, me, my, you, we, our,* and *one* from scientific writing, unless it is absolutely necessary, such as an experiment that you personally performed.

- APA style recommends the third-person.
  - Instead of “One may think that everyone gets divorced these days,” use “It is common to think that everyone gets divorced these days.”
  - Work to be conscious of your point of view. It will take some practice to eliminate the first- and second-persons from your writing, but you can do it.

## Sentence Structure

Where is your subject, where is your verb?

- Sentences should read smoothly.
  - Nothing will kill a paper like an invasion of awkward wording.
  - Think lucid; think clear; think logical; think coherent.
  - Does each sentence flow smoothly off the tongue? Or, is it difficult to read out loud?
- Begin to recognize the subject and the verb within each sentence. After this, you will begin to notice how many of your sentences begin with a subject and how many begin with introductory material.
  - If most of your sentences begin with introductory material, you will likely need to simplify your prose.
  - If few to none of your sentences begin with introductory material, you may need to complexify your prose.
- Either way, sentence structure needs to vary. Sentence structure that does not vary lacks luster and is repetitive to read.

## Verb Tense & Voice

Verbs must agree with one another and remain active.

- In order for your writing to improve, it is paramount that you begin to recognize your verb tenses. Notice when your tenses are in past, present, and future.
- Most academic writing requires an active voice, in which the subject of the verb performs the action. (In the passive voice, the subject of the verb receives the action.) Note that the 6<sup>th</sup> edition *APA Publication Manual* instructs writers to “Prefer the active voice” (2009, p. 77).
  - For example, “Johnny throws apples” is active, and “The apples are thrown by Johnny” is passive. In the first sentence, the subject is the performer (Johnny) of the act; in the second sentence, Johnny sits in the back seat (and could easily be omitted) while the objects he throws, apples, sit in the front seat.
  - Notice the simplicity of the active voice versus the passive voice. The passive voice is wordy (three words versus six), awkward, and, well, *passive*.
  - The active voice is clear and concise, vigorous and direct.
- As you write for different assignments, you will inevitably have to use verb tenses and voices other than the present and the active. For example, when writing an evidence-based practice, you will use the past

tense to discuss the experiments you performed. The **key** is to be conscious of your verb choices and then to make a conscious decision to use one tense or voice over the other. That way, if someone questions your choice of voice, you can defend your use with a logical argument.

## **Typos**

You must actually proofread your paper for mistakes; read it out loud; have a friend read it out loud. Notice where your friend stumbles over the words. Then, fix that area.

- Spell-check does not catch misused words, such as through/though/thorough or two/to/too. It is your job to read your paper carefully to eliminate these simple errors.
- When a paper contains typos, the author immediately loses credibility. If an author does not take the time to accurately check their paper, they likely did not take the time to accurately check the results from their experiments.
- DO NOT lose credibility due to typos. They are easy to fix. They just take time and concentration.

## **Too Much Summary & Research**

I know, I know, too much research sounds like a joke. But, after reading too many student papers that showed no trace of the student's ideas in the paper, I can no longer laugh at the idea. Instead, in these papers, I end up learning a lot about other people's ideas.

- Just because the assignment calls for a "research paper" does not preclude your voice and ideas from entering the paper.
- You must learn that summary and research exist in a paper (even in a research paper) **only** to support your ideas.
- Thus, a good rule of practice is to read through your paper and highlight other people's ideas. Do they make up the majority of the paper? Or, do they seem to exist only in tandem with your ideas?
- Of course, in scientific writing, much research is used, summarized, and cited; however, you need to learn how to make your voice and your ideas the main focus of your paper.
- Follow the three-step quotation guideline: When using quotes and paraphrases, you **must** (1) state your own ideas in relation to the quote, (2) introduce the person who is being quoted and what qualifications make his or her quote credible, and (3) document the quote in APA style.