

Academic Style Guides: APA MLA CMS

Style Guides

A style guide is a book that details expectations of academic writing. Different disciplines use different style guides.

Find out which style you should use for each course. APA, MLA, and CMS are the most common. Most instructors request that you either buy the actual style guide *or* a condensed version.

This handout is not intended as a comprehensive overview of specific styles, but rather, as an overview of things to keep in mind when writing an academic paper. Many websites have condensed versions and examples:

- <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/journalism/cite.html>
- www.calstatela.edu/library/styleman.htm

Academic Style

Writing Style

- Orderly presentation of ideas
- Precision and clarity
- Use language of the discipline

Grammar

- Agreement of subject and verb
- Pronoun reference
- Tense agreement
- Parallel construction

Unbiased Language

- Be specific /word carefully re:
 - Gender • Sexual orientation • Race

Format

- Title page
- Running heads
- Levels of headings
- Page numbers
- Lists/tables/graphics
- Spacing
- Indentation
- Font
- Underlining/italics/bold
- In-text citations
- Bibliographical/reference citations

References

Reference

- Give credit when
 - Quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing
 - Using someone's ideas, opinions, or theory
 - Referring to information that is not "common knowledge"
- All in-text citations must be noted in the reference list
- Use the style guide. It is impossible to guess!
- Keep excellent notes/index cards with all info

Plagiarism

- Not giving credit to the source
- Against Vancouver Island University policy and has serious consequences (see Student Academic Code of Conduct in the General Regulations section of the VIU Calendar or online at:

<http://www.viu.ca/calendar/GeneralInformation/generalregulations.asp#codeofconduct>

In-text citations

- With signal phrases
- Without signal phrases

Quotations

- Require signal phrase
- Format differs according to number of words

Internet Citations

- Use same criteria to cite and refer
- Evaluate source/avoid general sites (Google)/use academic sources

Reference List

- Only for works cited in paper
- New page/continuous pagination
- Double space throughout/do not add extra space after heading
- Hanging indent
- Alphabetical order by author
- Follow style format *exactly* for type of source (book, journal, website, etc)

Editing/Proofreading

- Punctuation: Note rules, especially with citations and references
- Spelling: Use preferred spelling/check hyphenation
- Capitalization: Note rules, especially with titles, headings, and references
- Abbreviations: Note rules re: in-text, punctuation, capitalization, plurals

Numbers

- Check to express as words or numbers
- Ordinal numbers (first, second, third...) are written out as words

Need More Help?

Learning to use a style guide can be difficult and frustrating. If you want more help, make an appointment to see an Education Counsellor at Student Affairs.

Bring your style guide, your essay, and all your notes and references. If you are using Internet sources, bring a printed page with the website information.