


2015 Athletic Training Educators' Conference


Academic Writing: Tips for Developing a Well-Written Manuscript

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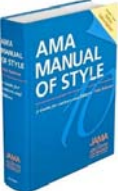

Quotes

- "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."
• Ernest Hemingway (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/writing>)
- "Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very;' your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."
• Mark Twain (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/writing>)
- "Writing is not what the writer does after the thinking is done; writing is thinking."^{1(p88)}
• Donald M. Murray
• **Ponder this quote for a later discussion**



Another Quote



- Quote from the Foreword
 - "I never cease to be amazed by the general inability of physicians, other health professionals, and scientists to communicate through the written word."^{2(pv)}
- This does not mean the writer is:
 - Unintelligent
 - Incompetent
 - Or they have poor ideas
- This does mean **writing is a skill that requires:**
 - *Ongoing practice*
 - *Critical feedback*
 - *Dedicated work*

Presentation Objectives


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    graph TD
      A[Discuss Techniques for Developing Your Writing Skills] --> B[Review Aspects of Writing the ATEJ Manuscript]
      A --> C[Describe Methods to Develop Your Productivity and Creativity]
      B --> D[Highlight AMA Style and Other Grammar Issues]
      C --> D
    
```

Developing Your Writing Skills

- Finding Your Voice
- Tightening Your Writing
- General Writing Tips



Let's Warm Up

- Work with 1 or 2 other people
 - You will need a sheet of paper, or ability to write on a tablet
 - Divide the page in 2 halves
 - On the first half, 1 person will draw symbols, objects, pictures, graphs, etc. (but not words) that express/identify/question an idea, fact, or theory.
 - On the second half, the other person(s) will write words, phrases, or sentences that state the point of the pictures.
 - You will have 4 minutes for this exercise.

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 - You will have 4 minutes for this exercise.
- Take-away for this activity
 - **Challenge word choices and provide a new direction into writing**

Example

- Compare this ...
 - The participants for this study were 400 randomly-selected certified athletic trainers who graduated during the 2004-2005 academic year and became certified in 2005 because this allowed young professionals to have at least 5 years to potentially become involved as professionals.

Example

- With this...
 - We randomly selected 400 athletic trainers who graduated and earned their Board of Certification credential in 2005. We surveyed these young professionals because they had at least 5 years of experience as an athletic trainer.
- **How would you describe the differences?**

Finding Your Voice

- **Writing is speaking; a conversation between you and the "listener"**
 - Our day-to-day conversations are sloppy, BUT...
 - Our verbal **conversations control the meaning and intention of our words and actions**
 - **"Finding your voice" refers to learning how you want to speak to someone through writing and accurately share your story³**
- So what is your take-away advice?
 - **Hear what is written**
 - You or someone else must read your writing aloud
 - **Listen for weak repetitions, poor word choices, and grammatical errors**

Tightening Your Writing

- **Don't repeat words or ideas** unless it strengthens the writing³
- Edit/revise the following sentence
 - **Poor:** We interviewed the subjects following completion of the survey. Subjects completed the survey first to provide us direction for the semi-structured interviews.

Tightening Your Writing

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- Edit/revise the following sentence
 - **Poor:** We interviewed the subjects following completion of the survey. Subjects completed the survey first to provide us direction for the semi-structured interviews.
 - **Better:** Subjects completed the survey first to direct our semi-structured interviews.

Tightening Your Writing

- **Certain words can clutter sentences, fail to add meaning, or unnecessarily categorize;** be careful when using these words³

- Which, that
- All, what, thing,
- Type, kind, situation, area, phase, aspect, factor, one

- Edit/revise the following sentence

- **Poor:** The most important finding that we discovered with this study was that feedback significantly increased learning.

Tightening Your Writing

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- Which, that
- All, what, thing,
- Type, kind, situation, area, phase, aspect, factor, one

- Edit/revise the following sentence

- **Poor:** The most important finding ~~that we discovered with this study~~ was ~~that~~ feedback significantly increased learning.
- **Better:** The key finding was feedback significantly increased learning.

Tightening Your Writing

- Try to **avoid naming/grouping something when it is not needed**³

- *In other words, write in the active voice, not passive voice*

- Edit/revise the following sentence

- **Poor:** Thomas and John were the two subjects who expressed the greatest interest in peer instruction. They differed in what aspects of peer instruction they desired, however. Thomas preferred the feedback he received from his peers, and John preferred the social nature of peer instruction.

Tightening Your Writing

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- Edit/revise the following sentence

- **Poor:** Thomas and John ~~were the two subjects who expressed the greatest interest in peer instruction. They differed in what aspects of peer instruction they desired, however.~~ Thomas preferred the feedback ~~he received from his peers,~~ and John preferred the social nature ~~of peer instruction.~~
- **Better:** Thomas and John expressed the greatest interest in peer instruction; however, Thomas desired peer feedback and John preferred the social experience.

Other General Writing Tips

- Start with the **"Paragraph Topic Sentence" and Build**⁴

- Use the *paragraph as a unit of thought*

- **Write a good sentence** to focus the thought

- Skip a couple lines and **write a good sentence for the next thought**

- Organize **thoughts/sentences so your ideas flow**

- **Go back to each thought/sentence and add notes** to expand it

- **Develop the notes into more sentences** to complete the thought

- Review, reorganize, and edit as needed

Other General Writing Tips


- **It is not about sounding smart, it is about using good words and phrases (eg, simple, familiar)** to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely⁵

- **Avoid intensifiers as modifiers** (eg, very, basically, actually)

- **Avoid trendy jargon, slang, idioms** (ie, avoid the business literature)


- Instead of "thinking outside the box," just write "thinking"

- To "give 110 percent" is not possible




Other General Writing Tips

- Write using **standard, edited American English**
 - Used for correct grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling
- If you are wondering which form to use, **go with American English over British English**
- Example:
 - “Among” and “amongst” have the same meaning (ie, “in the company of”) BUT amongst is rarely used in the American form of English



Other General Writing Tips

- **Write in the active voice & 1st person**⁵
- The **passive voice introduces ambiguity and clutters the sentence; active verbs communicate the specific action**
 - **Poor:** The authors were supportive of...
 - **Better:** We supported...
- **Quick test:**
 - Circle all the “being” verbs (is, are, was, were, am, be, been) in a paragraph/on a page
 - If equal or greater number of passive verbs than active verbs, then the writing is passive



Other General Writing Tips


- **Limit or avoid using abbreviations**⁵
 - Use only recognized abbreviations; avoid self-made abbreviations just because it is repeated in the manuscript
- **Emphasize the facts/evidence**, not who produced it⁵
 - This does not mean avoiding key authors/researchers; still identify these individuals
- **Read examples of how you want to write**⁴
 - Reading, in general, is always helpful
 - Reading material similar to how you want to write is even better
 - “Mimic the template”






Developing Your Productivity and Creativity


- Getting Started
- Removing Distractions
- Maintaining Motivation
- Writing is a Group Activity



Getting Started

- **Use a Ritual to Prepare Yourself to Write**^{6,7}
- Inspiration is a powerful source, BUT the demands of academia can stifle it
- **A preparatory ritual can lead to a creative start even when you don't feel it**
- Be consistent with the mental warm-up:
 - **Start the day with a morning a swim; get your coffee/latte/other; sharpen your pencils/clean your computer screen...**






Getting Started

- Develop a **Writing Routine & Stick to it**^{6,7}
 - An extension of the preparatory ritual
 - If you know what to write, write it
- If not, **use a technique best for you & set concrete goals (eg, 1000 words):**
 - Free write; brainstorm; mind mapping; re-read a key article/chapter

Removing Distractions

- **When writing, start on whatever is in your head at that time³**
- In other words, starting at the beginning of the paper is not always the best choice
- **How can you introduce a paper that does not yet exist?**



Removing Distractions

- **Going back to the quotes, what does Murray mean?**


“Writing is not what the writer does after the thinking is done; writing is thinking.”^{71(p88)}

- **Write first, revise/edit later**
- In general, writing a perfect initial draft is not possible
- **Get what is in your mind onto paper ASAP**

Maintaining Motivation

- **Set Priorities**
- Riddle: “How do you eat an elephant?”

One bite at a time.



- A thought on ranking projects:⁷
 1. **Finish projects with deadlines**; external motivation can help (but sometimes hurt) creativity
 2. **Complete manuscripts with requested revisions**; they are one step closer to being published
 3. **Develop presentations into manuscripts**; a level of inspiration is already there

Maintaining Motivation

- **Monitor Progress and Reward Accomplishments⁷**
- Develop a **table of writing projects with steps/goals** through the completion process
- When you **achieve a goal, give yourself a reward**
 - Never reward writing by not writing.
- If **“blocked,” go back to the start**

Let’s Test Your Puzzle Abilities

- Working alone, solve as many as you can in 2 minutes. • **ANSWERS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 L. of the A. {Example} • 7 W. of the A. W. • 1001 A. N. • 12 S. of the Z. • 54 C. in a D. with the J. • 8 P. in the S. S. • 13 S. on the A. F. • 18 H. on a G. C. • 90 D. in a R. A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 letters of the alphabet • 7 wonders of the ancient world • 1001 Arabian nights • 12 signs of the zodiac • 54 cards in a deck with the jokers • 8 planets in the solar system • 13 stripes on the American flag • 18 holes on a golf course • 90 degrees in a right angle
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Let’s Test Your Puzzle Abilities

- Working with a partner, solve as many as you can in 2 minutes. • **ANSWERS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 l. in a Y. • 8 W. of H. the E. • 20 Y. that R. V. W. S. • 60 S. in a M. • 40 T. with A. B. • 1 D. at a T. • 16 O. in a P. • 4 H. of the A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 inches in a yard • 8 wives of Henry the Eighth • 20 years that Rip Van Winkle slept • 60 seconds in a minute • 40 thieves with Ali Baba • 1 day at a time • 16 ounces in a pound • 4 Horseman of the Apocalypse
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What is the take-away with this activity?

Writing is a Group Activity

- Writing and learning are closely connected
 - **Both communicate information that adds/changes what we know**^{3,8}
- Writing with a group:^{3,7}
 - Transfers knowledge
 - Encourages growth from sharing experiences
 - Helps to find your writing voice
 - Provides and enhances motivation
 - Challenges each member to meet individual and group goals
 - Highlights and celebrates successes
 - Provides reflection with failures or other roadblocks
- Take-away:
 - **Find or develop a support group that will challenge you to write more often, faster, and better**



AMA Style and Other Grammar Issues

- Some Common Issues Seen in the Manuscript

AMA Style (10th edition)²

- What is it?
 - **A tool to help write organized, clear, readable, and respected manuscripts.**
- How to use it?
 - Start by reading your manuscript
 - Use the manual to **correctly present your information when it is not described in the ATEJ Author's Guide**
 - If something does not "sound right," research how to correct it
 - It also has a section on grammar, **but you will probably need other resources?** →



AMA Style


- Some Common Issues
 - **Citations are Arabic numerals** (eg, 3, 11, 42), superscript, and in order they are presented in the manuscript; citations are **placed**:^{2,10}
 - **After identifying the author**
 - **End of the phrase that is cited, or**
 - **End of sentence if entire sentence is cited material**
 - **Manuscripts under review are NOT listed in the references** but identified in text as "unpublished data"²
 - Refer to the AMA manual on how to write all references correctly
 - Remember, bibliographic software (eg, EndNote) will create a reference list based on how the information is typed into the fields

AMA Style

- Some Common Issues
 - Use the correct abbreviation²
 - **et al**, NOT et. al.
 - Means "and associates/colleagues"
 - **eg**, NOT e.g.
 - Means "for example"
 - Do not use etc. at the end of examples
 - **ie**, NOT i.e.
 - Means "that is" or "in other words"
 - Report **numbers to the level of precision you measured**²
 - Round up or down depending on what number is to the right of the last significant digit
 - Calculations (eg, mean, SD) can be expressed to 1 digit beyond the accuracy of the instrument


AMA Style

- Some Common Issues
 - **Comma tends to be overused**²
 - May want to use more sparingly (see manual for rules)
 - **Semi-colon and colon provide a more definitive break in thoughts**, such as with independent clauses (see manual for rules)²
 - **DO NOT begin sentences with Arabic numerals**²
 - Either restructure the sentence or write the number as a word




AMA Style

- Some Common Issues
 - Hyphenate** compound adjectives, adjective-noun compound, or other similar compounds that precede the noun they describe²
 - eg, **decision-making methods but not clinical decision making**
- Quotations²
 - Use **double quotes for material you quote**
 - Block quotes for material 4 or more lines in length
 - Use **single quotes only with quotations in quotations**



AMA Style


- Some Common Issues
 - Capitalize only proper nouns in the body of the manuscript²
 - eg, **athletic training, on its own, is not a proper noun**
 - There are additional rules for section titles
 - Use the correct word/spelling; some examples:²
 - Affect (verb) or effect (noun)
 - Between (2 parties) or among (more than 2 parties)
 - Gender (social construct) or sex (biological construct)
 - Health care, NOT healthcare
 - Use the **correctly formatted statistical symbol**; some examples:²
 - n = size of subsample
 - N = total sample size
 - P = statistical probability



Knowledge Check

- How many AMA style errors are in the following sentence?

35 subjects (n = 35) with healthcare education experience (e.g., they completed at least 1 full semester of coursework) and who were between the ages of 18 and 30 years (mean age = 24.128 years) comprised the entire sample for our study.




Knowledge Check

- How many AMA style errors are in the following sentence?

35 subjects (n = 35) with healthcare education experience (e.g., they completed at least 1 full semester of coursework) and who were between the ages of 18 and 30 years (mean age = 24.128 years) comprised the entire sample for our study.

➤ 6




Knowledge Check

- How many AMA style errors are in the following sentence?

35 subjects (n = 35) with **healthcare** education experience (e.g. {2 corrections}), they completed at least 1 full semester of coursework) and who were between the ages of 18 and 30 years (mean age = 24.128 years) comprised the entire sample for our study.


➤ 6

Thirty-five subjects (N = 35) with **health care** education experience (ie, they completed at least 1 full semester of coursework) and who were between the ages of 18 and 30 years (mean age = 24.1 years) comprised the entire sample for our study.



Some Other Grammar Myths

- Myth:** Do not "strand" a preposition at the end of a sentence
 - Let the context of the sentence drive what reads best
 - Example: "He is a person with whom I disagree." OR "**He is a person I disagree with.**"
- Myth:** Do not split an infinitive
 - Again, let the context of the sentence determine how it should be written
 - Example: "**To boldly go** where no man has gone before" is perfectly acceptable.
- Myth:** Use the indefinite article "a" before the word if it begins with a vowel. Use "an" if it begins with a consonant.
 - Use "**a/an**" depending on how the succeeding word is pronounced.
 - If pronounced with a vowel sound, then use "an" to aid the pronunciation
 - Example: **an honor; an herb**



Writing the ATEJ Manuscript

- Overview of the Review Process
- Authors' Guide: Key Issues
- Advice for Resubmissions/Revisions

Overview of the ATEJ Review Process

EIC	Associate Editor	Assistant Editor
Assigns Associate Editor and/or Reviewers	Assigns Reviewer & Manages Flow of the Manuscript through the Review Process	Reviews the manuscript for substantive content issues once the manuscript is accepted
Manages Flow of the Manuscript through the Review Process	Provides Recommendation for Publication with supporting rationale to EIC	Focuses on content specific and flow issues including tables and figures
Provides Recommendation for Publication	Ranks Reviewers regarding the quality of their reviews	Provides author queries as deemed necessary to enhance the quality and clarity of the manuscript for review by EIC
Ranks Reviewers		
Works to get manuscript ready for AP		

ATEJ Authors' Guide

- **Currently being revised**
- Some possible key revisions
 - Human subject projects **must identify IRB approval, but how much to describe may change**
 - **Follow AMA Manual of Style for all writing issues NOT specifically identified in the Authors' Guide** (the guide trumps the AMA Manual)
 - The ATEJ **may review manuscripts other than those types identified in the Authors' Guide** (this includes qualitative research)

Advice for Resubmissions/Revisions

- **Plan on being asked to revise and resubmit⁷**
 - Don't get discouraged; rejection part of the process
 - Remember, **any well-written manuscript needs critical feedback**
 - Still a step closer to being published
- **Consider the amount of work required for the resubmission⁷**
 - If work is minor, resubmit
 - If work is major, weigh the effort to the payoff. Do you have the time?


Advice for Resubmissions/Revisions

- If resubmitting, read editor's and reviewers' comments:⁷
 - **Be receptive to the feedback**
 - Identify the deadline
 - **Identify what you can change and assess its work**
 - **Adhere to the directions on how to revise**
 - Bold new writing
 - Precisely describe the changes made and how it resolves the issue
 - **If you do not make a requested change, explain why**
 - Be appreciative and professional in your resubmission letter

A Final Quote

"Writing's still the most difficult job I've ever had, but it's worth it."
 - John Grisham
 (<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/writing>)

- **Questions**



- **Acknowledgements**
 - Donald Hudson
 - Retired English teacher and National Writing Project consultant

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