



GENEVA COLLEGE ONLINE PROGRAMS

Student Writing Handbook

October 2023

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DISCLAIMER: While this handbook follows most APA style guidelines, it is formatted as a handbook, not a scholarly research paper, and as such, its contents and format should not be followed as an example for your written assignments (except for the Sample Title Page provided).

Online Student Writing Handbook

The Online Student Writing Handbook will be a valuable and necessary tool as you pursue your degree at Geneva College. While there are many helpful online writing guides and tutorials linked for you in the School Resources portal in Moodle, we have designed this handbook to be a foundational guide to the most essential aspects of writing papers in your online program. It is our hope that you reference this tool and build upon what is presented in it as you develop your academic writing skills.

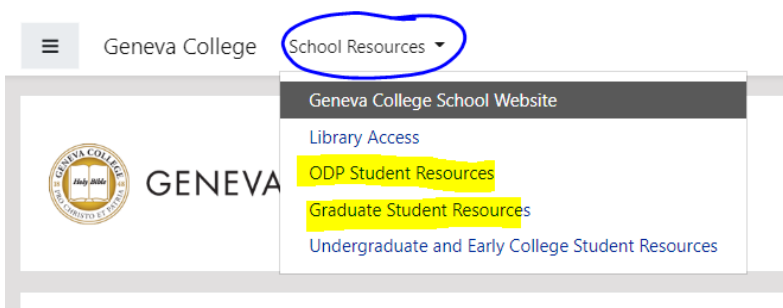
Top Tips for Writing in Your Geneva College Online Program

There are certain writing skills and habits that have historically been the most troublesome for Geneva College Online students, so we have gathered these tips to help you avoid them:

1. Begin EARLY! Never assume that your first draft will be your final draft.
 - a. Consider creating a [Concept Map](#) before you begin and commit to at least two drafts for each paper.
 - b. Brainstorm topics/ideas and create a visual representation of your thoughts in a map or list.
 - c. Organize your ideas on paper in an initial rough draft in which you simply “brain dump” your ideas; then walk away for a few hours or overnight. If possible, have someone else review it (see #3).
2. Refine that initial draft. Be sure you have addressed each aspect of the assignment according to the syllabus and check your organization of ideas. Then, polish your grammar, APA usage (citations and references), etc.
3. Allow enough time before submitting your final draft to have someone else (someone who is knowledgeable) proofread it; integrate their suggestions, if appropriate.
4. Incorporate course resources (textbooks, discussion forum posts, PPTs, videos, etc.) into your paper. This is where proper citation and reference skills are critical.
5. Answer/respond to each point of the assignment. Try using an outline or [Concept Map](#) alongside the assignment prompt. Be mindful that you do not get distracted or off-topic, and do not include your own opinions or reflections unless the prompt specifically asks for your perspective.
6. Write more formally than you speak.

7. Avoid the use of clichés, idioms, contractions, abbreviations used in texting (LOL, etc.), colloquial language, emoticons, etc., in academic writing. Visit [Appropriate Language - Purdue OWL](#) to learn more.
8. Write in a concise manner to reduce “wordiness.” Understand that more words do not make for a better paper. Visit [UNC Writing Center - Conciseness Handout](#) to learn more.
9. Are you feeling anxious about an assignment? Just get started! Visit the writing workshop in Moodle’s Student Resources titled, “[How to Deconstruct a Writing Prompt](#)” (under Writing: Advice and Resources > Before You Begin an Assignment). This video is also presented in the ADL 110 course. It will help you map out your ideas so that you feel less intimidated.

Find the resources in the top left corner of your  Dashboard:



10. The sooner you become accustomed to using in-text citations for quotes and paraphrases, the easier your writing will become. This handbook contains basic instructions to get you started.

Most Common Grammar Mistakes in Geneva College Online Courses

1. Lack of subject-verb agreement (see [Subject Verb Agreement - Purdue OWL](#))
2. Run-on sentences
3. Sentence fragments (see [Sentence Fragments – Purdue OWL](#))
4. Use of slang, colloquialisms or expressions, such as “a lot”, etc. (see Tip #7 above)
5. Unwarranted pronoun shifts (see p. 9)
6. Poor paragraph development (see p. 8)

Getting Started

Please be sure to research and review the most current APA guidelines (Student Paper) to ensure correct formatting. The most recent APA guidelines will supersede any information presented in this handbook.

[Purdue Online Writing Lab \(Purdue OWL\)](#) is an extremely comprehensive writing resource with information on the writing process, academic writing, mechanics, grammar, APA guidelines, in-text citations, references, and more. Refer to this site often and utilize the search bar when looking for resources related to a particular concept.

There are also other writing resources provided for you in the School Resources > Student Resources section of Moodle, as mentioned above. Be sure to check there for writing help.

If you cannot find what you're looking for on Purdue OWL or in the provided resources, try Googling it! There are many free and accessible resources that can provide writing help. However, be thorough and discerning in your research, as seeing something on the internet is not valid justification for writing that does not meet academic and/or APA guidelines and expectations.

Set Up Your Paper Properly

Naming your document. When a course syllabus refers to a written assignment, the expectation is for the work to be produced and saved in a Microsoft Word document (or other digital file, per syllabus instructions).

All of your writing assignments will be submitted and graded in Moodle through Turnitin. To help your instructor easily identify your work, each of your files should be saved/named according to the directions in the syllabus. This is typically:
LastNameFirstInitial_Course#_Session# (ex. SmithJ_BIO218_Session2.docx).

Before you begin writing a document, take time to set it up according to the directions below.

Margins

1. Margins should be 1" at the top, bottom, left and right of each page.
2. Do not justify margins. *Leave the right margin uneven.*
3. Do not divide words at the end of a line with a hyphen; allow the full word to go to the next line of text.

Font. Geneva recommends Calibri 12-point font because it is easy to read on digital devices and computer screens. APA guidelines recommend Times New Roman 12-point font, but they also allow for a *sans serif* font for ease of digital reading. Therefore, either of these two fonts will be accepted by instructors as following APA guidelines.

Title page. For precise directions, visit the [Purdue OWL APA Sample Paper](#).

Header and page number. For precise directions, visit the [Purdue OWL APA Sample Paper](#).

Not sure how to format the Header with a Page Number at the top? Try Googling it! There is a wealth of instructional advice on the internet about how to use such features in Microsoft Word and other applications.

Body of Paper

Paragraphs. The first line of each paragraph is indented (use Tab key on your keyboard for consistency).

Spaces between sentences. Throughout your document, use one space after a period before beginning a new sentence unless an instructor or publisher dictates otherwise. Please note that this is a change in the seventh edition of the APA Publication Manual.

Line spacing. Double-space between all lines of your paper, including block quotations (a direct quote of more than 40 words). You will notice that this handbook does not follow APA style for line spacing, as it is a reference guide, not a research paper. Please review Purdue OWL for [guidelines on block quotes](#).

Headings. Breaking up lengthy papers into sections or chapters improves the organization of ideas. Use headings to delineate those sections according to the APA style (please visit [Headings and Seriation - Purdue OWL](#) for more details). There are five different levels of headings, but most undergraduate writing will not involve more than the first three levels.

All writing assignments will have an introduction, but in APA style, introductions do not get their own heading. Simply begin your paper with the text of your introduction, without “announcing” that it is your introduction; it is assumed.

References. If you cite sources in the body of your paper, then you must include a list of References at the end of your paper that reflects the bibliographic information for each of the sources cited in your text.

Arrangement of paper. The order of the sections of your paper should be:

1. Title page (see the sample Title page on the next page).
2. Main Body
3. References

Note that APA Style typically requires an Abstract, but most Geneva College Online written assignments will NOT require one. Always follow the prompt for each assignment's requirements as listed in the syllabus.

Sample Title Page

1

Worldview: The Flavor of Our Experience

Student Name

Geneva College

Course XXX

Dr. Professor Name

January 1, 2023

WRITING STYLE

Paragraph Development

Strong paragraphs are essential to clear, concise writing, so it is essential that you develop strong paragraph building skills. There are some excellent resources available such as [UNC Writing Center - Paragraphs Handout](#).

First or introductory paragraph. An introduction is required in order to:

1. Interest the reader
2. State the thesis or purpose of the paper

How to develop paragraphs in the body of the paper. Following the topic sentence in the paragraph, you may use various elements to develop a complete paragraph:

1. Descriptive details
2. Facts and statistics (Remember to cite appropriately!)
3. Multiple examples
4. An anecdote or story to illustrate your point
5. An analogy or extended point by point comparison by definition
6. Quoting or paraphrasing a reliable source (such as your textbook or outside journal)
(Remember to cite appropriately!)
7. A combination of these methods

Concluding paragraph. A concluding paragraph is simply a summary so that you do not draw your paper to an abrupt close. It is generally good practice to restate your main points or the purpose of the paper and develop a logical conclusion from the points you have presented.

Writing Style

The purpose of giving attention to writing style is to develop clarity in your written communication. This section on style deals with the elements of presentation, appropriate use of voice and language, pronouns and verb tense.

Order of ideas. It is important to order the material you present so it is easy to follow the development of your ideas. One key technique is to use consistent terminology. For example, if you are writing about employee turnover, do not use the related term, employee retention, to refer to the same concept. Define your terms and use those terms throughout your paper. If more than one term applies to a concept, select the one that best fits the situation about which you are writing, define it, and use it consistently throughout your work.

Transitions. Transitions and transitional phrases show the reader how one idea connects to another in an orderly manner, keeping the ideas clear and organized, and the paper unified. Linking ideas with transitions allows you to develop your ideas thoroughly without confusing

the reader. This is particularly important when presenting more than one perspective on a topic, because the transitional words or phrases provide a link to the additional perspectives. Examples of such words are *furthermore*, *in addition*, *also*.

However, when you do change to a new or different idea, it is important that you use transition words to signal the change to the reader. Examples of such words are *however*, *but*, *on the other hand*, *although*.

It is also important to explain the organization of material in an introductory paragraph to each section. For example, you may note that you are going to discuss two perspectives, structure and function, in the analysis of your organization. Follow that note with a description of what you mean by each term. Then, in the following paragraphs, as you develop each perspective, you should note which of the issues you are addressing.

By ordering your ideas and using consistent terminology, transitional devices, and a clear structure, you help the readers develop a clear picture of the ideas you present.

Expression of Ideas. The purpose of your writing assignment should dictate the manner in which you express your ideas. An assignment asking for personal experience or reflection will not likely require the same level of formality and support from course materials that a research paper or project would entail.

Whatever the nature of the assignment, it is important to avoid shifts in verb tense and pronoun case. In other words, do not shift from using the third person [he, her] to the first person [I]. Pronouns and verb tenses are discussed below.

Active Versus Passive Voice. The “voice” in which you write will be determined by the type of writing assignment. This video briefly explains the difference between active and passive voice: [Jodie Salter Active Versus Passive Voice](#). Active voice is preferable in most writing because it is concise and more compelling. However, the passive voice can help prevent bias when presenting scientific information. This article provides additional helpful context on passive voice: [UNC Writing Center – Passive Voice](#). Ask your instructor or do some research on your own if you are unsure which voice to use in a particular assignment.

Appropriate Language for Academic Writing. As you progress in your academic career, make a point to continually refine and improve your academic writing style. One strategy to develop clarity and precision in the expression of your ideas is to eliminate the use of literary devices such as clichés, slang, euphemisms, jargon, colloquial language, etc., that are not appropriate for academic (research) writing. To learn more, visit [Appropriate Language - Purdue OWL](#).

Pronouns. The use of pronouns and verb tense is not only a matter of using correct grammar; it is also an element of style that is used differently in various kinds of writing and research.

For a tutorial on pronouns and antecedents, visit [Pronouns and Antecedents - Writing Commons](#). You can also review [Purdue OWL's section on Pronouns](#).

With regard to the use of pronouns, there are three important points to remember: (1) be certain that the antecedent (the noun for which the pronoun is used) is clear; (2) that pronouns agree with antecedents in number; and (3) that you use pronouns appropriate for the type of research you are reporting. Be careful that you do not use pronouns unless the reader can clearly determine the antecedent. If you have not used the noun for which a pronoun stands for several paragraphs, or if several nouns are used, any one of which could be the antecedent for the pronoun, be careful to repeat the noun in close proximity to the pronoun so the reference is clear.

It is important that pronouns agree with antecedents in number. For example, do not refer to an organization (singular in number) with a plural pronoun:

Incorrect: *The organization is not clear in their policy statements.*

Correct: *The organization is not clear in its policy statements.*

Sometimes students try to avoid gender bias through the use of a plural pronoun. This is perfectly acceptable if the antecedent to the pronoun is plural in number: (*The employees appreciate their benefit package*). But the plural form of a pronoun should not be used to avoid use of *his/her* structure when the antecedent is singular as in the following example: (*Each employee appreciates their benefit package*). Note that in this example, the subject is the singular form, "employee," but the pronoun used (incorrectly) is the plural form "their." The correct use of pronouns in this sentence would read, "Each employee appreciates his or her benefit package."

By using pronouns properly, you help the reader avoid confusion and signal the type of research you are reporting.

APA CITATIONS and REFERENCES

APA Citations: Why You Must Use Them

Most of your grades will be based upon writing assignments. Most of the graded coursework will be writing assignments in various forms:

- Discussion Forum posts
- Essays and reflections
- Research papers
- Literature reviews
- More

Writing assignments require the use of sources and, therefore, you must give credit to the authors of those sources. The instructions for writing assignments, called “writing prompts”, will require that you consult and integrate the course reading materials into your responses to those prompts. Whenever you refer to the intellectual property (the published research, thoughts/concepts, or words) of another person in your writing, it is critical to attribute those works to the original authors to avoid plagiarism. This proper “attribution of ideas,” also called “citing” another person’s ideas, is simply a way of giving credit to the owners of that intellectual property.

How Citations Help You Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism is easy to avoid when you use citations. Creating citations is a basic and simple-to-learn technical skill that you will acquire as an undergraduate student. Intentionally presenting someone else’s ideas as your own (or unintentionally, through negligence or carelessness) is plagiarism. When you cite another person’s ideas in your writing, you are purposefully attributing that intellectual property to its rightful owner and signifying to the reader that you are *not* trying to misrepresent the cited ideas as your own.

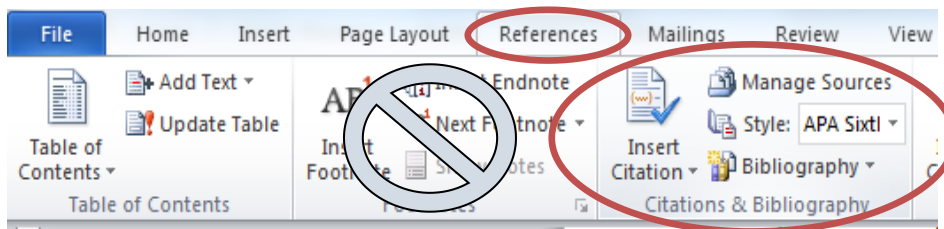
Geneva College takes academic integrity very seriously. Upholding academic integrity (also called intellectual honesty) by avoiding plagiarism is critical to your college career and professional reputation. Higher education institutions in general, and Geneva College in particular, take academic integrity very seriously, and students are held accountable for the proper attribution of the ideas of another person in their academic work. Proven plagiarism is punishable by academic dismissal, which is reflected on a student’s permanent academic record. Please refer to the Student Handbook for your program for the official policies on academic integrity.

Therefore, it is vital that you develop and master the techniques and mechanics of proper attribution and citation. You can do it with intentional effort, and we are here to help!

What is APA? May I use another style manual? Different fields of study use different sets of attribution rules when referring to the works of other authors or researchers, which are collected in a “style manual.” For instance, the Modern Language Association’s style manual (commonly known as MLA) is used by English professors and their students. Geneva College Online Programs use the American Psychological Association’s style manual, known as APA, which is used by the majority of the social and behavioral sciences. It is possible that you will have core and elective courses that use another style, but most courses within the programs will follow APA guidelines.

As you develop various assignments, refer back to the basic APA guidelines accessible through [Purdue OWL](#) or through the other writing resources provided in Moodle under School Resources > Student Resources > Writing: Advice and Resources.

Make things easy on yourself – use citation helpers. There are free, online websites that Geneva College Online students have found to be helpful in keeping their sources organized and automating the details of APA citation. One site is [Zotero](#). In addition, Microsoft Word has its own functions to help you complete citations and references properly:



A simple Google search will give you multiple tutorials on using these functions in Word.

PLEASE NOTE: Be advised that proper APA citation is the responsibility of the student. Therefore, any mistakes or inaccuracies created when using a citation helper will be regarded as such (i.e., citation helpers cannot be used as an excuse for improper APA citations). Also note that the citation generator in the Purdue OWL website is not free, and it has been found to be inaccurate.

Other places to find APA assistance include:

- Purchase a copy of the APA manual (7th edition)
- The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (aka, the Purdue OWL) at [The Purdue OWL](#)
- The Excelsior University Online Writing Lab (aka, the Excelsior OWL) at [Excelsior OWL - APA](#)
- Access the official APA Style website at [APA Style](#)
- Look in the School Resources menu in Moodle for other helpful links

Creating In-Text Citations

There are two primary methods for using someone else's intellectual property in your writing: directly, using a direct quote (word-for-word), or indirectly, by paraphrasing their concepts/ideas (summarizing and simplifying). Direct quotes and paraphrasing are both called in-text citations because they are placed within the body (text) of your paper, and ***BOTH*** types must be cited. You may have seen some other styles use footnotes instead of in-text citations; APA style does not include the use of footnotes.

Each time you make a reference to another person's work in your text with an in-text citation, you must also include the complete reference to that work in your References section at the end of your paper (see the section about References later in this handbook).

Please review the guidance from Purdue OWL on [In-Text Citations Basics](#).

Citing the Bible

When citing the Bible, it is important to follow the style in the example below, being sure to indicate the English translation that you are using. For example:

Dualism is clearly an unbiblical perspective on the Christian worldview. As the psalmists stated, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1 NIV).

Important Note for References: APA style does not require citations of the Bible to be listed on the References page. However, Geneva College acknowledges the Holy Bible to be a scholarly and historic work in addition to a religious work, and most importantly, the inspired Word of God. Multiple translations and variations might be compared or quoted in a single written assignment, so it is often necessary to cite and refer to each. Therefore, Geneva College Online Programs allow for and encourage *each* translation of the Bible cited in your papers to be included on the References pages, despite recommendations of the APA Style Manual to the contrary.

Creating Your List of References

You will create a References page for all written assignments that require proper APA style. It will be the last section of each paper and will list all of the works cited in the text of the document. **It may not include any works that are not cited within the body of the paper** (this differs from some other styles). You may have heard of similar tools such as a Bibliography or Works Cited page; these are used by other styles (such as Chicago and MLA). In APA, you will simply title the page with the word References (see [Purdue OWL Sample Paper](#)).

Entries on the References page are arranged alphabetically by authors. If an author has more than one publication, they are listed by year of publication, with the earliest publication first. If an author has more than one publication in a given year, then the entries are arranged alphabetically by title.

If there is no author given for a publication, then the title of the publication moves to the position of the author and the publication is listed alphabetically by the first significant word of the title.

Note that only the first word of the title of a book or journal article is capitalized. Each word in the title of a journal is capitalized, however.

Please review the guidance from Purdue OWL on [Reference List Basics](#).

A Note on References to Periodicals

Note that periodicals include journals and magazines. Journals such as the *American Journal of Sociology* are typically research-oriented and are scholarly publications. Journals, whether accessed online or in paper form, are appropriate for inclusion in a research project. On the other hand, websites or magazines such as CNN.com or *Time* (print), address more popular issues in a reporting style, rather than as a researched article that is built on earlier research. Magazines and websites are generally not appropriate as references in a research project.

Support Available to Geneva College Online Students

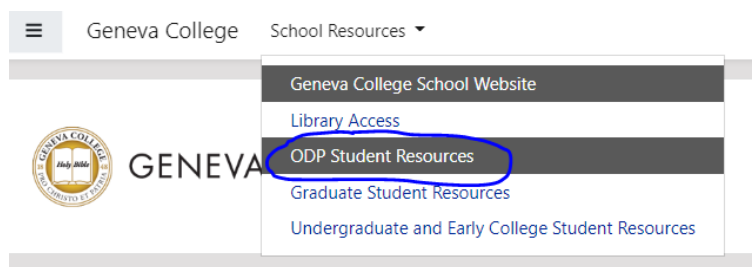
Self-Directed Tools – Online Resources to Support Your Success

Students enter Geneva's online programs with a wide spectrum of online experience, academic history and preparedness, and overall confidence in their ability to earn a degree in our programs. We aim to meet or exceed your specific academic support needs.

We have created and/or linked numerous helpful resources that you can engage should you have a question or desire more detailed instructions on particular aspects of your academic career. See the School Resources Link in the top left corner of any Moodle screen for many helpful resources.

Resources to Support Your Success

Find them in the top left corner of your  screen:



You will find groups of links in categories such as:

- *Getting Started with Online Courses*
- *College Success: Organization, Time Management, and Persistence*
- *Writing: Advice and Resources*
- *Writing: APA Citation & Avoiding Plagiarism*
- *Career Development Resources*

Your Instructor

Always be sure that you have clarified content and expectations with your instructor. Talk to them so that you fully understand what is required of you in an assignment. Refer to any rubrics provided for further guidance.

McCartney Library

As a Geneva College student, you have access to the historic and beautiful library on the Geneva College campus and all of its resources. Find more information in the [Online Degree Program Research Guide](#) regarding how you can access an ever-expanding selection of electronic databases and books 24/7 online. In addition to the resources available through Geneva's library, more materials are available from a worldwide network of libraries. Librarians are available to assist in navigating these sources, so be sure to [ask for help](#) when you need it.

ODP Pages of the McCartney Library Website

The McCartney librarians have assembled specialized research assistance exclusively for Geneva College Online Programs students at [McCartney Library Resources in Moodle](#).

You can access McCartney Library resources online from an off-campus location by signing in with your Geneva College credentials. Additional instructions can be found at [Accessing the Databases from Off-Campus](#).