APA Reminders When Writing Your Dissertation

As you write your dissertation, you should consult your *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* – 6th edition frequently because the requirements for your dissertation in both content and form are delineated in great detail and depth in this manual. The manual covers so much more than the rules for “in text citations” and the “References” list. I recommend looking through this book to get an idea of all the items covered by the manual so that in your writing you will be certain to follow the APA requirements. If you ever have any questions or need further information, you can always contact me. Remember in all things pertaining to your dissertation, your dissertation chair is the decider.

These sections go into great detail on the following subjects: Chapter 3 – writing clearly and concisely; Chapter 4 – the mechanics of style; Chapter 5 – displaying results (tables and figures); Chapter 6 – crediting sources; Chapter 7 – reference examples.

Here are a few highlights from the manual. These will be but a few items of the wide-ranging information contained in the manual. Refer also to the Manhattanville College School of Education and College Library *Formatting guidelines for doctoral dissertation*. This guideline, plus other helpful documents or links, can be found in the Ed.D. Educational Leadership Library Guide – link available on the Library home page.

- Go to the Mville College Library homepage – http://annex.mville.edu/undergraduate/academics/library.html
- Click on “Library Guides” – under “Library Quick Links”
- Click on “Ed.D. in Educational Leadership”
- Click on “Dissertation Format Guidelines”

Also, nine dissertations written by graduated doctoral students at Manhattanville College are now available in the full text in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. While they do not follow exactly the same format style, they follow the same format style in general and will provide real examples from published dissertations.

**A. Chapter 3 – Writing Clearly and Concisely**

1. **Organization – 3.03, pp. 62-63 – Levels of Headings** – The heading style recommended by APA consists of five possible formatting arrangements, according to the number in a top-down progression.
APA Heading Levels
Example taken from OWL at Purdue – APA Headings and Seriation (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/)

Level 1  Centered, Boldface. Uppercase and Lowercase Headings
Level 2  Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Headings
Level 3  Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. The text begins after the period.
Level 4  Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. The text begins after the period.
Level 5  Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period. The text begins after the period.

In this example for the Traditional Five Chapter Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Heading Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Approximately 15-30 pages)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Problem (1-2 pages)</td>
<td>Heading Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of chapter 1 and how it is organized</td>
<td>Heading level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the research problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for this study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State the purpose(s)/goals of your study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the research relate to the themes of the Mville doctoral program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology  Level 1 Heading

Dependent Variables  Level 2 Heading

There were two dependent variables in this study: superintendent tenure and superintendent longevity:

Superintendent tenure. Level 3 heading Tenure refers to the number of years served as
the superintendent of schools in one’s current or, for retirees, most recent school district.

**District population.** Level 4 heading District population referred to the number of

Residents living within a school district’s catchment area

2. **Organization – 3.04, pp. 63-64 – Seriation** – for key points within sections, paragraphs, and sentences: numbered lists; bulleted lists; and lists within a paragraph or sentence. There is very detailed information in this section for what types of lists are appropriate for each situation.

3. **Grammar and Usage – 3.06 (Smoothness of Expression, pp. 65-66) and 3.18 (Verbs, pp. 77-78)** - select tense carefully and maintain tense consistency throughout your dissertation. As you know for your dissertation proposal, you will write in the future tense because the study will not have been completed. For the dissertation defense and publication of the dissertation, “past tense (e.g., “Smith showed”) or present perfect tense (e.g., “researchers have shown”) is appropriate for the literature review and the description of the procedure if the discussion is of past events. Stay within the chosen tense. Use past tense (e.g. “anxiety decreased significantly”) to describe the results. Use the present tense (e.g., the results of Experiment 2 indicate”) to discuss implications of the results and to present the conclusions. By reporting conclusions in the present tense, you allow readers to join you in deliberating the matter at hand” (pp. 65-66). That being written, Dr. Wan prefers simple present or past tense be used in the final dissertation. Please remember that the present tense is used when discussing what a chapter covers and past tense when discussing what a chapter has covered. For example, the literature review in this chapter presents past research in the areas of ......... . Then, the last concluding paragraph in the chapter - The body of literature reviewed in this chapter outlined the research pertaining to .......

B. **Chapter 4: The Mechanics of Style**

1. **Punctuation**
   a. Comma – 4.03, pp. 77-79
      1) use a comma between elements (including before “and” and “or”) in a series of three or more items
2) use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction – compound sentence

3) do not use a comma between two parts of a compound predicate

b. Semicolon – 4.04, pp. 89-90

1) to separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction.

2) to separate elements in a series that already contain commas.

c. Colon – 4.05, p. 90

1) use a colon between a grammatically complete introductory clause (one that could stand as a sentence) and a final phrase or clause that illustrates, extends, or amplifies the preceding thought. If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, it begins with a capital letter.

2) do not use a colon after an introduction that is not an independent clause or complete sentence.

2. Capitalization and Italics are also covered in this section.

C. Chapter 5: Displaying Results

1. There are very specific format styles for displaying tables and figures – see APA manual – 128-161.

2. Permission to reproduce data displays – 5.06, p. 128 – if a table, figure, questionnaire, or test item is reproduced or adapted from a copyrighted source, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder and give credit in the tale or figure caption. Also very important – Permission to quote, reprint, or adapt – 6.10 , p. 173.

Figure 1. The components of technological pedagogical content knowledge.
(The permission to use letter or email should appear in the Appendix.)
D. Chapter 6: Crediting Sources

1. Quoting and Paraphrasing –

   a. Direct quotation written in a sentence - 6.03, pp. 171 - if the quotation appears within the sentence, close the quoted passage with quotation marks, cite the source in parentheses right after the quotation marks, and end with a period or other punctuation marks outside the final parenthesis.

   b. Direct quotation of more than 40 words or more – 6.03, p. 171 - display it in a freestanding block of text and do not include quotation marks, begin the quotation on a new line at the same point a new paragraph would begin, double-space the entire quotation, and put the period at the end of the quotation with the parenthetical citation outside of the period.

   c. Permission to Quote, Reprint, or Adapt – 6.10, pp. 173-174 – you may need written permission, which will appear in the Appendix section of your dissertation, from the owner of copyrighted work if you include lengthy quotations. Each individual publisher has different quoted word use requirements pertaining to the permission. Please discuss with your dissertation chair if you have any questions about this.

2. Citing References in Text

   a. Secondary sources – 6.17, pp. 178 – Use secondary sources sparingly, for instance, when the original work is out of print, unavailable through usual sources, or not available in English. Not appropriate for dissertations.

   b. Giving attribution

       1) Quotation – every quotation must be cited with the author(s), date, and page number.

       2) Paraphrased material – must also be cited in the text. Within a paragraph make certain that any text that is not your own and is paraphrased from an outside source is properly cited. From an email I sent in early May.

This morning I went back to the APA Style Web site (http://www.apastyle.org/) and did more searching about in text citations – paraphrasing. I clicked on “browse the blog” (http://blog.apastyle.org/), then, clicked on “paraphrasing” (http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2011/03/citing-paraphrased-work-in-apa-style.html#comments) and found this information about the requirements of in text citations when
citing one source within a paragraph. Here are the highlights: As Mr. McAdoo mentions, personal pronouns can be used when there is a clear referent. I still advise (on a recommendation from another Mville Librarian) to frame the paragraph as well with the author’s name, date, p. #(if required) in the first sentence and last sentences. If your paragraph contains citations from two or more different sources, it is imperative to give individual, easily recognized, proper in text citation throughout the paragraph to any ideas that are not your own.

Citing Paraphrased Work in APA Style

by Timothy McAdoo  March 18, 2011
As the Publication Manual notes, citing your sources is imperative: “Whether paraphrasing, quoting an author directly, or describing an idea that influenced your work, you must credit the source” (p. 170).

But, we are sometimes asked how a writer can properly and clearly attribute multiple ideas within a paragraph yet maintain a readable and interesting text.

It’s a challenge! If you include a citation only at the end of the paragraph, the reader won’t know how many of the ideas in the previous sentences you are attributing to the cited author. But, including the citation at the end of each sentence, an absolutely clear and correct approach, can become redundant:

The cross-pollination and fusion of musical genres over the last 2 decades has exposed children to a diversity of musical styles (Viglione, 2010). Technology has also made possible the distribution and sharing of music in exciting new ways (Viglione, 2010). Music is shared through social media sites, analyzed and tailored for the individual listener via sites like Pandora, and simply given away by musicians on their websites (Viglione, 2010). As a result, in the future, children will likely develop eclectic musical tastes early and expect a diversity of musical styles at younger and younger ages (Viglione, 2010).

The paragraph above clearly attributes the work of Viglione (2010), but imagine a 20-page literature review written in this style! Page 16 of the Publication Manual shows an example of how to paraphrase multiple ideas without this redundancy.

Can you rewrite the paragraph above in a way that avoids redundancy but maintains the attribution of all of the ideas? Submit your suggestions in the comments section! There are many ways to improve this paragraph, so we won’t post a “winner,” but we will follow up with comments and commendations on the suggested rewrites!
Everyone who replied above has the right idea. When writing a paragraph, you can alternate between citing an author parenthetically and using the author’s name in the running text. You can also use “he” or “she,” when you know the gender of the author (see SA’s reworded paragraph above). *Just be sure that these pronouns have a clear referent.* By using these variations, you can avoid redundancy in your writing and still make clear throughout the paragraph that the ideas are those of the original researcher.

To your specific question, the *Manual* does not specify any number of sentences at which an author’s name must be mentioned. **The writer’s goal should be to delineate which are his or her original ideas and which are those of other scholars.** For more, see pages 15–16 and pages 170–173 of the *Manual.*

As Harris (2005) states, “if in doubt, cite it” (p. 19).


*Also refer to APA, page 174 for suggestions when the in text citation is in the narrative (and not parenthetical) and including the date in subsequent citations within the same paragraph.*

3. Reference Components are also in the section.

E. **Chapter 7: Reference examples** – **BECOME VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE CORRECT FORMAT STYLE FOR CITATIONS IN THE REFERENCES LIST!** YOUR APA manual is your constant companion.

1. Do not rearrange order of listed authors to alphabetical; leave the order as appears on author listing. The first author listed is the lead author.

2. Supplemental citation information is found in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership Library Guide – Citing Sources in APA Style.

3. Much information is found in what is called the “grey literature” – technical and research reports published by educational, governmental, and non profit organizations. It is referred to as “grey literature because it is outside of book and periodical publication. Become familiar with how to correctly cite this material. Refer to the APA – 6th edition manual – 7.03, pp. 205 – 206.
4. **Literature Review:** Do not simply report what other people have done. “In a good literature review, the researcher doesn’t merely report the related literature. He or she also evaluates, organizes, and synthesizes what others have done” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 77). Here are some examples of what you might do:

   a. compare and contrast varying theoretical perspectives on the topic
   b. show how approaches to the topic have changed over time
   c. describe general trends in research findings
   d. identify discrepant or contradictory findings, and suggest possible explanations for such discrepancies
   e. identify general themes that run throughout the literature. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 79)


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