Writing and communication skills are invaluable tools for both students and professionals in the field of psychology. The new edition of this successful text helps users to generate crisp scientific communication, offers clear guidelines on effective writing, and illustrates how to generate strong and compelling prose.

The book aids students, writers, and speakers at all levels by guiding them at every stage of the process. In a practical and accessible way, the authors teach readers how to form concise, unambiguous arguments; document their sources; and render technical information clear and comprehensible.

Incorporating the latest writing guidelines found in the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, this new edition:

• Offers an understanding of why APA style is important
• Includes a chapter on conducting a literature research, guiding students through article databases, keyword usage and evaluation of sources
• Offers tips on creating poster presentations, giving talks, writing for the Internet, and making presentations to institutional review boards (IRBs)
• Provides a separate section on how to communicate statistics
• Incorporates a new section on using the Internet to present research papers

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Effective Writing in Psychology
Effective Writing in Psychology

Papers, Posters, and Presentations

Second Edition

Bernard C. Beins and Agatha M. Beins
Contents

Preface to the Second Edition ix
Preface to the First Edition xi

1 Writing in Psychology 1
  Writing in Psychology 2
  How Does Psychological Writing Differ from Other Kinds of Writing? 3
  Using APA Style 4
  Making a Credible Argument 5
  Different Types of Communication 6
  Effective Communication 8
  How to Begin 9

Part I Organizing and Developing Your Ideas and Writing 11

2 Formulating Your Ideas 13
  Identifying Your Focal Question 13
  Locating Relevant Sources 16
  Recognizing Multiple Viewpoints 19
  Ethical Writing 21

3 Assessing Your Sources 27
  The Difference between Primary and Secondary Literature 28
  The Difference between Popular and Scholarly Sources 28
  Evaluating Sources 31
  Evaluating Internet Sources 33
Contents

4 How to Conduct a Literature Search 41
   Understanding Library Resources 43
   Using Article Databases 49
   Using the Internet 51
   Using Sources to Find Sources 53

5 How to Read and Summarize a Journal Article 55
   An Overview of the Research—the Abstract 56
   Identifying the Issues—the Introduction 57
   Understanding What Was Done—the Method Section 57
   What Happened—the Results Section 60
   What It Means—the Discussion Section 62
   Where the Ideas Originated—the References Section 65
   Figuring Out What It Means 65

6 Organizing a Paper 67
   Organization 68
   Using the Work of Others to Support Your Argument 70
   Editing and Revising 75
   Mechanics 77

7 Elements of Style 79
   Recognizing the Importance of Grammar and Style 80
   Choosing Effective Wording 81
   Using Inclusive and Appropriate Language 82
   Deciding on the Use of Technical Language 85
   Avoiding Common Problems 85
   Verb Forms 88
   Spelling 89
   Specific Word Use 95

8 Communicating Statistics 97
   Why Do We Use Statistics? 98
   What Point Are You Trying to Make? 99
   Understanding Your Numbers 101
   Helping Readers Understand Your Statistics 103
   Differentiating Results and Interpretations 106

Part II Preparing APA Format Papers 107

9 Writing a Thesis or a Term Paper 109
   Developing Your Idea 111
   Organizing Your Paper Around the Central Questions 114
Contents

Finding Different Perspectives About Your Idea ........................................ 116
Developing the Logic of Your Argument .................................................. 119

10 The Introduction Section
Introducing the Topic .................................................................................. 123
Different Approaches to Starting the Introduction ..................................... 124
How to Begin .................................................................................................. 127
Reviewing the Literature ............................................................................. 128
Reasons for Reviewing the Literature ......................................................... 128
Clarifying Terms in the Research ................................................................. 129
Introducing Your Research: Generating a Hypothesis ............................... 130

11 The Method Section
Participants and Subjects ............................................................................ 133
Materials and Apparatus .............................................................................. 134
Procedure ..................................................................................................... 141
Design ........................................................................................................... 143

12 The Results Section
Your Hypotheses .......................................................................................... 147
Deciding What to Present ............................................................................ 148
Reporting Significant and Nonsignificant Results ..................................... 149
Marginally Significant Effects ...................................................................... 150
APA Style and Presentation of Your Results ................................................. 151
Creating Tables ............................................................................................ 152
Creating Figures ........................................................................................... 155
The Connection between the Text and the Tables and Figures .................. 156
The Difference between Results and Discussion Sections ....................... 157
Some Final Points About Presenting Results .............................................. 158

13 The Discussion Section
Summarizing Your Results ........................................................................ 171
Connecting Different Aspects of Your Results ......................................... 172
Dealing with Nonsignificant Results .......................................................... 173
Comparing Your Results with Those of Others ......................................... 174
Stating the Importance and Implications of Your Results ......................... 175
Acknowledging the Limitations of Your Study ........................................... 176

14 References Citations in the Text and the Reference List ....................... 179
Citing References in the Text .................................................................... 180
Citing Sources with Three to Five Authors ............................................... 181
Citing Sources with Six or More Authors .................................................. 182
Citing Personal Communications ............................................................... 183
Citing Multiple Sources within Parentheses .............................................. 183
Contents

Order of Citations in the Reference List 184
Using Your Word Processing Program to Create the Citation 184
Examples of How Different Types of References Should Be Laid Out 185

15 Final Touches: The Abstract and Formatting Details 193
The Abstract 194
Formatting Details 195

Part III Communicating Beyond the Research Paper 215

16 Creating Poster Presentations 217
Differentiating Visual and Written Communication 218
Reducing the Amount of Information 218
Visual Style 219
Your Behavior: The Ethic of a Poster Session 222
Creating Your Poster Using PowerPoint® 224

17 Giving Oral Presentations 231
The Difference between Oral and Written English 231
Adapting APA Style to Oral Presentations 236
Preparing for Your Talk 236
Creating Graphics for Your Presentation 238
Giving the Presentation 239

18 Presenting Your Work on the Internet 243
New Capabilities with Internet Publication 244
Using a Word Processor to Create Manuscripts for the Internet 245
Advantages of Internet Publishing Software 247
Publishing Your Poster on the Web 249
Uploading Your Manuscript to the Internet 249

19 Submitting Your Plan to an Ethics Committee 251
Ethical Standards in Research 251
Writing a Proposal for an Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects 253
Writing a Proposal for the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) for Animal Research 258

Appendix A Example of APA-Style Manuscript with Common Errors 261
Appendix B Corrected APA-Style Manuscript 269
References 277
Author Index 285
Subject Index 288
Preface to the Second Edition

A writing project is never done. If you are thoughtful about your writing, you will always spot elements in your prose that you think could have been better. Thus writing a book like this one leads to a process, not a product. So, when we wrote the first edition of Effective Writing in Psychology, we recognized that it would be a helpful book with an interesting approach to writing. But there were also a few places where we wondered if we could have made our point more effectively or written more clearly.

So with this edition of Effective Writing we have had the opportunity to do it again, only better. Happily, we think that there were only a few instances in the first edition that needed clarification, expansion, or rewording. But we tried to take care of them to make the book even stronger. We hope you benefit from the changes we made.

In addition, as with any evolving domain, the technical aspects of writing in APA style have changed since the first edition of Effective Writing appeared. So we have adapted the sections on writing in APA style to conform to the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Many changes to the publication manual are minor, so you will be able to learn and implement them easily.

It has been as delightful working on this edition as it was on the first edition of Effective Writing. A father–daughter collaboration is a joy. Our work together constantly reminded us of our mutual respect at the personal and professional levels.
Preface to the Second Edition

As always, though, a project like this does not happen by accident. It requires collaborative efforts on the part of many people. We are grateful to the professionals at Wiley-Blackwell for their help, in particular Matt Bennett, Nicole Benevenia, and Julia Kirk.
Preface to the First Edition

Mark Twain recognized the importance of effective writing skills when he said, “The difference between the right word and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightning and the lightning bug.” We wrote this book to help writers generate their own version of lightning when they write papers, create posters, or develop presentations in psychology.

As we have taught courses in writing and in psychology (one of us for over a third of a century), we have become very aware how important it is for students and researchers to develop solid communication skills. No matter what type of professional work you undertake, it will be critical for you to convey your ideas well.

As you write and communicate in psychology, you will face challenges that some other types of writers do not. Writing in psychology involves two separate components. One concerns the ability to create clear and crisp prose that people want to read. The second relates to the ability to convey a compelling message in technical and scientific language. All too often, scientific writers understand their concepts exceedingly well, but they fail to present a message that readers can understand, appreciate, or even want to read. Here this book enters the picture. We present suggestions and guidelines that will help you create interesting papers and cogently delivered oral presentations that will capture the attention of others.

This book will help writers at all levels of experience and skill. Some components of the book are oriented toward effective writing and give tips that are relevant for communicating with many different readerships. Other components provide direction for successful use of writing in American
Preface to the First Edition

Psychological Association (APA) style. By using both of these aspects of the book, first-time and experienced writers can be comfortable knowing that their words will have an impact and that their work will be recognized as of professional quality.

We have worked to make this book both accessible and useful. At the same time, we have made it rigorous because writing should be as clear and precise as it is interesting.

Organization of the Book

The book begins with an overview of different kinds of writing and what makes writing for psychology different. In addition, we introduce some of the principles for developing credible arguments and effective communication, whether you are writing or speaking, or creating graphic presentations. We also introduce APA style, which is common in many of the behavioral and social sciences.

The book details guidelines on developing your own ideas and conducting Internet and library research to integrate them with issues that others have already addressed. The next focus of the book involves organizing your thoughts and beginning the process of writing and revising.

Following the chapters on effective communication strategies, we offer guidance on the technical aspects of writing a paper in APA style. In chapters 10 through 15, you will learn how to use APA style accurately and effectively. If you have not already discovered that APA style involves detail after detail, you will learn it here. But we explain those details in ways that will permit you to follow them as you need to.

We also recognize that not all scientific communication occurs through papers. Consequently, in the last section of this book, we offer strategies for creating poster presentations, giving oral presentations, developing Internet presentations, and writing proposals for institutional review boards.

Finally, we have included a sample APA-style paper to help you write and format your own work. One of the unique features of the sample paper is that it contains annotated errors that writers frequently make. Seeing a paper that illustrates errors that you might make often helps your writing more than seeing flawless papers. If you don’t know that you made a mistake, it is hard to know that you need to correct it.
Features

We provide features in this book that we hope will make the process of writing more effective and efficient. First, we tell you not only what constitutes good writing, but why. As a result, you should be able to generalize the points beyond the specific examples we use. Furthermore, the examples in the book come from published research, which gives you a good sense of how effective writers convey their ideas.

Second, we use many tables and figures that illustrate specific guidance in many areas that pose problems for writers. Rather than simply listing formatting details, we have tried to bring them to life in ways that you will be using them.

Finally, as we noted above, we include examples of the types of errors students and researchers actually make. You can learn from the mistakes of others. The sample paper in the appendix includes stylistic and formatting errors that commonly occur so that you can see what to avoid.

Acknowledgments

A book is the product of its authors, but it also takes its final shape because of the contributions of others. For this book, we have benefited from the help of Linda Beins, a librarian extraordinaire with extensive insights into finding and developing information. We were also fortunate to have the keen eyes and intellect of Stephen F. Davis, Kenneth D. Keith, and Suzanne Baker, who provided us with feedback on early versions of the chapters. Finally, we are grateful for the consistent help of Chris Cardone, Executive Editor, and Sarah Coleman, Development Project Manager, two of Wiley-Blackwell’s astute staff who have made this project as seamless as it could have possibly been.