

Writing Checklist for NACADA publications

In general, the most frequently edited passages in NACADA publications originally appeared in passive voice. The most prevalent major errors involve misuse of person. The biggest delays in publication result from improperly cited or inappropriately copied material. Also, all printed NACADA publications appear in black and white, so all copy must be submitted in black and white.

The checklist offers guidance on areas best corrected by the author to ensure that the original meaning of the text remains intact.

- Use third person. The following explains instances of appropriate divergence from this steadfast rule:
 - Use first person when referring to oneself as the author; check that it is not invoked in any other way, especially as the royal *we* (assuming membership: *we* need to conduct more research) or as a possessive (*our* advisees).
 - Employ the imperative only in word tables, figures, or side bars that illustrate specific actions, such as those in an appointment (or writing) checklist.
 - Only invoke second person (*you*) in dialogue or when quoting verbatim from others.

- Use active voice whenever possible because it generally makes for concise and meaningful text. The following pointers offer suggestions for changing wordy passive passages to active succinct text:
 - Avoid the interrogative (*how, why, what*) form as a replacement for a noun. “What and how advisees think is important to helping them.” “To help them, advisors need to understand advisees’ thoughts and cognitive processes.”
 - Eliminate *there are* and *it is*; in these sentences, the subject noun often appears in the predicate. “There is seldom a good time to use passive voice.” “Passive voice seldom adds interest or specificity to the text.”
 - Do not use verbals as nouns; gerunds (verb + ing = noun) tend to make the writing passive and wordy. “Showing empathy is a good way to connect to a struggling student.” “Empathetic advisors connect to struggling students.”
 - Replace terms of necessity *has to* or *have to* with more active forms: *needs to... must... benefit from...*; likewise, use forms *to be* as auxiliary, not as linking, verbs.

Authors who make specific choices in the second draft avoid queries in copyediting:

- Use numerals in series only when placing items in rank order; if all listed items carry equal weight, use bullets.
- Rework instances of anthropomorphism; this literary technique appears in writings of the humanities and other disciplines, but not in the social sciences under the auspices of APA (p. 69).

- In general, reserve quotation marks for only quoted material or dialogue. Other uses of quotation marks typically draw attention to clichés or a substandard word choices (APA calls it *hedging*). Please review APA on proper use of quotation marks versus italics: pp. 91-92 and pp. 104-106.
- Avoid writing about the writing. When absolutely necessary to provide structure, use present tense: “The following section addresses”... not “will address.” However, other types of transition statements between sections typically better entice readers.
- Use the serial comma: “peer, professional, and graduate students.”
- Use past tense in the literature reviews: “O’Banion said,” not “says”; this mandate comes from APA (p. 78), and yes, it diverges from some other style authorities.
- Do not start sentences with conjunctions (*and, but*) (except sparingly in dialogue).
- Do not use contractions (*cannot, not can’t*) (except in dialogue).
- Keep headings to fewer than seven words if possible.
- Try to avoid one-sentence paragraphs and one-paragraph sections.