

# Glossary of Writing Terms

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## A

Abstract	In APA, abstracts are found directly following the title page and are typically a 150-200 word summary of the following article or paper.
Academic paper	Academic papers are, for the most part, designed with two distinct purposes in mind: to analyze, interpret, explain, or argue about a topic; and to demonstrate an intellectual understanding of the course or field for which it is being written.
Active sentence	Active sentences are sentences in which the subject performs the action.
Active voice	Active voice entails the use of a subject-verb construction (active sentences) throughout the majority of a piece of writing.
Adjective	Adjectives provide information about, clarify, or describe nouns, pronouns, or other adjectives.
Adverb	Adverbs do very much the same thing as adjectives except they clarify and describe verbs.
Agenda	The underlying motivation for the creation of a text.
Agreement	Consistency in time, point of view, plurality or not, and so on within a text.
Analysis	The process of looking closely and critically at a text to determine what it means, how it presents its ideas, its effectiveness, and so on.
Anecdote	Brief stories or slices-of-life that help to make a point
Annotate	To underline or highlight important passages in a text and to make notes in the margins.
APA style	The official writing and documentation style of the American Psychological Association (APA), which is Grantham University's official style of documentation and citation for all courses.
Appeal	An appeal is an argument that connects to the readers' needs, such as achievement, belonging, or survival.
Appendix	The Appendix at the end of a text, report, or dissertation, contains appendices that provided additional information pertaining to the text.
Application paper	An application paper focuses on experiences and qualities that suit the writer for a specific position or program.

Argument	Argument involves a course in logical thinking intended to convince the reader to accept an idea or to take action.
Argumentative paper	An argumentative paper presents an argument about a timely, debatable topic.
Artifact	An artifact is an object made or modified by a human culture.
Attributive phrase	A group of words that indicates the source of an idea or quotation.
Attributive tag	See <i>attributive phrase</i> .
Audience	This term literally refers to the listeners or hearers of a speech, including the intended listeners/hearers, but is commonly used to refer to the intended reader or readers for a piece of writing.

## B

Basic listing	A brief, somewhat informal itemizing of main points.
Biased words	Words that unfairly or disrespectfully depict individuals of groups.
Bibliography	Lists of works that cover a particular subject.
Block quotation	A long quotation of 40 words or more. Block quotations are formatted in a way that sets them apart from the rest of the text by tabbing- in each line, omitting the quotation marks, and leaving the citation outside of the end punctuation.
Blogs	Online journals (shorthand for “Web log”).
Body language	Body language is a communication style that involves the use of physical cues to indicate a person’s level of comfort, interest, engagement, etc.
Body paragraph	A paragraph comprising, in part, the central portion or body of a paper or other, similarly structured, document, which is focused on articulating, developing, and supporting a single point of the larger argument presented by the author with his/her thesis statement in the introductory paragraph(s).
Boolean operators	Words or symbols used when searching research databases that describe the relationship between various words or phrases in a search.

## C

Call numbers	A set of numbers used by the Library of Congress that specify the subject area, topic, and authorship or title of a book, magazine, or other text.
Camera-eye	An approach to writing that involves sharing details as though a camera lens moving across a subject.
Cause-effect paper	A paper that examines the conditions or actions that lead to a specific outcome.
Chronology	Order of events as they have occurred in time. We often refer to descriptions of events in chronological order.
Citation	An agreed-upon notation that gives credit to those who informed the ideas within a text that did not originate with the text's author.
Classical argument	Until recently, the most popular of argumentative styles. This style, invented in ancient Greece, involves two individuals arguing opposite sides of an argument in order to convince an unbiased third person.
Clichés	Overused words or phrases that, through time, have lost their meaning. For example, "It's raining cats and dogs!" or, "It wasn't just easy; it was a piece of cake!"
Climax	The most exciting moment in a narrative; the moment at which the person succeeds, fails, or learns something.
Closed question	Questions that can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no".
Clustering	A form of brainstorming by freely recording words and phrases around a nucleus word.
Coherence	Strong connection between sentences in a paragraph; achieved through transition and repetition.
Collections	The materials housed within a library.
Colloquialism	Colloquialisms are common words which work well in common conversation, but are not suitable for academic writing. Words like, "cool," "sweet," "y'all," and "gonna" are colloquialisms. Often, these can also be whole phrases like, "I was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs."
Comma splice	A common error in writing made when the writer combines two independent clauses together with a comma (and nothing else). (i.e. "There was no way I was going alone, she said she wouldn't dream of letting me out of her sight.").
Concessions	Openly recognizing the validity of opposing viewpoints.

Conflict	The obstacles or adversaries confronted by people in narratives; person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. technology, person vs. nature, etc.
Conjunction	A word that joins two ideas within a sentence. For example: “I love pizza, <i>and</i> I love tacos.” The conjunction is “and.” Another example would be: “I would love some pizza, <i>but</i> it gives me heartburn.
Connotation	The suggestion made by a word or group of words—the implied meaning.
Context	The set of circumstances in which a statement is made; the text and other factors that surround a specific statement and are crucial to understanding it.
Contraction	The shortening or abbreviation of a phrase of two or more words into a single word for the sake of efficiency and/or for use within informal writing or speech (e.g. <i>do not</i> may be contracted as <i>don't</i> ). While contractions are often found in informal modes of writing and speech, they are not appropriate in academic writing.
Controversies	Issues about which there are two or more strongly opposing views or highly debatable issues.
Conventions	The standard rules for spelling, punctuation, mechanics, usage, grammar, and formatting.
Copyright	Legal ownership of the text of a document, entitling the owner of the copyright to determine if/when/how that text may be reproduced.

## D

Database	An electronic repository of information organized by subject and/or academic or professional discipline (e.g. scholarly articles).
Debatable topic	A topic that is not mere fact, but can be argued from at least two different angles.
Deductive reasoning	Reasoning that works from general principles or ideas; through specific applications, support, and/or examples; to a conclusion.
Defensible position	A claim that is debatable, but can be strongly supported by evidence; a claim that is neither fact nor an unsupportable opinion.
Denotation	A word’s literal meaning.
Dialogue	The words spoken by people. In writing, dialogue is set apart by quotation marks.
Directed writing	An exploration tactic using one of a set of thinking moves: describe, compare, associate, analyze, argue, or apply.

Direct quotation	A word-for-word statement or passage from an original source. In writing, quotations are typically set apart by quotation marks and always cited. See also <i>block quotation</i> )
Documentation	Crediting sources of information, through in-text citations or references and a list of works cited or references, generally on a page or pages located at the end of a paper.
DOI	A Digital Object Identifier is an alphanumeric code that online content providers (e.g. databases, scholarly journals) provide as an alternative to the actual URL of a document so that researchers may cite those online documents using a static identifier within their bibliographic citations.
Drafting	Writing sentences and paragraphs to create an initial draft of a paper—should contain a beginning, a middle, and an end.

## E

EBSCO	The online research database provided to students and faculty by Grantham University for the purposes of conducting academic research necessary for courses of study offered by the University. This database provides bibliographic citations and, in many cases, full texts of articles originally published in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals.
Editing	Refining a draft in terms of word choice and sentence style and checking it for conventions.
Ellipsis	A set of three periods with one space preceding and following each period; a punctuation mark that indicates a deletion of material.
Paper	The process of trying or testing (from the French verb, <i>paperer</i> , translated as <i>to try</i> ); a written document that explores a particular question or issue, typically offering a thesis and supporting argument in response.
Ethos	An argumentative strategy designed to build, and then use the audience's sense of trust and respect for the arguer to promote an idea.
Etymology	The origin of a word.
Extended definition	A type of analytical writing that explores the meaning of a specific term, providing denotation, connotation, and a variety of perspectives on the term.
Extreme claims	Claims that include words ( <i>all, best, never, worst</i> ) that are overly positive or negative.

## F

Facts	Statements that can be checked for accuracy through empirical evidence.
Fair use	Rules governing the use of small (not large) portions of a text for non-commercial purposes.
Fake writing voice	A writing voice that sounds overly academic, bland, or unnatural.
Feasible	Do-able; reasonable—given time, budgets, resources, and consequences.
Field research	An on-site scientific study conducted for the purpose of gathering raw data.
First draft	The initial writing in which the writing connects facts and details about the topic.
First person	A confessional or conversational style of writing that connects the thoughts of the writer directly to the reader through the use of the pronouns: <i>I, me, we, us</i> and so on. Good for some papers, but in general, is not considered appropriate for academic writing. First person is frowned upon when writing APA Style research papers.
Flush	The justification of the text in a paper (meaning to which margin of the page the text lines up). In APA, with the exception of page numbers, the title of the paper, the title-block, certain level titles, block quotations, the abstract title, and the References page title-- all text should be justified <i>flush left</i> . Page numbers are placed <i>flush right</i> , and all of the other exceptions are <i>center justified</i> .
Focus	The specific part of the subject to be covered in a piece of writing.
Focused free-writing	A form of free writing that is approached from a specific angle or as a quick draft of a paper.
Forecasting	Also known as <i>foreshadowing</i> , this is a writing technique that shows a preview of what the reader can expect throughout the rest of a document. In academic writing, forecasting usually happens within the thesis statement or within the transitions between paragraphs or sections.
Foreshadowing	(see <i>forecasting</i> )
Form	The type of writing; for example, report, letter, proposal, editorial, paper, story, or poem.
Formal English	Carefully worded language suitable for most academic writing.
Formatting	The visual organization of a document, including, but not limited to, margins, font, font size, font color, textual justification, line spacing, etc.

Formulaic writing	Writing that stiffly adheres to a prescribed format and, because of that, fails to make an impact.
Forwarding	The process of interacting with an idea through writing. When we are forwarding, we are changing the idea, extending it, reshaping it, and filtering it through our consciousness in order to send the new, altered version out into the world.
Fragment	An incomplete sentence (missing a verb or a subject).
Free-writing	A form of non-stop writing used during the early stages of the writing process to collect thoughts and ideas.

## G

Glossary	A list of important words and terms.
Graphic organizer	A chart or diagram used to arrange the main points and essential details of a paper.

## H

Hanging indent	A hanging indent is the indentation of the first line of a paragraph . Using the tab-key is generally the easiest way to create a hanging indent, but one can always use 12 spaces on the space bar.
Hyperlinks	Specially formatted text that enables readers to click to another spot on the Internet.

## I

Implications	Natural results, direct and indirect, whether good or bad.
Inductive reasoning	Reasoning that works from particular details toward general conclusions.
In-text citation	Like citation, an in-text citation is an agreed-upon notation that gives credit to those who informed the ideas within a text that did not originate with the text's author. In APA in-text citations are required in

brief form within the body of the text, and are fully-cited on the References page(s).

Informal English Language characterized by a more relaxed, personal tone suitable for personal writing.

Intensity A writer's level of concern for the topic as indicated by the writing voice.

## J

Jargon Technical terms not familiar to the general reader.

Journal A notebook used regularly for personal writing.

Journals Publications providing specialized scholarly information for a narrowly focused audience. Journals may be published monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, etc. Most journals are now also digitized. Many can be found in Grantham library's free database. Some online journals require a subscription fee to access.

## L

Level of language The level of language a writer uses—informal, semi-formal, or formal.

Line diagram A graphic organizer used to arrange ideas for expository writing.

Logical fallacies Logical fallacies are false arguments based on fuzzy, dishonest, or incomplete thinking.

Logos An argumentative strategy designed to appeal to an audience's logic.

Loose sentence A sentence that provides a base clause near the beginning, followed by explanatory phrases and clauses.

## M

Main claim A debatable statement, the thesis or key point in an argument.

Medium The way that writing is delivered; for example, in a printed publication or online.

Metaphor A comparison that equates two dissimilar things without using *like* or *as*; saying that one thing is another.



Mnemonics Memory techniques in which new ideas are associated with more recognizable or memorable words, images, or ideas.

Modifiers Words that limit or describe other words or groups of words; adjectives or adverbs.

## N

Nominal A noun form of a verb such as *description, instructions, confirmation*.

Noun A part of speech that stands for a person, place, thing, or idea.

Nucleus word The central theme in a cluster, connecting all other ideas.

## O

Observation Noting information received in person through the senses.

Omit To leave out.

Open-ended question A question that requires an elaborate answer.

Opinions Personally held attitudes or beliefs.

Options Choices provided with an assignment.

Order of importance A pattern of organization often used in persuasive writing in which the writer begins or ends with the most convincing argument.

Order of location Organizing details according to their position; progressing from near to far, inside to outside, and so on.

Organizing pattern The way that details are arranged in writing; for example, chronological order or cause/effect order.

Original document A record that relates directly to an event, issue, object, or a phenomenon.

Orphan A single line of a new paragraph at the bottom of a page.

Overall design The pattern the writing takes to move ideas along—time order, compare-contrast, and so on.

OWLs Online writing labs where individuals can get answers to their writing questions.

## P

Page design	The elements (typography, spacing, graphics) that create the look of a paper; readability is the focus of design for academic writing.
Paper mill	A typically commercial organization, usually represented online through a web site, offering academic-style papers or papers, usually for a fee, to would-be plagiarizers.
Parallelism	Repeating phrases or sentence structures to show the relationship between ideas.
Paraphrase	To discuss an entire document in one's own words.
Passive sentence	Sentences in which the subject is acted upon.
Passive voice	A subject-verb construction in which the subject is acted upon, not performing the action as it would be in the active voice.
Pathos	An argumentative strategy designed to appeal to an audience's emotions.
PDF	Portable document file; a file form that preserves a document according to its exact appearance and is readable through Adobe software.
Periodicals	Publications (journals, magazines, newsletters) or broadcasts produced at regular intervals (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly).
Personal narrative	Writing about a memorable experience; often includes personal reflection and thoughts.
Pivotal points	Moments in which a significant change occurs; literally a point in which a person changes direction.
Plagiarism	The act of presenting someone else's work as one's own, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
Planning	The thinking and organizing that go into establishing a direction and structure for writing.
Platitudes	Stale or unoriginal thoughts.
Point of view	The perspective from which the writer approaches the writing, including first-person, second-person, or third-person point of view.
Portfolio	A collection of selected work by a group or author.
Preposition	A word that shows a where/when relationship with the other words in the sentence or clause. Prepositions include words such as <i>up</i> , <i>in</i> , <i>through</i> , <i>over</i> , <i>by</i> , <i>from</i> , and so on.
Primary sources	Original sources that provide first-hand information about a subject.

Pronoun	A word that replaces a noun in a sentence to help alleviate redundancy. Pronouns include words such as <i>he, she, they, we, it, them, his, her,</i> and so on.
Proofread	The act of checking a document for errors before submitting it.
Public domain	Materials provided by the government provided as a part of the “copy left” movement, or, generally speaking, documents over seventy-five years old.
Publish	The act of sharing a completed work with another.
Purpose	The goal of a piece of writing; for example, to inform, to convince, to analyze, to persuade.

## Q

Qualifiers	Words or phrases that limit or refine a claim, making it more reasonable.
Quotation	A word-for-word statement or passage from an original source. In writing, quotations are always set apart and cited.

## R

Rapport	Personal connection, trust, and teamwork.
Rebuttal	A tactful argument aimed at weakening the opposing point of view.
Redirect	To restate the main claim or argument.
Redundancy	Words used together that mean nearly the same thing. Also, the repetitive use of a word or phrase when that word or phrase could be replaced with another.
Redundancy	Words used together that mean nearly the same thing. Also, the repetitive use of a word or phrase when that word or phrase could be replaced with another.
References	Also known as <i>sources</i> , references are made up of information that has been gathered from external works in order to provide evidence toward a claims or to draw associations between authors within a paper. References can be journal articles, books, information on websites, magazines, videos, interviews or other documents. Most college writing uses sources, but these references are generally limited to specific forms and types by the course and/or instructor. APA insists that references be scholarly in nature and generally asks that they be

peer reviewed. References should always be cited both in the body of text and in the *References page*.

Reference listing	A citation of a document that has been quoted, paraphrased, or summarized within a paper and appears in the <i>References page</i> .
References page	In APA, the References page is the last page of a paper. This page includes an alphabetical listing of all the sources/references quoted, summarized, and/or paraphrased within the paper. Source/reference listings are expected to follow the APA citation style appropriate for the particular type of source they refer to. Each listing is treated as an individual, but reversed paragraph, with the first line flush with the left margin of the paper, and with each additional line of the source/reference listing tabbed-in.
Refute	To prove an idea or argument false, illogical, or undesirable.
Repetition	Repeating words or synonyms where necessary to remind the reader of what has already been said.
Research paper	A fairly long paper, complete with a thesis statement, supporting evidence, integrated resources, and careful documentation.
Restrictions	Limitations of choice within an assignment.
Résumé	A brief document that outlines a person's employment objectives and highlights the person's job skills, experience, and education.
Revising	Improving and/or redirecting a draft through large-scale changes such as adding, deleting, rearranging, and reworking.
Rhetoric	The art of using language effectively.
Running head	Running heads (aka <i>running titles</i> ) are brief versions of the title that appear in the top, left of each page, and are presented in all capital letters. Running heads should be no more than 50 characters in length, and no more than five words long. Due to their brevity, running heads are often abbreviated versions of the title of the paper. On the title page, the words <i>Running head:</i> precede the title (not in italics or in all capital letters). The remaining pages of the paper include only the abbreviated title without the additional wording.

## S

Search engine	An online research tool (e.g. Google, Yahoo) through which researchers may search the internet for webpages, documents, etc.
Secondary source	Sources that are at least once removed from the original source; sources that provide second-hand information.
Second person	The perspective or voice of direct address, in which the author or speaker addresses the reader or hearer using a second-person pronoun

	(i.e. you), as if in conversation. Second person is useful when giving individual direction or in some technical writing. But, due to its casual, familiar, and often accusatory tone, it is highly discouraged in academic writing.
Sensory details	Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, temperatures and other details connected to the five senses—showing rather than telling about the subject.
Sentence combining	The act of combining ideas in sentences to show relationships and to make connections.
Sentence expanding	The act of extending basic ideas with different types of phrases and clauses.
Sentence outline	A more formal method of arrangement in which a writer states each main point and essential detail as a complete sentence.
Sentence variety	The varying of beginnings, lengths, and types of sentences within a paper in order to make the writing interesting to the reader.
Sexist language	Language that, unintentionally or not, accounts for only one gender despite being directed toward a mixed audience.
Showcase portfolio	A collection of appropriate, finished pieces of writing.
Slang	Words considered to lie outside of the standard English language because they are faddish, familiar to a few people, and may be insulting.
Slanted question	Questions that presuppose a specific answer.
Sources	Also known as a <i>references</i> , sources are made up of information that has been consulted to provide evidence within a paper. Sources can be journal articles, books, information on websites, magazines, videos, interviews or other documents. Most college writing uses sources, but these sources are generally limited to specific forms and types by the course and/or instructor. APA insists that sources be scholarly in nature and generally asks that they be peer reviewed. Sources should always be cited both in the body of text and in the <i>References page</i> .
Spatial organization	A pattern of organization in which the writer logically orders descriptive details from far to near, left to right, top to bottom, and so on. Also see <i>camera-eye</i> .
Style	The variety, originality, and clarity of a piece of writing.
Subject	The general area covered by a piece of writing.
Summary	Condensed representation, in one's own words rather than through quotation, of the main points of a passage. Summary is designed to extract the meaning of a piece of work in a form that essentializes the original author's words.
Surface change	The edited (corrected) words, phrases, and sentences in a piece of writing.

Surface error A problem in word choice, grammar, mechanics, usage, etc. that do little to harm the transference of meaning, but appear untidy and unprofessional.

## T

Tab A series of 12 spaces placed at the beginning of a paragraph. Can more easily be accomplished by striking the “Tab” key.

Tactful Being sensitive to the feelings of others; avoiding unnecessary offense.

Taxonomy A system of classification of items—plants, animals, ideas, movements, etc.

Tertiary source Sources that provide third-hand information, such as wikis; though these sources are a good place to begin to formulate ideas, using them as evidence to drive an academic paper is highly discouraged at the college-level.

Thesis Statement A sentence or group of sentences that sum up the central idea of a piece of writing; thesis statements serve as a map to the body of a paper.

Third person The perspective or voice of indirect observation, in which the author or speaker uses third person pronouns (e.g. he, she, they) to describe the actions and interactions of persons with things and in places at which the author or speaker is/was not present. In fiction, this is the voice of the semi-omniscient or omniscient narrator.

Thought details Impressions, emotions, predictions, and reflections; details that reveal perceptions rather than sensations.

Title page The page on which, in the APA style, the title of the paper, the name of the author(s), and the name of the organization are identified. Title pages are the first page of an APA style paper.

Title block The identifying information found on the title page of an APA style paper. Title blocks are center-justified, and include, in descending order, the title of the paper, the name of its author, and the organization the paper is being written for (for papers written in college, this organization is almost always the name of the school).

Tone The overall feeling or effect created by a writer’s thoughts and his or her choice of words.

Topic outline A less formal method of arrangement in which the writer states each main point and essential detail as a word or a phrase.

Transition Words or phrases that help tie ideas together.

## U

Uninspiring draft	A draft in which the writer fails to connect with his or her readers or makes a lasting impression.
Unity	Oneness achieved in a paragraph through a strong focus on a single, central idea.

## V

Verb	An action word.
Vivid verb	Specific action verbs, such as <i>lunge</i> , <i>trudge</i> , etc. that help to create clear images.
Voice	The tone of the writing, often affected by the personality of the writer.

## W

Widow	A single word or a short line carried over to the top of the next page.
Working thesis	A preliminary answer to a main research question; the focus of one's research.
Worn-out topic	A paper that is dull or unoriginal because the topic has been overworked. <i>Abortion</i> , <i>Legalizing Marijuana</i> , <i>Global Warming</i> , and <i>Lowering the Drinking Age</i> are all examples of worn-out topics.
Writing portfolio	A selected group of writings by a single author.
Writing process	The steps that a writer follows to develop a thoughtful and thorough piece of writing.