1 ASA Editorial Style

The *ASA Style Guide* aims to achieve several goals:

- To establish uniformity and consistency in style among ASA publications with respect to elements such as formats for text citations, references, and other structural features. The guidelines established here assist editors and copyeditors to implement uniform standards across all ASA journals in their final published forms.

- To provide an authoritative reference source on style issues for authors who are writing manuscripts for ASA journals. This *ASA Style Guide* is primarily based on *The Chicago Manual of Style* (*CMOS*) but departs from the *CMOS* on certain points. The guidelines presented here provide acceptable stylistic forms (e.g., how to cite chapters in books in a reference list) for ASA journals.

- To summarize basic issues on effective writing for authors in general. Elements of effective, polished writing (e.g., rules of good syntax and grammar, conventionally accepted usages and spellings of words, correct use of punctuation) are summarized in a portable format for use by writers in a wide variety of settings. The *ASA Style Guide* is structured so it can be easily adapted for other purposes (e.g., as a teaching tool or for ASA Web site development).

1.1 Style Matters

The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines *style* as "a distinctive manner of expression . . . a particular manner or technique by which something is done, created, or performed" (2003). Style thus encompasses organizational constraints, professional requirements, and writers' inclinations and preferences.

1.2 ASA Style

1.2.1 Some Basics

In addition to guidelines for presentation formats (e.g., headings, tables, figures, citations, and references), the *ASA Style Guide* provides some basic information on the mechanics of writing (e.g., correct syntax, grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage). Attention to these issues will certainly enhance writing style, but it is important to note that communicating effectively in writing depends on the more fundamental thinking-and-planning stage, which involves conceptualizing ideas; conducting solid, objective, accurate analysis; developing a strong thesis or point of view; organizing materials and citing them in a systematic way; "mapping" the ideas in a logical and coherent manner; and developing a design or outline for presentation in the manuscript.

Guidelines for reporting on empirical social science, such as the "Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications," recently published in *Educational Researcher*, highlight some basic issues pertaining to the design and analyses phases of a writing effort (AERA 2007). A volume by Day and Gastel, titled *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper* (2006), also provides valuable insights and guidance on the basic elements of organizing, writing, and publishing scientific papers.

The *ASA Style Guide* emphasizes formal, objective, orderly, and grammatically sound expression. For example, writers should generally avoid writing in the first person, injecting opinion, overstating claims, and overwriting. They should use the active voice, maintain consistency in grammatical constructions, be concrete and specific, aim for creative but smooth composition, and follow standard usages and conventions. Scholarly writing should reflect both intellectual and stylistic rigor.

1.2.2 Plagiarism

The ASA has a firm commitment to full and proper attribution and authorship credit, as set forth in the *ASA Code of Ethics*, in Section 14 on plagiarism:

> (a) In publications, presentations, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists explicitly identify, credit, and reference the author when they take data or material verbatim from another person's written work, whether it is published, unpublished, or electronically available.

> (b) In their publications, presentations, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists provide acknowledgment of and reference to the use of others' work, even if the work is not quoted verbatim or paraphrased, and they do not present others' work as their own whether it is published, unpublished, or electronically available.

Other sections of the *ASA Code of Ethics* define ethical responsibilities of authors in other areas, such as authorship credit, the publication process, and responsibilities of reviewers. (See the *ASA Code of Ethics*, available at http://www.asanet.org.)

1.2.3 Clarity

The essential element of good style and effective writing is clarity of expression, both with respect to ideas and structure. Several volumes by Williams, including the recently published *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (2007), emphasize the importance of clarity, coherence, and concision in effective prose and elegant, polished writing. Clarity in writing means using direct and straightforward language; expressing ideas accurately in jargon-free, uncluttered phrases; and adhering to a well-designed outline. Writing clearly also involves a focus on "nuts-and-bolts" issues

(such as consistency of verb tenses, accuracy in spelling, correct word usages, and correct punctuation) that are key to effective presentation. Authors are encouraged to think of themselves as both authors and editors (Becker 1986) and should submit manuscripts for publication only after multiple careful readings and revisions.

1.2.4 Bias

In keeping with ASA's firm commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity in all areas, the *ASA Style Guide* strongly urges the avoidance of language reflecting bias or stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities, sexual orientation, family status, religion, or other personal characteristics. For more ideas on how to approach gender-neutral and bias-free expression, refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003:157, 233), the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001:66–76), and that association's Web sites: http://www.apastyle.org/disabilities.html, http://www.apastyle.org/sexuality.html, and http://www.apastyle.org/race.html.

Gender

Unless gendered terms are specific to analysis of data or demographics, use nongendered terms such as *person, people, individual,* or *humankind* rather than *man, men,* or *mankind.* There are a number of common techniques for maintaining a gender-neutral approach:

- Rephrase the sentence (change *a boy or girl lives in that house* to *a child lives in that house*).

- Use a plural noun or pronoun (*people, they*).

- Replace the gendered pronoun with an article (change *his* to *the*).

- Delete the pronoun (change *avoid his bias* to *avoid bias*).

In general, avoid slashed gendered terms (*he/she, him/her, his/hers*), repetition of the conjunction *or* (*he or she, her or him, his or hers*), and switching gender order (using *he* or *she* and then using *she* or *he*).

Some writers may wish to distinguish the use of terms relating to gender and sexuality (*woman, female, gender*) for accuracy and precision. The author should note such preferences when submitting a manuscript for publication.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000) also provides suggestions for gender-neutral language in a usage note that follows the entry for *he.*

Race and Ethnicity

The classification and terminology of race and ethnicity are complex and have changed over time. Avoid racial and ethnic stereotyping of groups. Authors using racial and ethnic terms should aim to be as specific and precise as possible when identifying a person's origin or group. For example, *Cuban* is more specific than *Hispanic; Japanese* is more specific than *Asian.*

Use the following:
- African American (no hyphen) (*CMOS* 2003:304, 325)
- black (not capitalized)
- white (not capitalized)
- Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, Latina (use *Latino* or *Latina* if gender is known; use *Latino* if gender is unknown or known to be male)
- American Indian, Native American (no hyphen)
- Asian or Asian American (no hyphen)

Avoid the following:
- Afro-American
- Negro
- Oriental

For further explanation, refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003:233, 325) and to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001:67–69, 74–75).

1.2.5 Verbs

The *ASA Style Guide* focuses on some basic rules of grammar relating to verbs. Information about rules governing other parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and interjections) is covered in Chapter 5 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003:147–95).

Active Voice

Because the active voice is more precise and less wordy, use it whenever possible. The subject of an active sentence tells the reader who did something, and the active verb says what happened. A passive sentence tells the reader what happened but attributes the action to no one. For example:

> *Passive voice:* Three hundred fifty college graduates between the ages of 25 and 35 were queried.

> *Active voice:* A team of 14 trained interviewers queried 350 college graduates between the ages of 25 and 35.

Avoid the passive voice by saying *The authors found . . .* rather than *It was found . . .*, or by using the first person (*I* or *we*) in text. ASA style discourages the use of the personal pronoun in formal writing.

> *Passive voice:* All 350 interview transcripts were analyzed.

> *Active voice:* The analysis included all 350 interview transcripts.

Tense—Past or Present?

Most problems with verb tense result from inconsistency. Different sections of a paper can use different verb tenses, but within each section, the tense should be the same.

For literature reviews: In general, use the past tense. In discussing past research, use the tense that communicates that the research has been completed:

> In their study on education and income, Smith and Jones (1994) found that the college graduates in their sample earned more over the life course than did high school graduates.

However, mixing past and present tense within a sentence sometimes better communicates a finding from past research:

> Jones (1969) concluded that students are more likely to cohabit than they are to marry.

In this case, Jones's conclusion is understood to be timeless—as correct today as it was when she completed her study.

In the methods section: Use the past tense to describe the methods used to conduct a study:

> We completed our interviews in the spring of 1992.

In the results section: Use either past or present tense:

> The results support our hypothesis.

> The results supported our hypothesis.

See Day and Gastel (2006:191–93) for use of tense in scientific writing.

Subject–Verb Agreement

The subject of a sentence must agree in number with the predicate verb, regardless of the words or phrases that come between them. Certain subject–verb constructions, however, often present problems:

- The word *data* is plural and takes a plural verb:

  The data, as reported in the appendix, are correct.

- Collective nouns (*committee, faculty*) may take either a plural (if referring to individuals) or a singular (if referring to a group) verb. Context determines the appropriate use:

  The faculty is meeting this afternoon.

  The faculty are voting on the issue later today.

- Words such as *none, some, any, most, part,* and *number* take either a plural or singular verb, depending on the context. A suggestion by *The Chicago Manual of Style* may be useful guide: If the word is followed by a singular noun, treat it as a singular; if by a plural noun, treat it as a plural (2003:222):

  None of the report was printed.

  None of the students were in attendance.

1.2.6 Wordy Phrases

Some commonly used words and expressions can weigh down writing. Simplify and enhance writing by using "plain" language. The following list, adapted from Appendix 2 of Day and Gastel (2006:265–72), presents common wordy phrases and suggests alternative expressions. Reading this list should increase sensitivity to unnecessary words typically used in writing.

Wordy	Better
a considerable amount of	much
a considerable number of	many
a great deal of	much
a majority of	most
a number of	a few, several, many, some
absolutely essential	essential
accounted for by	because, due to, caused by
add the point that	add that
adjacent to	near
along the lines of	like
an example of this is the fact that	for example
an order of magnitude faster	10 times faster
analyzation	analysis
another aspect of the situation	as for
are of the opinion that	think that, believe
are of the same opinion	agree
as a matter of fact	in fact [or omit]
as in the case	as happens
as of this date	today
as per	[omit]
as regards	about
as related to	for, about
as to	about [or omit]
at a rapid rate	rapidly
at an earlier date	previously
at some future time	later
at the conclusion of	after
at the present writing [or time]	now
at this point in time	now
based on the fact that	because
by means of	by, with
causal factor	cause
collect together	collect
completely full	full
concerning, concerning the nature of	about
consensus of opinion	consensus
considerable amount of	much
definitely proved	proved

Wordy	Better
demonstrate	show, prove
despite the fact that	although
due to the fact that	because, since
during the course of	during, while
during the time that	while
enclosed herewith	enclosed
end result	result
endeavor	try
entirely eliminate	eliminate
eventuate	happen
except in a small number of cases	usually
exhibit a tendency to	tend to
fatal outcome	death
few [many] in number	few [many]
fewer in number	fewer
finalize	end
first of all	first
firstly [secondly, etc.]	first [second, etc.]
for the purpose of	for, to
for the reasons that	because, since
from the point of view of	for
future plans	plans
give an account of	describe
give rise to	cause
has been engaged in a study of	has studied
has the capability of	can
have an input into	contribute to
have in regard to	about
have the appearance of	look like
if at all possible	if possible
impact [verb]	affect
important essentials	essentials
in a number of cases	some
in a position to	can, may
in a satisfactory manner	satisfactorily
in a very real sense	in a sense [or omit]
in almost all instances	nearly always
in case, in case of	if

Wordy	Better
in close proximity	close, near
in connection with	about, concerning
in favor of	for, to
in light of the fact that	because
in many cases	often
in my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that	I think
in reference [with reference to, in regard to]	about
in order to	to
in rare cases	rarely
in relation to	toward, to
in relation with	with
in respect to	about
in some cases	sometimes
in terms of	about, in, for [or omit]
in the absence of	without
in the case of	[can usually omit]
in the case that	if, when
in the course of	during
in the event that	if
in the first place	first
in the majority of instances	usually
in the matter of	about
in the nature of	like
in the neighborhood of	about
in the normal course of our procedure	normally
in the not-too-distant future	soon
in the opinion of this writer	in my opinion, I believe
in the possession of	has, have, owned by
in the vicinity of	near
in view of the above, in view of the foregoing circumstances, in view of the fact that	therefore, because
inasmuch as	as, because
incline to the view	think
involve the necessity of	require
is defined as	is [will frequently suffice]

Wordy	Better
it has been reported by Smith	Smith reported
it is apparent that	apparently
it is believed that	I believe
it is clear [obvious] that	therefore, clearly [obviously]
it is observed that	[omit]
it is often the case that	often
it is our conclusion in the light of the investigation that	we conclude that, our findings indicate that
it should be noted that X	X
it stands to reason	[omit]
it was noted that if	if
it would not be unreasonable to assume	I [we] assume
leaving out of consideration	disregarding
make an examination of	examine
not of a high order of accuracy	inaccurate
not withstanding the fact	although
of considerable magnitude	big, large, great
of very minor importance [import]	unimportant
on a few occasions	occasionally
on account of the conditions described	because of the conditions
on account of the fact that	because
on the ground that	because
perform an analysis of	analyze
presently	now
prior to, in advance of	before
proceed to investigate [study, analyze]	investigate [omit proceed to]
relative to this	about this
resultant effect	effect
subsequent to	after
taking this factor into consideration, it is apparent that	therefore, therefore it seems
that is, i.e.	[usually can be omitted if phrase or clause to which it refers has been written clearly]
the data show that X	X

Wordy	Better
the existence of	[usually can be omitted]
the foregoing	the, this, that, these, those
the fullest possible extent	[omit, or use most, completely, or fully]
the only difference being	except
the question as to whether or not	whether
there are not very many to be considered	few
to be sure	of course
to summarize the above	in sum, in summary
under way	begun, started
with reference [regard, respect] to	[omit, or use about]
with the exception of	except
with the result that	so that
with this in mind, with this in mind it is clear that	therefore

1.2.7 Common Misusages

Under a section titled "Glossary of Troublesome Expressions," *The Chicago Manual of Style* lists dozens of words that are commonly misused (2003:196–233). The following list includes a few of these:

Affect; effect
Affect in the verb form means to influence; *effect* is used as a noun to mean result. *Effect* can also be used as a verb meaning to bring about or to make happen.

Altogether; all together
Altogether means wholly or completely; *all together* refers to the same time or place.

Assure; ensure; insure
To *assure* is to state confidently; to *ensure* is to make sure or certain; to *insure* is to protect against financial loss.

Between; among
As a general guideline, *between* indicates a one-on-one relationship (*between you and me*), while *among* indicates collective or

undefined relationships (*honor among thieves*). *Between* can also be used with groups of three or more if the statement refers to multiple one-on-one relationships (*trade between the United States, Mexico, and Canada*).

Biannual; semiannual; biennial
Biannual and *semiannual* both mean occurring twice a year; *biennial* means taking place once in two years.

Can; may
Can refers to physical or mental ability; *may* indicates possibility or permission.

Compliment; complement
A *compliment* is a flattering remark; a *complement* is something that is required to supply a deficiency.

Due to; because of
Due to is interchangeable with *attributable to*; *because of* means for the reason that.

Elicit; illicit
Elicit (verb) means to draw out (an answer); *illicit* (adjective) means improper or unlawful.

Emigrate; immigrate
To *emigrate* is to leave one's country to settle in another one; to *immigrate* is to come into a country of which one is not a native.

Its; it's
Its is the possessive form of *it* (belonging to it); *it's* is the contraction for *it is*.

Lay; lie
Lay means to set down (it is a transitive verb requiring a direct object): *Lay the clothes on the bed*. *Lie* means to assume a position of rest: *Lie down for a nap*.

Less; fewer
Less refers to degree, value, or amount; *fewer* is used to compare numbers or countable things.

That; which
Use *that* in restrictive (defining) clauses—clauses that define or restrict the meaning of the subject or the main clause (*The data that came from the university were crucial to our study*). Restrictive clauses are not set off by commas. In general, if either *that* or *which* can be used, *that* is preferable.

Use *which* for nonrestrictive (nondefining) clauses—clauses that do not change the meaning of the subject or main clause but simply add information about something already identified. Nonrestrictive clauses always use *which* and must be set off by commas or parentheses because such clauses are indeed parenthetical (*The data, which came from several different sources, are available on request from the authors*).

Who; whom
Who is used as a subject of the verb or a predicate nominative (*Fido, who barks constantly, annoys the neighbors*); *whom* is used as the object of a verb or a preposition (*To whom should these papers be sent?*).