

Thomas Edison State College
W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing

Synthesis Paper
Writing Tips

The following is a list of tips to assist you in writing your *Synthesis Paper*. We hope that these tips are helpful to you.

Grammar Tips

1. Grammar and writing style are the main reasons student papers require revision. Before you submit the paper, please make every effort to review your paper carefully. Having someone else read your paper for understanding, grammar, content, etc. is very helpful to your success.
2. Use common, every day language to eliminate confusion in your writing. Avoid using fancy words, jargon, and acronyms.
3. Use active voice in your writing. For example,
“I was remembering my first nursing position...” is passive voice.

The better way to write this sentence is in active voice.

“I remember my first nursing position.”

4. When possible, avoid the use of negative language. For example, revise
“She is not often disagreeable.”
to
“She is often agreeable.”
5. Parallelism: When using conjunctions (and, but, or, nor) to express a coordinating idea be sure that the words are parallel before and after the conjunctions. For example, it is correct to write
“The student expressed **that** she had completed her assignment and **that** she was pleased with the outcome.”
It is incorrect to write
“The student expressed that she had completed her assignment and she was pleased with the outcome.”
6. Use verb tense agreement, pronoun agreement, and plural or single agreement in the same sentence. For example, for pronoun agreement
“The student supported the policy, which they proposed.”
should read
“The student supported the policy, which **he/she** proposed.”
or
“The students supported the policy, which **they** proposed.”
7. Introductory prepositional phrases require commas at the end of the phrases. For example,
“After reading for three hours, the student finished the assignment.”

8. APA format uses a comma before “and” or “or” in a series of three or more.
“The mentor uses tests, observations, **and** oral presentations to grade student work in the course.”
and
“Students may choose to do a PowerPoint, oral, **or** written presentation for the assignment.”
9. When using a plural abbreviation, do not use an apostrophe. The apostrophe denotes possessive form. RNs is the plural form...RN’s or RNs’ is the possessive. For example
“The RNs’ patient trust scores were highest for the pediatric unit.”
vs.
“The trust scores for RNs on the pediatric unit were the highest.”
10. Avoid a succession of loose, rambling sentences and/or multiple clause sentences. Remember clarity in written communication is important.
11. References cited in the body of your paper must also be included on the reference list at the end of your document. The converse is also true, that is, when you cite a reference in the reference list, you must have cited content from that reference in the body of the paper.
12. Use the most current APA manual to assure accuracy/consistency throughout your paper. When you cut and paste a reference from a paper you completed in 2008, you must revise the reference to meet the recommended format from the 2010 APA manual. Every reference on the reference page must demonstrate use of the appropriate format.
13. Use a grammar text to assure grammar. A suggested online text is

Strunk, W. (1999). *Elements of style* (3rd ed.). New York: MacMillan Publishing Company
retrieved from <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

To access to the book online use the URL <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>
When you access the site, go to the table of contents, which is hyper-linked to topics. Click on the topic of interest to review the information you are interested in acquiring.
14. When referencing a course assignment to document an outcome and/or a competency, use either italics for the assignment title or another way to identify the assignment.
15. When referencing a course assignment in your paper, make sure the title of the assignment you reference has the same title as the assignment in your portfolio. The mentor who grades your paper is required to validate that all assignments referenced in your paper are included in your *e-Portfolio* under the appropriate MSN outcome.
16. Critical reflection is important to a successful synthesis paper. **Do not** simply list what you did to meet the outcome. Critically reflect on how each assignment demonstrates the

achievement of the outcome or competency you addressed. What did you learn, and how did the learning experience/assignment influence your practice.

17. Do not copy and paste your documentation of achievement from one outcome or competency to another outcome and/or competency. When using the same assignment to document any outcome achievement, your discussion should **uniquely explain** why the evidence supports that outcome and/or competency. For example, to document your achievement of ethical behavior, you might use learning assignments from NUR 710: Testing, Assessment, and Evaluation, NUR 530: Evidence-Based Nursing Practice; NUR 730: Nursing Education Seminar and Onground Practicum, etc. However, each assignment must present with a different concept/statement, which specifically identifies why the selected assignment documents achievement of a MSN outcome or competency. **While you may use the same assignment to meet a different MSN outcome and/or competency, you must provide a unique explanation to document how you achieved each outcome and competency.**
18. Avoid redundancies. Critically reflect on **all courses** taken and use different examples to document your achievement of each outcome and competency. For example, do not use the same assignment multiple times to meet different outcomes. Assignments in most courses meet multiple outcomes. Vary your choice of assignments across program outcomes and competencies. Make sure the examples that you use are in your *e-Portfolio*.
19. When you document an outcome using an assignment from a transferred course, please identify that the assignment came from the transferred course, the name of the course, and the name of the course it replaced in the MSN program.
20. You may use a short title heading for each MSN outcome and competency if the number of the outcome is present with the short title.
21. **When you cite a course one to three times in the paper, only write the course name (NUR-530: Evidence-based Nursing Practice). If you plan to cite the course more than three times in your paper, the first time you cite the course write the number in parentheses after the full name, for example, NUR-530: Evidence-based Nursing Practice (NUR-530). Thereafter, when referring to the course, use only the numeric form (NUR-530).**
22. The mentor grading your paper needs to toggle between your paper and your portfolio to validate that you included the assignment cited. **All assignments referenced in the *Synthesis Paper* must correspond to the assignments in your *e-Portfolio*.**
23. Update your resume/curriculum vita to reflect your academic, specialty area, and professional achievements while in the MSN program.
24. Remember you are responsible for reviewing and revising your final paper before resubmitting it to the *e-Portfolio*, that is, **the *Synthesis Paper* in the *e-Portfolio* should be the final paper and should replace any paper previously submitted to the *e-Portfolio*.**

25. You are required to mail a corrected hard copy and a flash drive or CD of your *Synthesis Paper* by regular US Mail; however, you do not need to send the paper by special delivery. Send your paper to the address below.

Thomas Edison State College
W. Cary Edwards School of Nursing
ATTN: Nina Keats, RN, BSN, CSN
101 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608-1176

APA Format Tips

26. APA **does not** use “Introduction” as a heading on the first page of a formal paper. Place the title of the paper on the first page, and follow the title with .an opening paragraph that identifies the purpose of the paper. See APA manual page 27
27. In APA format, express numbers **10 and above** as numerals; express numbers **nine and below** as words. See APA manual pages 111-113 for more information on numbers.
28. When using abbreviations, spell out the term followed by the abbreviation in parentheses, the first time you use it, even for commonly used terms, for example, intravenous (IV). See APA manual pages 106-111.
29. Do not use an abbreviation if, in the paper, you only use the term three times or less. (See APA manual page 107.
30. Avoid the use of slang. If you use slang, use quotation marks the first time the word or phrase is used; thereafter, do not use quotation marks. See APA manual page 91.
31. See page 99 of the APA manual for information on prefixes that do not require hyphens.
32. See page 102 in APA manual, regarding capitalization of drug names.
33. See page 62 of APA manual regarding information on headings.
34. See page 109 of APA manual for common abbreviations for units of measurement.
35. See page 96 in the APA manual regarding spelling of the possessive of a singular name.
36. See page 175 of the APA manual for citing one work by multiple authors.
37. See pages 170-172 in the APA manual for citation of direct quotes.
38. See page 184 in APA manual for citing full name of a group author