Best Practices in Academic Writing

All of your assignments, from discussion posts to writing assignments, should be written in formal academic prose. Think of it as the opposite of informal speech. Academic writing has certain conventions, and they are summarized in this document.

Academic writing guidelines
- Use first person point of view sparingly: I, me, we, our, us, etc. "I" is acceptable when you are making a strong claim, such as "I would argue that…" NEVER use second person point of view: you, your, etc.
- Do not use phrases such as I think that, I believe that, I feel that, in my opinion, etc. Your claims should be supported by evidence, and therefore, you do not need to present unsupported ideas or feelings.
- BE PRECISE AND CLEAR.
    - Prevent wordiness. Do not use filler words, such as: just, even, very, really, etc. Avoid filler phrases, such as: the fact that, at that point in time, in other words, etc.
    - Do not editorialize your writing. Avoid words like: unfortunately, virtually impossible, well worth, obviously, hopefully, fortunately, invaluable, undoubtedly, assuredly, literally, etc.
    - Use the right word for the right shade of meaning and do not use pretentious words just to impress readers, such as "utilize" instead of "use." Other common examples: plethora, elicit, ensue, illustrative. If you use words your reader might not know, explain them.
    - Do not use slang or other informal diction (marked on papers as "coll." or colloquial).
    - Write out all contractions. Example: "cannot" instead of "can't."
    - "To be" verbs—is, are, was, were, etc.—should be used sparingly. Avoid starting a sentence with "there is…", such as "there is a dog in this painting." Instead, make the subject active, such as "the dog in this painting is…"
    - Just do it! Rule: After the introduction, do not make announcements, such as "this paper will," "in this paper I will," "I decided to write about…," or "I chose to go to x art museum…". Instead of signaling, just do it!
    - Don't give readers commands, such as "Be sure to …..," or any similar sentences.
    - Do not use passive voice in your writing. Be concise and clear. Passive voice makes the sentence too wordy. Use active voice in clear, precise, and concise sentences.
- Always, always, always credit ideas to their authors and distinguish your voice from that of your sources.
    - Direct quotes should be rare.
    - Indirect quotes—i.e., information taken from a source that has been paraphrased into your own words—still need to be cited. Just because it isn't a

direct quote set off with quotation marks does NOT mean that it does not require citation.

Common document formatting rules
- Spacing: double-spaced unless directed otherwise.
- Margins: 1 inch. Your word processor will likely use a default setting of 1.25 inches, so you will need to change this.
- Page numbers: on each page (see example on this document). Add pages on a Mac by choosing the Insert menu, then insert page numbers, and then deselecting the page number on the first page option and choosing location of page number.
- Cover pages:
  - For a paper of 5 pages or less, put your student information at the top of the first page. See sample at end of document.
  - For a paper over 5 pages long, you should have a cover sheet including a title (upper center) and the student information in the lower right corner. See sample at end of document.
- When submitting an assignment through BlazeView's submission folders, the file should be labeled with your last name and the name of the assignment, such as <Reynolds_CaseStudy1.doc>.

Writing formats

Your instructor will specify the writing format to use. Most common in academic writing is the **essay** format. To be an essay, your writing needs to have an introductory paragraph, at least 3 body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Each paragraph should be indented one tab to show that it is a new paragraph, and each paragraph should address one point. That paragraph's point should be summarized in the first line of the paragraph—called a "point sentence" or "topic sentence." Test it out by reading only the point sentences of your draft—if the argument is clear from those point sentences, then you have succeeded.

If asked to prepare an **outline**, use outline formatting. Your word processor should have an option to automatically format text as an outline. It is usually a formatting button next to the options for bullet points and a numbered list. See sample at end of this document.

Working with sources

Working with sources is an important aspect of academic writing.

Finding sources

For books, use the library catalogue at the link below by clicking on the tab for "books & journals":
https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/library/

For other book sources, and for articles, use the Art research guide that the library provides:
https://libguides.valdosta.edu/art

Be aware that some resources that the library provides are limited to registered students. What this means for you is that if you want to use a database from off-campus, you will need to log in first to confirm that you are allowed to access that database. For information about off-campus access to VSU library services, go to the VSU library homepage and click the "Anywhere Access" button.
https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/library/

For internet research, start with these two recommended web sources:
Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History:
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/

SmartHistory:
http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/

Using sources

When should you cite a source? Answer: whenever the information that you are using did not come from your own head or your own observation.

When you don't need to cite a source:
If you are describing what you see in an artwork—if it is visible in the artwork, and you can describe it, then you do not need a citation
If the information is so common that it can be found in every source about your subject (such as the birth date of an artist, unless that date is in question and is up for debate)
Information from your lecture notes does not usually need a citation, but check with your instructor on this point.

When you do need to cite a source:
If you are describing another writer's interpretation of an artwork—this could be an interpretation that you found in a textbook, or one that you saw on a museum label, or one

that the artist wrote in a primary source. Interpretations are original work and belong to the author, so you need to cite the author.

If the information about your subject is not common and you want to show where you found the information

If the information about your subject is in debate, then you need to show the source that you are using

Quoting sources

There are two options when using a source: **direct quotation**, when you want to quote your source word for word, and **indirect quotation**, when you want to summarize the source in your own words. Both forms of quotation have conventions and require **references**. References are explanations of where the words or ideas came from, since you are referring to the source. References can be formatted in many different ways, such as MLA style or Chicago style. You should use whatever format is indicated for the assignment. When in doubt, use footnotes for papers and use parenthetical citation for writing on discussion boards online.

Direct quotation: use a direct quotation when you are copying the exact words from the source.

The rule: All direct quotations require quotation marks; otherwise, they constitute plagiarism.

Example of a direct quotation from a textbook, with a reference formatted as a footnote in the Chicago style:
Discussing Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul*, Kleiner states, "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle."[1]

If you were writing on a discussion board, the reference would be formatted as parenthetical citation:
Discussing Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul*, Kleiner states, "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle" (Kleiner 537).

Framing quotes:
Direct quotations need to be 'set up,' either by a summary of the content of the quotation or by a short phrase using the name of the author and a verb such as 'states,' 'explains,' 'says,' 'writes,' etc. When a quote is not set up, it is marked as a "dropped in quote." See example of a set-up quote above, for the Kleiner quote.

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[1] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 537.

If a direct quotation is longer than 4 lines in your paper, then it must be formatted as a 'block quote.'
- Single-spaced instead of double-spaced
- Entire block is indented 5 spaces
- No quotation marks are used (the formatting takes the place of the quotation marks)

Here's an example of a block quote:
Discussing Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul*, Kleiner states,

> He depicted the saint-to-be at the moment of his conversion, flat on his back with his arms thrown up. At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle. Although many of his contemporaries criticized Caravaggio for departing from traditional depictions of religious scenes, the eloquence and humanity with which he imbued his paintings impressed many others.[2]

When using a direct quotation, you may not alter the source text in any way except to indicate a mistake in the source or to omit words in the text.
- Use [sic] to indicate a mistake in the original (in this case, imagine a missing 'ing' in "witness"): "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witness [sic] a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle."
- Use ellipses to omit words: "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event... The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident..."
  - Use three dots when the omitted words come from the sentence quoted.
  - Use four dots when the omitted words indicate that you are skipping over entire sentences.

When incorporating quotations into your own writing, they must make grammatical sense within the context of the sentence as a whole. If your quote lacks a grammatical subject, for instance, then you must provide that subject before beginning the quote.

All punctuation should go 'inside' quotation marks, while footnote numerals always go after punctuation.
- Right: Kleiner states, "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle."[3]

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[2] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 537.
[3] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 537.

- Wrong: Kleiner states, "At first inspection, little here suggests the momentous significance of the spiritual event in progress. The viewer of the painting could well be witnessing a mere stable accident, not a man overcome by a great miracle"[4].

You must have a reference for every single quotation, even if you have two quotations from the same source in sentences right next to each other. You may use shortened formatting in the footnote after a complete citation the first time a source is used. For instance, if I was referring to the above quotation for a second time, I would cite it like this.[5]

Indirect quotation: when you summarize what the source says, using your own words.

The rule: Indirect quotations do not use quotation marks, but they still require a reference.

Footnote example, using above quotation: Kleiner argues that Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul* fails to convey the profound importance of the moment depicted, which looks like a simple fall from a horse.[6]
- Indirect quotations usually begin with a credit to the source—here, it is Kleiner.
- Notice that I have summarized what Kleiner says about the painting by using my own words, but that I have still given him credit for his interpretation.

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[4] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 537.
[5] Kleiner, 537.
[6] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 537.

Plagiarism

Review the plagiarism policy in the course syllabus and the policy in the VSU Student Handbook.
Student Handbook:
https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-handbook.php

Plagiarism includes:
- copying sentences from your textbook or another source without following procedures for a direct quotation
- re-wording sentences from your textbook or another source without following procedures for an indirect quotation
- using a reference, but not quotation marks, for a sentence copied from one of those sources

Examples:
Here is a correct example of a direct quotation and parenthetical citation:
Kleiner writes, "The humanism that Petrarch and Boccaccio promoted during the 14th century fully blossomed in the 15th century. Increasingly, Italians in elite circles embraced the tenets underlying humanism..." (Kleiner 419).

Incorrect examples:
The humanism that Petrarch and Boccaccio promoted during the 14th century fully blossomed in the 15th century. Increasingly, Italians in elite circles embraced the tenets underlying humanism... (Kleiner 419).
Why is this plagiarism? The student has copied the source word for word, but it is missing quotation marks to show that it is a direct quotation.

The humanism that Petrarch and Boccaccio promoted during the 14th century fully blossomed in the 15th century. Increasingly, Italians in elite circles embraced the tenets underlying humanism.
Why is this plagiarism? It is missing quotation marks and a reference. In this case, the student has copied the source word for word and is passing off the writing as his or her own writing.

The humanism that Petrarch and Boccaccio developed during the 1300s grew stronger in the 1400s. More and more, elite Italians adopted the principles underlying humanism... (Kleiner 419).
Why is this plagiarism? The sentence from the source has been re-worded by replacing specific words with synonyms. This is plagiarism because the structure of the sentence has been maintained. Without a reference, the student is passing off the writing as his or her own writing. This could work as an indirect quotation if the source was credited and if the student summarized the content in his or her own words.

References

Regardless of the type of quotation, each quotation needs its own reference listing the source and the page number for the quotation.

Chicago style: The citation format used in art history is called the Chicago style. It is named after the University of Chicago Press. The press requires submissions to be formatted in this particular style, and it publishes a guide to the style called *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- You may also use the Turabian style in place of the Chicago style; Turabian is a simplified version of the Chicago style.
- See Sayre, pp. 88-91, and the library's Citation Guide for more information on the Chicago style.
- A footnote to Kleiner's discussion of Caravaggio would look like this.[7]

How to make a footnote:
You create one in Microsoft Word by going to the "Insert" menu and selecting "Insert footnote" (on a Mac; procedure is similar on a PC).
> Do not use the footer and type footnotes directly into the footer—because footers are designed to repeat information from page to page, and you need a method that will allow for different information on each page.

How to format a footnote:
Footnotes use commas to separate the parts of the entry. These parts should always include the author's name, the title of the source, the publication location and date, and the page number for the specific quotation.
- For more specific formatting information, consult the sources listed above, and the Chicago Manual of Style Online at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html
  - See especially their quick guide
- Different kinds of sources require different kinds of citations. For instance, a website would have a different citation than a book or an article. The rules for these different sources are maintained by the University of Chicago Press and are explained in the above mentioned sources.
- The Chicago Manual of Style website mentions two ways to use the style: "humanities style" and "author-date system." Make sure that you are using the "humanities style" (which uses footnotes) and not the "author-date system," which is used by the social sciences (and uses parenthetical citation).
- Subsequent references to a source can use a shortened version of the initial reference, such as this example.[8]

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[7] Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th ed. (Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010), 536-537.
[8] Kleiner, 538.

<u>Works Cited</u>: The last page of your paper should be a "Works Cited" page, listing any publications cited within the footnotes of the paper.

- This page should list ONLY publications that you cited in the paper—meaning, that you used for direct or indirect quotations.
- Sometimes a "bibliography" may be used in addition to, or rather than, a Works Cited page. A bibliography can include sources not being cited, as it is not simply a list of works cited in the paper. You might use a bibliography after a Works Cited page to show off any sources that you consulted, but did not cite within the paper. This kind of bibliography will show your teacher that you are aware of the source and did consider using it.
  - o A bibliography might also be used at the beginning of a project to show sources that will be considered for use later in the paper. If asked to do an "annotated bibliography," that means to include short descriptions of each source. See examples at end of document in bibliography and other resources section.
- Entries in a works cited or bibliography list must be arranged alphabetically by last name. Entries should not be numbered.
- Single space each entry, but double space between entries.
- See examples on following page.

How to format references on a Works Cited page:
- In the Chicago style format for a Works Cited entry, use periods to separate the parts of the entry. These parts should always include the author's name, the title of the source, the publication location and date, and only for articles, the page numbers of the entire article.

Examples:

<u>Book citations</u>
Sample:
D'Alleva, Anne. *Look! The Fundamentals of Art History.* 3rd edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2010.

Formula:
Author last name, author first name. *Title in italics.* Edition number, if given on copyright page. City of publication: Name of publisher, copyright year.

<u>Article citations</u>
Sample:
Soth, Lauren. "Van Gogh's Agony." *The Art Bulletin* 68, no. 2 (1986): 301-13.

Formula:
Author last name, author first name. "Article title in quotation marks." *Journal title in italics* volume number, issue number (publication year): page numbers for entire article.

Article or chapter in an edited book
Sample:
Courbet, Gustave. "Statement on Realism" [1855]. In *Art in Theory 1815-1900*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 372-374. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Formula:
Author last name, author first name. "Article title in quotation marks." *Book title in italics,* name of editor(s), page numbers for entire article. City of publication: Name of publisher, copyright year.

Web citations
Samples:
Zucker, Steven, and Beth Harris. "Vincent van Gogh, *The Bedroom*." In *Smarthistory*. November 28, 2015. https://smarthistory.org/vincent-van-gogh-the-bedroom/ (accessed March 9, 2018).

Department of European Paintings. "Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890)." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Originally published October 2004, last revised March 2010. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm (accessed March 9, 2018).

Formula:
Author (the second one is an example of a corporate author, which lists the business that wrote the page). "Title of webpage in quotation marks." *Title of website in italics.* Publication information for the website (when known), date of publication (when known). Hyperlink to the webpage (date accessed in parentheses, as in the date that you looked at the page).

The two recommended web sources supply citations for their articles, but you might need to edit the citation to fit the formula. On the Heilbrunn Timeline, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the "+" next to "Citation" to reveal the citation. Then simply copy and paste into your document!

Works Cited

Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. 13th ed. Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage, 2010.

Bibliography

Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, ed. *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

Sayre, Henry M. *Writing About Art*. 16th ed. Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008.

University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*. http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html (accessed April 4, 2010).

Cioffi, Frank L. *The Imaginative Argument: A Practical Manifesto for Writers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anchor, 1995.

Strunk, Jr., William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 2000.

Turabian, Kate L. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Other Resources

Academic Support Center: https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/student-success-center/
> A wonderful resource to help you with your writing. You can attend topic-based sessions or meet with an individual tutor. Tutors can meet with you online or face-to-face. This is your best resource for grammar and structure issues. [This is an example of an annotation.]

The Chicago Manual of Style Online.
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
> This is the place to go for questions about footnotes and formatting references in the Chicago style. Notice the distinction between two forms of the Chicago style: Notes and bibliography, or author-date. Art history uses the notes and bibliography option.

Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab). http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
> This is the best online resource for questions about grammar and writing. It's the kind of site where you can look up the rules of comma usage. [This is another example of an annotation.]

[Sample Cover Page for a paper longer than 5 pages]

Title [first part can be poetic]:

2nd part of title should specify artist/works that are addressed in the paper

Name of student

Course number and title

Professor of course

Date submitted

[Sample header for a paper that is 5 pages or less]

Name of student

Course number and title

Professor of course

Date submitted

<div align="center">Title of paper</div>

Essay begins here, with each paragraph indented one tab. The first paragraph is the introduction. Your opening is your first move, and it should grab the reader's attention. It is common to begin with description of an artwork and then set up the issue being addressed in the paper. The introduction can vary from one paragraph long to three paragraphs long depending on the length of the paper, but it should always include a thesis that states what you will argue in the paper. I recommend using a framing structure to announce your thesis, such as "I will argue…" It's one of the few times in academic writing that it's okay to use first person!

The second paragraph begins here with a point sentence. The point sentence announces the point of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph then explains that point by offering evidence to support the point. An academic argument is simply a stringing together of different points that add up to support your thesis.

The third paragraph begins here with another point sentence. Multiple paragraphs may follow—the length of the essay depends on your assignment guidelines and what you need to write to prove your thesis.

When writing, carve out some dedicated time to work on your assignment with no distractions. You should draft your paper one day and then return to it the next day for

an editing stage. Don't try to write and edit at the same time! I always say that those tasks use different parts of the brain. Editing is very important because then you get to think about what the reader will need, and not what you need in order to write. A lot of writers say that writing is really re-writing. The first draft is almost never the final draft! I like to save each day's work in a separate file just in case I need to come back to a previous version of my draft, so I end up having multiple versions of a draft with different dates.

The last paragraph of the essay is the conclusion. Here you should summarize what you have proven in your paper, but you should also wrap things up by considering what new questions such an argument makes possible. A good ending will not only summarize your argument but open it up to new ideas and new avenues of exploration. Happy writing!

Sample Outline

<div align="center">Title of Paper</div>

I.   Introduction

A.   Opening: description of an artwork that will be discussed in the paper (specify which artwork)

B.   Setup: explain debate, or issue, or questions that this work brings up

C.   Thesis/main claim: "In this paper, I will argue…"

1.   Show how you will prove the claim, including breakdown of sections of paper (theme 1, theme 2, theme 3) and mention of sources used as evidence

D.   Stakes: explain why it is important to prove this claim

II.   Theme 1

A.   First point of theme

1.   Evidence/source used to support this part of the claim

B.   Second point of theme

1.   Evidence/source used to support this part of the claim

C.   Third point of theme

1.   Evidence/source used to support this part of the claim

III.   Theme 2

A.   See structure for theme 1

IV.   Theme 3

A.   See structure for theme 1

V.   Conclusion

    A.   Summary of argument and stakes

    B.   Closing: what this argument contributes to the field or makes possible