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Writing a Research Paper

Writing Center / Dr. Karen Lee, M.F.A., Ph.D.

“Faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life” (NIV, Titus 1.2).



Stages of Researched Writing

- Choosing and Narrowing a Topic
- Gathering Material: Note-taking & Avoiding Plagiarism
- Annotated Bibliography
- Thesis Statement
- Types of Argument
- Outline
- Integrating Secondary Sources: Direct Quotation, Paraphrasing, Summarizing
- Research Citation Styles
- Works Cited Page
- Title

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Choosing and Narrowing a Topic

Choose a topic that satisfies your assignment's requirements. Focus your choice for topical specificity.

General: Birds.

Focused: The effect of deforestation on endangered bird populations in Paraguay.

General: Eppie in George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner*.

Focused: Symbolism associated with Eppie concerning themes of love and redemption in George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner*.



Gathering Material

- Note-taking
- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Types of Sources

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Note-Taking

When taking notes, be sure to cite your sources carefully (author, title, page numbers, publisher, publication date) and mention whether you are quoting the source verbatim (direct quotation) or summarizing a source's ideas in your own words.

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Some Note-Taking Methods

- Typing notes on the computer.
- Using note cards.
- Handwriting notes into a binder.
- Using a dictaphone (useful for aural learners).

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Avoiding Plagiarism


Precise note-taking should help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, since you'll keep secondary source information clearly distinct from your original thoughts. If the idea is not common knowledge ("the sun rises and also sets"), or not the product of your original thought processes, then cite it.

Tip: If in doubt, cite!

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Types of Sources

- Peer-Reviewed/Scholarly/Refereed sources are by professional experts in the field. Examples: *Publication of the Modern Language Association, Cell, Journal of the American Medical Association.*
- General-audience sources are for non-experts. They are written in non-technical, accessible language. Examples: *Cosmopolitan, Newsweek, Better Homes & Gardens,* and many Google-able and Yahoo-able websites.



Peer-Reviewed/Refereed/Scholarly Sources: A Few Examples

- Electronic Sources:

On-line articles from our library's subscription databases such as JSTOR and ProQuest.

- Print Sources:

Journal articles, books.

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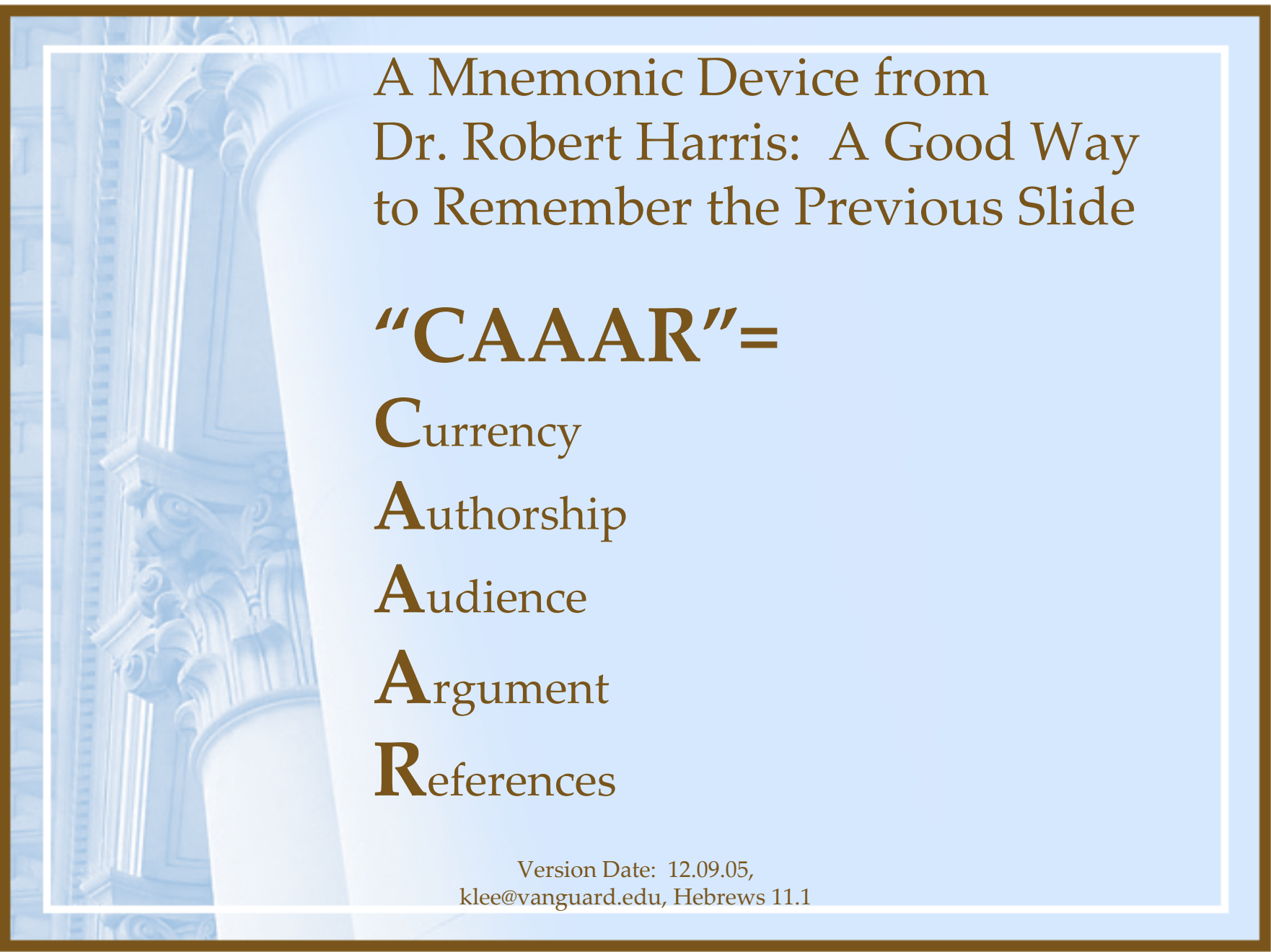
Source Credibility

Not all sources are credible or reliable sources. As you examine books and periodicals, on-line or in print, you need to decide which sources are relevant *and* credible.

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Source Evaluation Questions

Ask yourself the following questions to determine a source's level of credibility: When was the source published? What are the author's credentials? Who's the intended audience? Is the argument balanced or does it show bias and make unsupported claims, illogical conclusions, or inaccurate generalizations? Lastly, what sorts of references does your source cite?



A Mnemonic Device from
Dr. Robert Harris: A Good Way
to Remember the Previous Slide

“CAAAR”=

Currency

Authorship

Audience

Argument

References

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Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a survey of sources relating to your narrowed topic. It looks like a works cited page, but each bibliographic entry is followed by a paragraph or two of written commentary: What the source is about, how it relates to your topic, how you might use it in your research paper, and any strengths and weaknesses in the source.



Sample Annotated Entry

Gardner, Howard. *Creating Minds*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

In this book-length analysis of creativity through the lens of multiple intelligence (MI) theory, Gardner focuses upon the development of seven leaders in their fields, beginning with childhood developmental patterns: Martha Graham, T.S. Eliot, Gandhi, Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, and Igor Stravinsky through the paradigm of multiple intelligences. Critics of Gardner's paradigm say that limiting multiple intelligence to seven or eight basic types in turn limits the spectrum of human creative potential. On the other hand, Gardner's cohorts defend this model's usefulness in destabilizing old-school notions of intelligence such as Stanford-Binet standardized tests and the monolithic concept of a quantifiable intelligence quotient. This source is useful as a primary text for my paper on multiple intelligences. Since this a primary text for MI by Gardner himself, however, it is naturally biased in favor of Gardner's theory, although it does situate MI among various other psychological models of creativity in a well-balanced introduction.

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Thesis Statement

- Answers the question, “What is this paper trying to prove to its audience?”
- Compresses the critical crux of your paper into one sentence.
- Conveys your main argument in a nutshell.
- Uses specific language and specific ideas.
- Generates a multi-faceted argument.
- Appears in your paper’s introduction or abstract.



Thesis Statement Examples

- Interaction fosters collaborative learning.
- A working student's life, bifurcated into the corporate world and the classroom, demonstrates how these dual roles enhance rather than detract from one another.
- Contrary to popular belief, ice cream is not junk food because it is a good source of calcium and milk protein.
- While Christianity and Christian Science may appear to share superficial similarities, a closer examination reveals many differences concerning beliefs about Jesus, concepts of salvation, and the Bible's authority.

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Types of Argument

- Cause and Effect
- Comparison and Contrast
- Toulmin Argument
- Rogerian Argument
- Refutation
- Recommendation



Cause and Effect

A cause and effect argument uses “if-then” and “because” statements to show how certain past and present problems or incidents have resulted or will result in specific consequences.

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Comparison and Contrast

When you compare and contrast two items, organize the paper's ideas point by point to show what you're trying to prove about their similarities and differences. Do not summarize one item then summarize the next, leading to an unconnected reportage of facts rather than an analytical discussion. Use comparison-contrast transitions to guide your analysis: "likewise," "similarly," "along the same lines," "in contrast," "on the other hand," "by comparison," "on the contrary."



Example of Point-by-Point Comparison & Contrast

Apples vs. Lemons

Point #1: Type of fruit


(pome vs. citrus)

Point #2: Type of taste

(sweet vs. sour)

Point #3: Type of Color

(red, green, yellow
vs. just yellow)



Toulmin Argument: Thesis/Claim/Warrant/Support

This is the conventional form of argument built on a thesis with sub-claims supported by evidence, grounds, or data; claims are linked logically to supporting material by warrants. Qualifiers make concessions, showing exceptions to the thesis and its sub-claims.



Rogerian Argument: Don't Pick Fights with Your Audience

The Rogerian model acknowledges the audience's point of view or opinions before presenting the author's different or opposing viewpoint. A Rogerian argument supports the central argument with tact – without outright attacking the audience's preconceived notions.



Refutation

Refutation or the rhetorical figure called “procatalepsis” means anticipating and refuting possible counterarguments: “One may argue that . . . However, a closer look reveals the contrary”

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Recommendation

Argument of recommendation gives enough background to contextualize an analysis of past and current problems leading to a justifiable recommendation or proposed solution and course of action. Use cause-effect statements such as “if-then” and “because.”



Outline

- An outline is a roadmap for your research paper.
- Your research paper should have several basic parts: Introduction, main body (several paragraphs, depending on paper length), conclusion, and works cited page.
- Depending upon your field, your paper may also need a title page, abstract, methods section, summary of results, or appendices and other sections.



Sample Partial Outline

I. Thesis Statement / Introduction

- A. Fruit meanings in Judeo-Christian culture
- B. Fruit symbolism in OT
- C. Fruit symbolism in NT

II. Fruit in the Bible

A. Garden of Eden: Genesis 3

1. Literal or figurative?
2. Tree of Knowledge (Good/Evil)
3. Transgression/Forbidden Fruit

B. Vine and Branches: John 15

1. Abiding in the Vine
2. Branches Cut Off vs. Grafted Branches

C. Fruit of the Spirit: Paul to Galatians 5

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Integrating Secondary Sources

- Direct Quotation
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing

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Direct Quotation

Directly quoting means typing one or two sentences verbatim from a source. Set up direct quotations with phrases of your own to guide your flow of discussion. Use quotation marks (“ ”) to set off directly quoted material from your own words, and either footnote or parenthetically document the work at the end of the sentence, using the research citation format your assignment requires.

Example: Direct Quotation

Reflecting upon the role of books in shaping her childhood among missionaries, Ruth Bell Graham writes, “I was born and raised in China, and books were just a part of our life Reading was a very early love” (Graham 27).

Tips: Be sure to use the proper research citation format for parenthetical documentation. Use ellipses sparingly in omitting quoted material: Readers will get suspicious if it looks like you omitted a lot of material. If you need to quote three or more sentences, use blocked quotation format, but don't use blocked quotations just to “pad” or lengthen a paper.

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Quotation No-Nos!

- NO dropped quotations or quoting without proper context presented by your own thoughtful phrasing.
- NO traffic-jam quoting or choo-choo train quoting where several direct quotations are strung together, one after another, without discussion.



Paraphrasing

A paraphrase is your “translation” of the source text into your own words. Unlike a summary, which is shorter than the source text, a paraphrase is about the same length.

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Summarizing

A summary condenses the ideas in a source text into a briefer version. Unlike a paraphrase, which is about as long as the source text, a summary is shorter in length.



Research Citation Styles

You need to choose a research citation style depending upon your professor's requirements.

The point of conforming to a research citation style is to participate in consistent professional standards for how information is researched, published, and circulated within a field. In addition, the details of source citation help other scholars who may want to pursue research based on your written work.

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Some Research Citation Styles

- APA (American Psychological Association)
- ASA (American Sociological Association)
- Chicago Style, Turabian Style
- MLA (Modern Language Association)
- SBL (Society of Biblical Literature)

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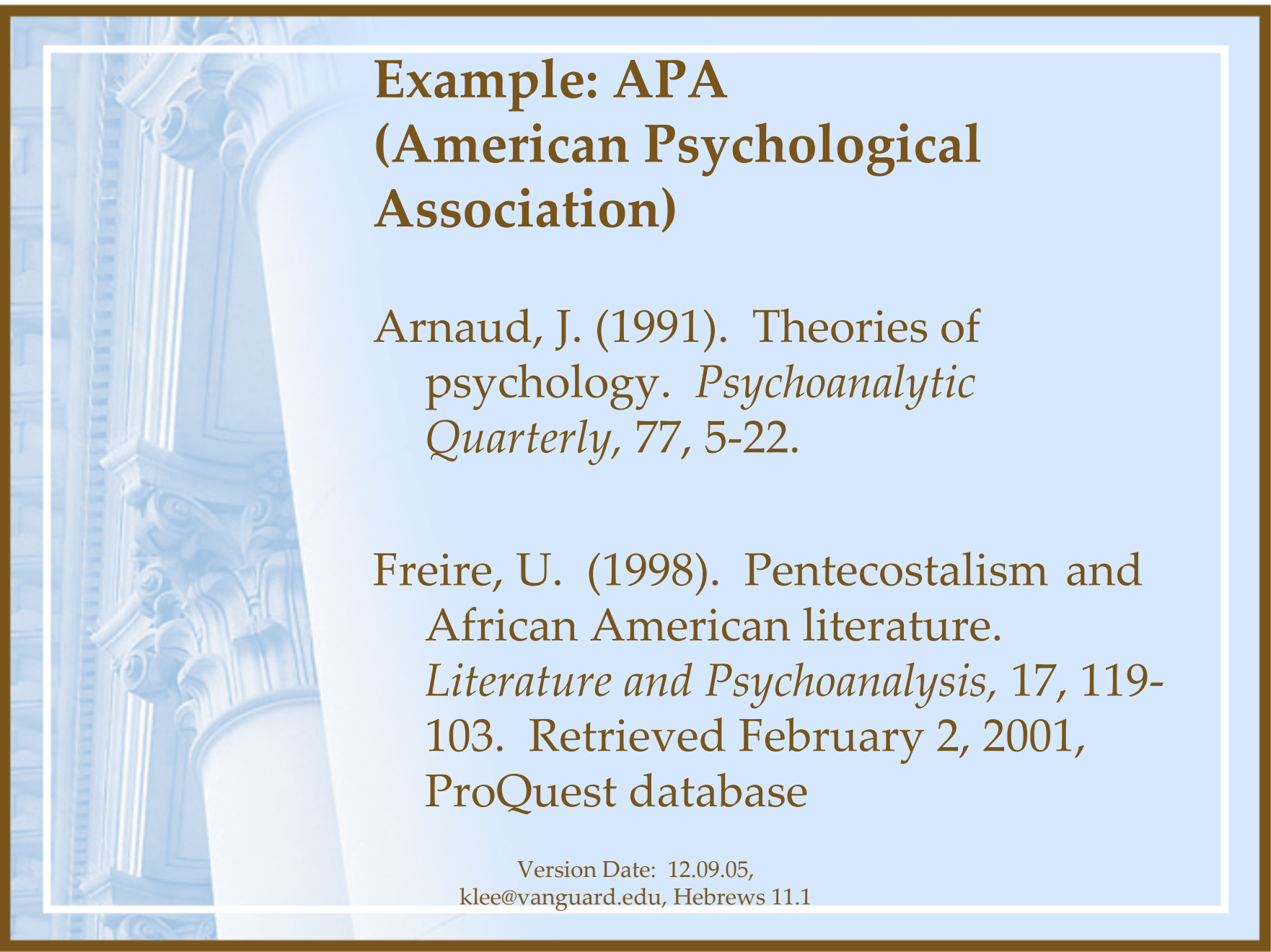
Works Cited or Bibliography

Depending upon the citation style required for your assignment, your works cited or bibliography page (listing all sources referenced in your research paper) needs to conform to specific guidelines in your citation style's handbook.

Please note that several of the following examples require hanging indentation (all lines indented except the first of each bibliographic entry).

Entries are listed in alphabetical order.

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Example: APA (American Psychological Association)

Arnaud, J. (1991). Theories of psychology. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 77, 5-22.

Freire, U. (1998). Pentecostalism and African American literature. *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, 17, 119-103. Retrieved February 2, 2001, ProQuest database



Example: ASA (American Sociological Association)

Arnaud, Jameson. 1991. "Theories of Sociology." *Sociological Quarterly* 77: 317-392.

Freire, U. 1998. "Pentecostalism and African American literature." *Literature and Ethnic Studies* 17(1): 119-130. Retrieved November 1, 2001. Available: SilverPlatter database (Literature Abstracts, CD-Rom, Lit Item 1424, Spring 1999 release).



Example: MLA (Modern Language Association)

Brooks, Gwendolyn. "The Rise of Maud Martha." *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women 1860-1960*. Ed. Mary Helen Washington. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1984. 429-32.

Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Nebbitts, Analee. Home page. 1 May 1998. 2 March 1999 <<http://www.analee.com>> .



Example:
Chicago-Turabian Style

Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Tolbert, Janice and Gregg Watts.
“Patriotism.” *Newsweek*, 30
June 1997, 51-52.



Example: SBL (Society of Biblical Literature)

Footnote: ⁶⁷ Duane F. Watson, "False Apostles," n.p., *ABD on CD-Rom*. Version 2.0c. 1995, 1996.

Ensuing Note: ⁷¹ Watson, "False Apostles," n.p.

Bibliography: Use hanging indentation.

Watson, Duane F. "False Apostles." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary on CD-Rom*. Logos Library System Version 2.0c. 1995, 1996. Print ed.: David Noel Freedman, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.



Title

Choose an original and appropriate title for your research paper. Examples from actual articles retrieved from ProQuest:

- Art of Forgiveness
- Forgiveness as Human Strength: Theory, Measurement, and Links to Well-Being
- Forgiveness: A Path to a Better You
- Tender and Tough: Praying for Enemies

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Final Thoughts

Writing a college research paper is a process-oriented activity that encourages independent learning. Gathering notes, organizing them, shaping your thoughts, and writing a paper should give you a strong sense of satisfaction. Allow yourself plenty of time to brainstorm, research, plan, and write.

Writing a research paper has its own rewards: You'll remember what you wrote about long after you've graduated from college, and you'll retain the valuable practice of independent critical thinking along with the lifelong ability to synthesize and communicate information.

Writing is for life 1 Corinthians 15.58.

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The Writing Center

For more help with researched writing, contact the Writing Center.

- Where: 2nd Floor of Scott Academic Center
- When: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mon. through Fri.
- How: Drop by in person, call x426, or e-mail Dr. Lee at <KLee@vanguard.edu>.
- What else: Thanks for your interest in our resources!

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