

## Prepare your thesis for copyediting and proofreading

Presented by  
Dr Ross James



### Seminar Objectives

1. Identify common errors that you can eliminate before you submit it to a copyeditor or a formatting specialist. \*
2. Acquire basic skills to copyedit and proofread your own thesis.
3. Save money!

\* These guidelines don't give comprehensive formatting advice. I strongly suggest you visit Format My Thesis – 'Home of the Happy Thesis' – where thesis formatting specialist Michael Done offers a range of services. To turbo-charge your formatting, download Michael's powerful (and free) thesis template. Format My Thesis: [www.formatmythesis.com](http://www.formatmythesis.com)

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## 1. The University, Your Supervisor, You and the Copyeditor

### What the university says

- a. Copyeditors must follow Guidelines agreed by Australian Council of Graduate Research and Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd)

[Curtin guidelines for editing](#)

- b. Final comments from university and IPEd: "This is your thesis ... the final responsibility for its integrity is yours."

CURTIN RESOURCES

<http://studyskills.curtin.edu.au/better-sentences/>

<http://studyskills.curtin.edu.au/good-grammar/>



### What your supervisor should do

1. Provide editorial advice or substantive editing (structural or content editing).
2. Approve your choice to retain a copyeditor.
3. Help you decide about pragmatic options to replace APA styles.



### What you should do

1. Give copyeditor clean and complete copy of thesis (not chapter by chapter; no unfinished sections!).
2. Give copyeditor the style guide the thesis must conform to.
3. Take responsibility for final product; review each suggested change or correction before accepting it.
4. Acknowledge the copyeditor.






## 2. Style Guides



### Style Guides

- Rules for writing (e.g., grammar, punctuation)
- Mostly formats of citations and references
- Specific to fields of study or disciplines or preferences of journals and institutions

 Curtin University \* APA, Harvard, Vancouver, Chicago Author-Date

- \* AMA: Johnson et al.<sup>2</sup>
- \* APA: (e.g., Davis, 2008)
- \* CMOS: Citation superscript numbers correspond to numbers in endnotes or footnotes, not references page



### APA style: Headings



#### Level 1 (Chapter headings):

Centred, **Bolded**, Title Case (all Major Words Capitalized) \*

**Level 2:** Left-Aligned, **Bolded**, Title Case \*

**Level 3:** indented 1.27cm, **bolded**, sentence case, ends with period.\*\*

**Level 4:** indent 1.27cm, **bolded**, *italicized*, sentence case, ends with period.\*\*

**Level 5:** indent 1.27cm, not bolded, italicized, sentence case, ends with period.\*\*

In-line or  
run-in headings

\* Capitalize second part of hyphenated words, e.g., Self-Reported

\*\* First sentence of paragraph begins on the same line (*in-line* or *run-in* heading).

Capitalize first word after a colon and all proper nouns or adjectives. To create in-line heading:

Type heading-text > CNTL + ALT + ENTER > apply Heading 3 or 4 or 5 > type paragraph

1. Query what your supervisor means by “APA style”. Don’t confuse:
  - “APA style = referencing conventions”
  - “APA style = journal article formatting”.
2. Some APA styles seem irrelevant or undesirable in theses.
3. Your 3 or 4 examiners are unlikely to fail you on formatting.

## Pragmatic Options to Replace APA Style

### Headings

For long form theses you will find that numbered headings will aid navigation and reading comprehension. The pragmatic option, then is:

- Do NOT indent Levels 3, 4 and 5, do NOT create inline headings.
- Number headings by hierarchy (multilevel listing is not based on chapter number) for levels 2-4 (not Level 1 nor Level 5).

**Level 1** (chapters):

Centred, **Bolded**, Title Case (Major Words Capitalized)

**1. Level 2:** Left-Aligned, **Bolded**, Title Case

**1.1 Level 3:** left margin, **bolded**, sentence case, ends with period.

**1.1.1 Level 4:** left margin, **bolded**, *italicized*, sentence case, ends with period.

**Level 5:** left margin, not bolded, *italicized*, sentence case, ends period.

Table & figure captions													
APA	Pragmatic												
Table S.2 <i>Table Caption Italics, Capitals, no Period</i>	Table S.2 Table Caption no Italics, with Capitals, no Period												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Students</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>54</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>76</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Students	1	54	2	76	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Students</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>54</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>76</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Students	1	54	2	76
Grade	Students												
1	54												
2	76												
Grade	Students												
1	54												
2	76												
<p><i>Favourite Type of Movie</i></p>	<p>Figure 5.2. Favourite movie genre</p>												
<p>✓ Figure 5.2. Non-italicised figure label, no capitals, period.</p>	<p>✓ Figure 5.2. Caption for the figure without italics, no capitals but with a period.</p>												


## APA Style: Appendices

In the text	•	Refer to the appendix by letter (A, B, etc) as they appear in sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet (see Appendix A)</li><li>▪ Sit amet ipsum dolor (see Appendix B)</li></ul>
In the reference list	•	List them by letter (A, B, etc.) with a title in the same sequence they are introduced in the text.

## Margins

FIRST ACTION: set the correct margins as determined by your university!



Margins and line spacing  Curtin University



- Margins (portrait) Left margin 4cm, then TP, RM, BM = 2.5cm
- Margins (landscape) Top margin 4cm, then TP, RM, BM = 2.5cm
- Line spacing: 1.5. (APA allows 1 space in tables if needed)

### 3. Miscellaneous Errors

---

Verb Tenses      Past tense:

Present tense:

---

Spaces      Remove non breaking spaces aka superscript circles.

Create one space after periods at end of sentences.

---

Symbols      Ampersand (&) has a special use.

Ensure symbols are bookended: such as “lorem” (lorem) [lorem] {1234}

---



#### 4. Hyphens, En Dash, Em Dash

Hyphens, en dash,  
em dash



Hyphens (-) for compound words, minus or negative BUT not for a range.

En dash (–) for statistics, a range of numbers.

An n dash

An – dash

Em dash (—) for more emphasis or more emphatic effect than commas, parentheses, or colons.

An m dash

An — dash

Create en dashes  
and em dashes

En: Go insert > symbol > more symbols > special characters OR create your own shortcut key in special characters such as ALT+CTRL+N

Em: Go insert > symbol > more symbols > special characters OR create your own shortcut key in special characters such as ALT+CTRL+M

> Insert > Symbol > more symbols > Arial

Hyphen 2012 (Unicode)

En 2013 (Unicode)

Em 2014 (Unicode)

Or ALT + (numeric keypad) 045, 0150, 0151

#### 5. Spelling

##### Wordplay: Spelling

Check consistency  
of spelling with  
American or  
Australian English  
(e.g., iSe vs. iZe;  
oUr vs. or).



- Choose one style and stick with it. If in doubt follow Macquarie Dictionary (Australian). APA recommends Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (American).
- Check: (US/AU) iZe/iSe, yZe/ySe, iZA/iSa, or/oUr, vour/viour, er/re (e.g., meter / metre but meter), ling/lling, led/lled, ill/il, se/ce, burned / burnt

## 6. Wordplay: Compounds and Hyphenation

In general, the rules are too complex to summarize: See APA 6th ed. section 4.13, pp. 97-100.

If confused, consult the most recent dictionary (e.g., Macquarie). Convention changes (e.g., *database* is acceptable as is *lifestyle*, but not so long ago they required a hyphen)

Do hyphenate



- Compound words with *self-* as the prefix (e.g., self-report, self-esteem)
- Two words acting as a compound adjective to modify a third word (e.g., low-dosage trial, 10th-grade students, a two-thirds majority)
- A word that would be easily misunderstood without a hyphen such as re-pair (pairing again) vs. repair (to fix), re-form (form again) vs. reform (make changes to improve)
- Any compound with a base that is capitalised, a number, or an abbreviation (e.g., non-Aboriginal, post-2010, anti-UN protesters)
- Do hyphenate fractions when they function as a compound adjective to modify a following word. Otherwise, common fractions are not hyphenated.
  - ✓ a two-thirds majority voted (fraction modifies "majority")
  - ✗ two-thirds of the people voted

Do not hyphenate



- Racial or ethnic group names (e.g., African American, Australian Chinese)
- Compound adjectives that include an adverb ending in -ly (e.g., federally funded, randomly assigned, widely accepted practice)
- Compounds that are a comparative or superlative adjective (e.g., concisely written thesis, well argued review, worst case scenario)

## 7. Wordplay: Confusions

Although vs. While	Incorrect use of the verb highlighted
Based on /Due to	Whose study, research?
Between or Among	Socioeconomics or socio-economics
“Could be used”	Well-being or wellbeing
Fewer or less	Followup vs. follow-up vs. follow up
This	Thesis or research or study
Internet	While, Whilst, When, Where, Since
Words ending in <i>ing</i>	That vs. Which vs. Who
Different from or different to or different than	

## 8. The (Oxford) Comma

The last item in a series is usually preceded by *and*, *or*, or *nor*. Although the (*Oxford*) comma is not required before *and*, *or*, *nor* it is recommended because it sometimes removes uncertainty or ambiguity in meaning, however note APA style does require a serial comma — the final comma before the final conjunction.

## 9. Lists

Use a colon not a semicolon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check lists to ensure correct use of colon ( : ) not a semicolon ( ; ) when introducing the list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ CORRECT: There were 10 items:</li> <li>☞ INCORRECT: There were 10 items;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Within the items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Use</u> semicolons for seriation if there are commas within the items. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ The research team consists of (a) the research coordinator, Dr Mary Bloggs, who will visit the health centre each day; (b) the supervisor, Bill Blenkinsop; and (c) three quality control inspectors: Tom Tank-engine, Willy Wonka, and Ken Kangaroo.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
For a series <u>with numbers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Use</u> a period, not parentheses, for a series <u>with numbers</u>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ CORRECT: 1. Lorem ipsum . . .</li> <li>☞ CORRECT: 2. Dolor sit amet . . .</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
For a series <u>with letters</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Use</u> parentheses for a series <u>with letters</u>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ CORRECT: (a) Lorem ipsum . . .</li> <li>☞ CORRECT: (b) Dolor sit amet . . .</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 10. Abbreviations

- APA prefers authors use abbreviations sparingly.
- Do not explain abbreviation if commonly used or known within a discipline. (STI, HIV etc). But include it in a list of acronyms and abbreviations.
- Do not use an abbreviation or acronym unless used more than three times in thesis.
- Explain it first time it occurs, such as: American Psychological Association (APA).
- Do not explain again even in section headings (exception: tables & figures, which “stand alone”).

**?** Start again in each chapter?

	<b>WITHIN THE TEXT OF THE SENTENCE</b>	<b><u>ONLY</u> WITHIN PARENTHESES</b>
cf. Compare or consult	compare	(cf. Smith et al., 2010 and Allen, 2008). Never put a comma after.
exempli gratia, <i>for example</i>	... are known, for example red and black	(e.g., a heart attack) Always put a comma after e.g.
et alii, <i>and others</i> ;	Smith, Black and Blenkinsopp (2010) found a 90% correlation.	The researchers found a 90% correlation (Smith et al., 2010). Always use a comma.
et cetera and the rest	and so forth, and so on	(health promotion, programme evaluation, etc.) Put a comma before if ending a list of two or more items.
id est <i>that is</i>	The children received a prize, that is, a piece of fruit.	(i.e., a piece of fruit). Always put a comma after.
vs. versus	... the analysis found the intervention versus control group difference was not significant.	... the analysis (intervention vs. control). Always place a period after.

## 11. The Slash / Solidus



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APA: Do use a slash . . .



- to separate numerator from denominator  
☞ X/Y
- to indicate per to separate units of measurement accompanied by a numerical value  
☞ 0.5 deg/s

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APA: Do not use a slash . . .



- when a phrase would be clearer. Never use : X and/or Y. Instead use X or Y, or both
    - 👍 CORRECT: Each child handed the ball to her mother or guardian.
    - 👎 INCORRECT: Each child handed the ball to her mother/guardian.
  - for simple comparisons. Use a hyphen or short dash (en dash) instead.
    - 👍 CORRECT: test–retest reliability
    - 👎 INCORRECT: test/retest reliability
  - more than once to express compound units. Use centered dots and parentheses as needed to prevent ambiguity.
    - 👍 CORRECT: nmol • hr<sup>-1</sup> • mg<sup>-1</sup>
    - 👎 INCORRECT: nmol/hr/mg
-

## 12. Numbers and Statistics

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<b>Number ranges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Do use</u> an en-dash to separate number ranges in text and references.</li><li>• <u>Do use</u> an en-dash for<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☞ items of equal weight (e.g., test–retest, male–female, the Sydney–Perth flight)</li><li>☞ link figures, time and distance: 6–12 people; 10–20 kilometres</li><li>☞ page ranges (e.g., 630–820)</li><li>☞ other types of ranges (e.g., 16–30 kHz)</li><li>☞ percentage range (5%–15%)</li><li>☞ associating two separate words: Asia–Pacific region</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hyphenate if the <b>age</b> is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☞ A 29-year-old nurse</li><li>☞ 2-year olds, 10 to 12 year-old participants</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Commas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Do use</u> commas to separate groups of three numbers when writing out numbers of 1,000 or more. So: 1,234; 6,000,000.</li><li>• <u>Do use</u> commas in exact dates.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☞ April 18, 1992 (but not in April 1992).</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Statistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Do not</u> use the percent symbol (%) with written numbers (five percent), only with figures (5%).</li><li>• A <i>p</i> score is always lower case and italics</li><li>• A <i>CI</i> score should have square brackets around the numbers, so: CI [0.123, 004]</li><li>• Always have a space between symbols and equal signs so <math>p = .01</math> or <math>&lt; 5</math></li><li>• Ensure correct use of the % sign in ranges:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☞ CORRECT: 20%-35%</li><li>☞ INCORRECT: 20-35%</li></ul></li><li>• Check that numbers with 4 digits have a comma separator (APA style) so 1,000 not 1000 nor 1 000</li></ul>

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### Singular Versus Plural

- ☞ CORRECT:  $ps < .05$ ;  $Ms = 3.70$  and  $4.22$ ; degrees of freedom
- ☞ INCORRECT:  $ps < .05$ ,  $p's < .05$ ;  $Ms = 3.70$  and  $4.22$ ; Means =  $3.70$  and  $4.22$ ; degrees of freedom
- Note APA requirements for italics and spaces and (for plurals) the non-use of italics for lowercase “s” and non-use of an apostrophe “s”, an italic “s”, or a capital “S”
  - ☞ CORRECT: The means and standard deviations are reported in Table 1. We calculated Cronbach’s alpha as the reliability statistic and then ran a chi-square test. The read-aloud group ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) and the read-silently group ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) differed significantly on the test of reading comprehension,  $\chi^2(1, 50) = 4.25$ ,  $p < .05$ . Boys and girls did not differ significantly ( $M_{\text{girls}} = 4.22$  and  $M_{\text{boys}} = 3.78$ ). The sample size for each testing group was 25, but several participants in each group ( $ns = 5$  and  $6$ , respectively) had missing data on the final question, and these were replaced with the participant’s mean score. This did not affect reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ).

<b><i>Symbols and spacing</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Do use</u> a space when writing the word million in full: \$45 million.</li> <li>• <u>Do use</u> a space before and after mathematical operators (e.g., &lt;, =).</li> <li>• <u>Do not</u> insert a space separating a symbol from its associated numeral. For example, \$45m, not \$45 m.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Use numerals for numbers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Use</u> numerals for numbers 10 and above, or lower numbers grouped with numbers 10 and above (from 5 to 15 years of drug abuse).</li> <li>• <u>Add s</u> only—with no apostrophe—to make plurals out of numbers (the 1990s).</li> <li>• <u>Do</u> use numerals for exact statistical references, scores, sample sizes, and sums (e.g., multiplied by 3, or 5% of the sample. We used 20 subjects, all three year olds, and they cried for an average of 2 hrs 10 min per day.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Combine numerals and spelling out numbers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Use</u> combinations of words and numerals for back-to-back modifiers (five 3-point scales).</li> <li>• <u>Use</u> combinations of numerals and words for large sums (over 2 million people).</li> <li>• <u>Use</u> combinations of numerals and written numbers for <u>large approximate</u> sums (over 8 million people)</li> <li>• <u>Do</u> use metric abbreviations with figures (4 km) but not when written out (four kilometres).</li> </ul>
<b><i>Spell out numbers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use words for numbers &lt; 10 not used with units of measurement OR grouped in comparison with numbers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ six pages, six stages, six chapters, two-tailed t test, but six items using a 5-point Likert scale (a point on a scale is a precise unit of measurement)</li> <li>☞ our experiment was repeated three times</li> <li>☞ two separate questionnaires containing nine questions each</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Spell</u> units when those units are approximate; e.g., when you use 'about'.</li> <li>• <u>Spell</u> common fractions (no hyphen) and common expressions; e.g., one third, Fourth of July, one half of the book; decreased by two thirds; a two-thirds majority (two-thirds is hyphenated because the fraction is a compound adjective modifying majority)</li> <li>• <u>Spell</u> numbers starting sentences (Forty days after . . .).</li> <li>• <u>Spell</u> out numbers that are inexact, or below 10 and not grouped with numbers over 10 (two-tailed t test, eight items, six pages, four-way interaction, three trials).</li> </ul>

### 13. Numbers and Specific Functions

<b>Scores and points on a scale</b>	☞ Response options ranged from <i>strongly disagree</i> (1) to <i>strongly agree</i> (5)
<b>Sample or subsample sizes</b>	☞ randomly selected 5 of the 8 participants
<b>Mathematical functions</b>	☞ multiplied by 4 ☞ divided by 5 and multiplied by 4
<b>Ordinals</b>	☞ Use numerals for ordinals 10 and above: 12th, 33rd, etc. ☞ <u>BUT do use words</u> for ordinals below 10: first, second, . . . ninth
<b>Percentages</b>	☞ between 40% and 50% of the population ☞ 9% of students ☞ 0.8% improvement
<b>Proportions and ratios</b>	☞ a ratio of 10:1 ☞ 4 of the 12 programs (proportion) ☞ 7 times as many dropouts ☞ those in the upper 4th percentile
<b>Specific numbers of participants</b>	☞ the responses of 8 participants reviewed by two people rating the responses
<b>Subjects in a sample</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital N vs. lowercase n</li> <li>☞ Of the total subjects in the study (<math>N = 200</math>) 40 participants in the control group (<math>n = 90</math>) and 70 in the experimental group (<math>n = 110</math>) read the instructions.</li> </ul>
<b>Numbered series or lists (including parts of books and tables)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Grade 6 (but sixth grade)</li> <li>☞ Trial 5 but fifth trial</li> <li>☞ Table 6 but sixth table</li> <li>☞ page 71 (<u>do not</u> cap page)</li> <li>☞ chapter 8 (<u>do not</u> cap chapter)</li> <li>☞ in a list of four or more numbers: 3 women, 6 men, 11 horses, 5 dogs</li> <li>☞ the 1st and 9th items in all 15 lists</li> <li>☞ pack 10 pairs of socks, 5 shirts, 3 pairs of shorts, and 1 hat</li> </ul>
<b>Dates</b>	☞ 12:30 p.m. on May 1, 2009 ☞ between the 1st and 15th of each month
<b>Population size</b>	☞ The town's population of 20,000 people
<b>Exact sums of money</b>	☞ \$12 etc.
<b>Time</b>	☞ 4 days, 2 hr 24 min., at 1:50 a.m., 8 seconds, 7 minutes, 3 hours, 2 days, 2 weeks, 4 months, 5 years
<b>Comparison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> edition of APA says OK to use words for numbers &lt; 10 if items are grouped for comparison within the same paragraph. So: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ students in the first and 10th grades</li> <li>☞ six of the 23 questionnaires</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Precise units of measurement</b>	☞ 5 megabytes, 6 metres, 8 kilometres, 20-litre bucket, 5-point scale, 20-mg dose, 12.5 mm
<b>For approximate units</b>	☞ It took the children about 10 seconds to locate .... ☞ spell out approximate days, months, years
<b>Centuries</b>	☞ the twentieth century
<b>Numbers zero and one</b>	☞ zero-tolerance policy on drink driving ☞ BUT 1 of 15 responses was valid



## 14. Eight Top Tips



### Doing it yourself? My eight top tips



1. Print it out and read it. On-screen reading is awkward.
2. Read text slowly and aloud.
3. Use a blank sheet of paper to cover the material not yet proofread.
4. Point with your finger to read one word at a time.
5. Proofread in stages: one for spelling, another for formatting, etc.
6. Fine print: give it special attention
7. Turn copy upside down to check alignment of page elements (e.g., line spacing, word spacing, general format, type quality)
8. Highlight problems as you notice them, but don't stop to make changes; it slows you down and distracts you.

## 15. Support

### Graduate Research School

<https://students.curtin.edu.au/essentials/higher-degree-by-research/prepare-thesis/>

### Hybrid Theses

Copyright

<http://copyright.curtin.edu.au/research/higher-degree-research-hdr-thesis-students/>

Espace

<https://espace.curtin.edu.au/>

### APA Style

<http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/>

### Purdue Online Writing Lab

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/>

### Thesis Whisperer

<https://sites.google.com/site/twblacklinemasters/verb-cheat-sheet>



### Copyediting Options

Workshop: Step by step introduction to common errors that copyeditors find in research theses and techniques for resolving them.

One-hour consultancy: Specific feedback on your thesis to minimise copyediting costs.

Contracted copyediting: Full copyediting to meet APA requirements and your preferences. Returned to you with editing suggestions for you to accept or reject in Microsoft Word tracking mode. Further copyediting of additional or revised content is charged. Unlimited revisions to correct errors made by me.

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