

SYNAPSE

Penn's Healthcare Journal

Writers' Document

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I. Job Description - Writer

Your role in the assembly of this publication is to select a concept for an article and write it. While you are not receiving a grade for your composition, please do take your responsibilities seriously.

A successful writer will utilize a wide range of peer-reviewed articles, of course taking care to ensure that most of his/her citations come from reputable sources and are relevant with respect to date of publication. Don't forget to make the most of the faculty here at Penn! Try to find someone doing work in your field of interest – interviews with them are not only a great source for your article (and yes, you can quote them), but also may suggest to you new sources or approaches. If you do choose to contact a faculty member in the course of your research, we recommend that you do so earlier rather than later.

Your task is to select an issue related to healthcare and write about it in a manner that engages the undergraduate student readers at Penn. You must communicate your research in language appropriate to those who do not have a degree in the subject, but are nevertheless intelligent, discerning individuals. Writers must utilize peer-reviewed, reputable research, and maintain the integrity of *Synapse*. Finally, it is the writer's responsibility to meet all assigned deadlines and follow through with all corrections recommended by the editors.

II. Article Description

The core of our publication relies on our credible, well-researched, insightful articles. With that said, the topics you choose and how you want to approach them is up completely to you. We simply ask that you follow some specifications so that our publication is cohesive.

How to Choose Topics

Topics can range from a current event in the healthcare arena, a subject in a class you'd like to explore, or even the results of a recent internship. *Synapse* is wide-reaching in that it covers a variety of angles related to healthcare, from ground-breaking research to the business of the industry and everything in between. Whatever piques your interest is likely to pique a reader's, so feel free to explore and discover.

Do, however, choose a topic with moderate specificity. “Genetics” is too broad. “Global Analysis of Allele-Specific Expression in *Arabidopsis thaliana*” is perhaps too narrow. Aim for something in the middle of the road, with enough to write about in an article but not a book.

Length

Aim for 600-1000 words. It’s unlikely that we’ll conduct a precise word count, but if your article is glaringly outside the range, you might want to broaden or narrow the topic accordingly. Please note that we will not accept anything over 1200 words.

Style and Clarity

As you are writing for an undergraduate publication, do keep in mind your audience. A *Synapse* reader is unlikely to have an advanced degree in the topic you’re writing about (yet), but is intelligent and knowledgeable enough to grasp new concepts when explained well.

If your topic is polarizing, explore both sides of the debate. You may, of course, come to one conclusion based on your research, but open the door for the reader to explore elsewhere for him/herself. Be upfront about how you conducted your research and how you arrived at your conclusion. Not everyone has to agree with you, but they should respect your methodology.

Every article must have a clear thesis or argument. Think about the “so what?” of your piece. Why should a Penn undergraduate care about your topic? This will not only help your reader understand what s/he should take away from your article, but also help direct your writing process.

Content, of course, matters, but so does style. Refrain from sounding too technical but do remain professional. Think like the reader: What types of articles would you like to pick up and read? If you could explain the validity of the debate in 10-15 minutes, how would you pitch it?

Sub-sections may be useful tool, especially if you article ends up closer to 1200 words. Choose a few notable phrases to help the reader navigate.

Your paragraphs should be concise and to-the-point. Again, think like a reader. There’s no need to show off how many adverbs and adjectives you know in the English language. Dictionaries and thesauruses exist for that purpose; use them well.

Titling

Please provide a working title. This can, of course, be revised later on in the process, but it'll serve as a good starting point. Also keep in mind relevant captions and subtitles for your article.

Graphics

Pictorial representation is a great way to grab a reader's attention; the old adage exists for a reason. You're welcome to include up to 3 graphics in your paper, but we exercise the right to make the editorial decision as to which ones will appear in the final publication. Please try to submit as high-resolution as possible. 300 dpi is ideal.

No graphics will be published without attribution, so please include that information with the submission of your article.

Please do not hesitate to contact this semester's design team for any information regarding design.

III. References

As students, none of us can possibly be experts in any field. In order to make our articles credible, it is imperative to cite others who are experts. The more you cite, the more credible your article is. **Please note:** Articles with incorrectly formatted references or articles with no references will be rejected!

Acceptable Sources

The majority of your references should be to scholarly sources, books, journal articles, magazines relating to healthcare, conference proceedings etc. Sources can also be from non-academic but reputable sources like newspapers, magazines and other mass media type sources. Please try to severely limit internet sources. We all know that the Internet is NOT peer reviewed and having a lot of html links for sources make us look really unprofessional.

The Citation format we will be using this literary cycle is the APA Journal style. DO NOT use footnotes and or other citation formats than the one listed below.

In-Text Citation

- Place citation numbers for references and notes within parentheses, italicized: (18, 19) (18-20) (18, 20-22). Do not use superscript numbers. Citations are numbered sequentially, first in the text, then through the references and notes, and then through the figure and table captions. The last note contains the

acknowledgments and is not cited.

- Each reference can be listed only once. Separate individual references from other references and from any text notes. (This is a change from our previous style to simplify referencing and facilitate online linking of references.) Each reference should have its own number and not include other text.
- If you use the same source twice, cite it within your text using the same number. Each source should have only one number attached to it.
- Notes should be used for information aimed at the specialist (e.g., procedures) or to provide definitions or further information to the general reader that are not essential to the data or arguments. Notes can cite other references (by number).
- Please do not place tables within notes.

“References” Section

List all citation numerically and describe each citation according to the rules of the APA Journal style. For a good explanation of APA, check out <http://www.bibme.org/citation-guide/APA/journal> .

Additionally, an automatic bibliography generator can be found at <http://www.bibme.org>. You may use another online tool, but make sure that you select APA formatting.

IV. Plagiarism

Synapse will not publish facts and ideas that are not supported by reliable sources. We cannot publish facts and ideas that are borrowed without citation. Please refer to the References section for proper citation format. While we expect you to do your own fact checking, we will follow up on our own as well.

Plagiarism is entirely unprofessional. There are, however, many aspects of plagiarism which are subtle and difficult to arbitrate. Ultimately, it is the job of writers and editors (us) to fully understand the concept of plagiarism. We need to catch plagiarism, even if it's as seemingly inconsequential as wrongly formatted citations, before our readers catch it for us.

The MLA Style Manual (Walter S. Achtert and Joseph Gibaldi. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1985, 4) has an excellent definition of plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or expression in your writing without acknowledging the source. The word comes from the Latin word *plagiarius* (“kidnapper”)...In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else...The most blatant form of plagiarism is reproducing someone else's sentences, more or less verbatim, and presenting them as your own. Other forms include repeating another's particularly apt phrase without appropriate

acknowledgment, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, introducing another's line of thinking as your own development of an idea, and failing to cite the source for a borrowed thesis or approach.

V. Grammar, Style and Formatting

We expect that authors to have the basics covered, i.e. parallel sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement/placement, etc. Nothing cheapens an article like frequent, glaring grammar mistakes. We understand that it may be difficult to correct a spliced comma when proofreading at 2 a.m., but do try to be careful. We're on your side here, and no one wants to see mistakes in the final publication.

Please submit all drafts in 12-point, single-spaced, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. Include your last name and page number in the header at the top right. Title your file "SurnameInitial_draft X". So if Elizabeth Saionz were submitting her 2nd draft, she would title her file "SaionzE_draft 2".

Here are some quick tips and tricks to avoid the major grammar pitSprings:

- Read your final article aloud to a friend, colleague, or even yourself. You be surprised at how many mistakes you can catch this way.
- Watch redundancy. Referencing and parallel structure are welcome if used appropriately.
- Avoid slang, colloquialism, and clichés unless you have a good reason.
- At *Synapse*, we do not use the Oxford Comma. This is the comma placed before the "and" in a list of three or more items. Instead of "proteins, carbohydrates, and lipids" we prefer "proteins, carbohydrates and lipids."
- When a punctuation mark follows a quotation, place the punctuation inside the end-quote mark.
- Commonly misspelled words: use a dictionary and spell check.
- Commonly confused words:
 - Accept, except
 - Affect, effect
 - A lot (not "a lot")
 - Allusion, illusion
 - Altogether, all together
 - Ascent, assent
 - Cite, sight, site
 - Complement, compliment
 - Conscious, conscience
 - Council, counsel
 - Elicit, illicit

- Eminent, immanent, imminent
- Its, it's
- Lie, lay
- Precede, proceed
- Then, than
- There, their, they're
- To, too, two
- Who, which, that
- Who, whom

The following is excerpted from *The Manual of Style and Usage*, of *The New York Times*.

adverb placement. In fluid writing, an adverb used with a compound verb should normally be placed between parts of the verb (the way *normally* is, a few words back in this sentence, and the way *usually* is, in the next example): He will *usually* take the opposing side. A similar rule applies when a verb like *is* links a noun to its modifier: *Refundable fares are often expensive* (not *often are expensive*).

data is acceptable as a singular term for information: *The data was persuasive*. In its traditional sense, meaning a collection of facts and figures, the noun can still be plural: *They tabulate the data, which arrive from bookstores nationwide*. (In this sense, the singular is *datum*, a word both stilted and deservedly obscure).

people, person. Use *people* as the plural of *person*. Allow persons in letters to the editor, in untranslated texts, in direct quotations, and in a few established idioms like *displaced persons* and *missing persons bureau*.

convince, persuade. *Convince* should be followed by an *of* phrase or a *that* clause...But *convince* cannot be followed by a *to* phrase; in such a case, *persuade* is required: *He persuaded his sister to take the day off*. *Persuade* is more versatile than *convince* and can be followed by any of the three constructions.

plus. Do not use *plus* as a substitute for *and*...Use *plus* as a preposition (*five plus one*), as a noun (*Her knowledge was a plus*) or as an adjective (*a plus factor*).

that, which. Use *that*, not *which*, in a restrictive clause—a clause necessary to the reader's understanding of the sentence...Note that there are no commas around the clause. In a nonrestrictive clause—one providing added information, not essential to understand the sentence—use *which*, preceded by a comma.

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