

Introductory Psychology Writing Assignment

Fall 2009

Assignment Overview

All Introductory Psychology students are required to complete an Introductory Psychology Writing Assignment. This assignment requires students to read and critically analyze an article that presents two opposing views of an issue in psychology.

You can get these articles from the library reserves by following these steps:

Step 1: Go to the Reserves URL – <http://docuser.v.auraria.edu>

Step 2: Click on the link for **Course pages for electronic, traditional, and video reserves.**

Step 3: You will then need to type in **MSCD psychology.**

Step 4: From the next screen, choose:

Course Number	Course Name	Instructor	Term
MSCD-PSY 1001	Introductory Psychology	Hagan	Fall 09

Step 5: Enter the password **Banjo** in the space provided and click on accept.

Step 6: Choose one article. The article is in PDF format and will be printed through Adobe Acrobat.

Learning Objectives for this Writing Assignment

- 1) To demonstrate critical thinking skills in writing.
- 2) To expose you to primary sources in Psychology that are appropriate for an intro level course.
- 3) To provide you with general feedback on writing clearly, with brevity, and with mechanical accuracy.
- 4) To expose you to the citation process (parenthetical) and APA format.

Instructions for Completing the Assignment

- 1) You will see two folders. Each folder contains two articles: one supporting an issue and another that opposes the issue. Chose ONE of these folders and read BOTH articles from the folder.
- 2) Write a paper that describes and critically evaluates the research regarding the issue you selected. In your paper you should choose a position (either for or against that theory) and defend your position.
- 3) **Your paper should include:**
 - a. An introductory paragraph
 - This paragraph should introduce the topic
 - State the importance of the topic
 - Outline the controversy surrounding the topic.
 - b. 3-4 paragraphs briefly summarizing one side of the argument.
 - Summarizing means that you should identify the main points in this article. For each of these points you include a few supporting statements or extensions of the main idea.
 - Then put those main points and supporting statements into your own words.
 - Try not to use quotes! If you do use quotes, use them very sparingly and be sure to cite those quotes with the author's name, date of publication, and page number (e.g. Smith, 2008, p. 234).
 - c. 3-4 paragraphs briefly summarizing the other side of the argument.
 - Identify the main points and put those main points into your own words. As before, include supporting statements for each main point.
 - d. 1-2 paragraphs evaluating the research on the topic.
 - Choose which side of the argument you support. Then, use points from the article to defend why you support that side (not personal opinion).
 - What does "evaluate the research" mean? Just because it is written in an article, doesn't mean it is true! When you evaluate an article, ask yourself if the author is expressing a personal opinion or did he/she provide evidence (i.e. research) to support his/her position. You may find one side of the argument more compelling because there was more research supporting that side or the quality of the research was better.

- Note: Please incorporate personal experiences only when relevant to your argument. Remember that personal experiences may be used to illustrate your points. However, personal experience, in itself, does not constitute scientific evidence.

e. 1-2 paragraphs suggesting what types of future research should be done to help clarify this controversial topic.

f. A concluding paragraph

- Briefly restate the two sides of the topic
- Summarize which side of the argument was more compelling and why

f. An APA style reference page.

4) The format guidelines for your paper include:

- a. The paper should be 3-5 pages in length and should be typed.
- b. The entire paper should be double-spaced with 12 font size.
- c. All margins should be one-inch.
- d. Place your name, class, and date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your paper.

5) Plagiarism. Representing someone else's research and/or words as your own is considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and can result in failing the course. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must give credit to the author or scientist whose work you are citing. The following APA (American Psychological Association) format is used for citations made within the text. Below are examples of sentences and how they should be cited.

- **One work by one author:** In a recent study of reaction times...(Rogers, 2007).
An alternative example: Rogers (2007) compared reaction times...
- **One work by multiple authors:** When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in the text. When a work has three or more authors, cite all authors the first time the reference occurs. In subsequent citations include only the surname of the first author followed by et al. Example: Wasserstein et al. (1997).
- **Citation of a work discussed in another source:** If a work is cited in your article, and you did not read the original work cited, you should use the following citation format: Siedenberg's study (as cited in Coltheart, 2003)...
- Citations include the author's last name and the date it was published. **You only need a page number in your citation if you have a direct quote!**
- Important: Any sentence that contains information from the article needs to be cited. Since you will reference the article you read for this assignment multiple times, you will end up citing that article in your paper multiple times. If you are in doubt about whether you should cite it then cite it! Better to be safe than sorry.

6) Reference Page: This is where you list, in alphabetical order, the citations you used in your paper. This reference page should be on a separate piece of paper. The following APA format should be used for your reference page.

Reference to an article in an edited book:

Kohn, A. (2005). Five reasons to stop saying "good job." In Slife, B. (Ed.), *Taking Sides* (pp. 110-114). Washington, DC: McGraw Hill.

NOTE: USE THIS EXAMPLE FOR YOUR PAPER! *The two excerpts from articles you read for this paper ARE from an edited book SO USE THE EXAMPLE ABOVE FOR YOUR REFERENCE PAGE. Cite both articles (the one that says "yes" and the one that says "no" as separate articles on your reference page).*

A journal article:

Giancola, P. R. & Tarter, R. E. (1999). Executive cognitive functioning and risk for substance abuse. *Psychological Science*, 10, 203-205.

A book:

Huffman, K. (2007). *Psychology in action* (8th ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

7) You are encouraged to find additional sources to support your argument but it is not a requirement for this assignment. If you do find additional sources be sure to cite them in your paper and in your reference page.