

**MASTER OF HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS MEDICAL CENTER**

**Writing Guidelines**

1. Use 12-point font, with one-inch margins on all sides. For each course, the instructor will indicate whether single-spacing or double-spacing is acceptable. A title page is appropriate for research papers and other assignments.
2. Know your objective, and state it early in your writing. In addition, your paper (or each portion of an assignment) should conclude with a summary that ties together its various parts.
3. Organize your thoughts and your research before you begin writing.
4. Use headings and subheadings, if the length of what you are writing is a full page or more. Do not leave headings or subheadings hanging at the bottom of a page.
5. Make your formatting attractive and readable. You may use lists/bullet points, where appropriate.
6. Use page numbers on each assignment you submit, beginning with the second page.
7. Use short sentences and paragraphs. Do not use one-sentence paragraphs.
8. Do not use contractions. For example, use “cannot” instead of “can’t” and “do not” instead of “don’t.”
9. A sentence should never begin with a figure, even when there are figures in the rest of the sentence. Either spell out the first number or reframe the sentence.
10. When using percentages in the text of your work, use a numeral and write out “percent,” e.g., 47 percent. Use the percent sign (%) in tables and figures.
11. When using an abbreviation or acronym (e.g., HMO, PPO, AHA, CEO), write the complete name or phrase the first time you use it, followed by the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses. Subsequent references may use the abbreviation or acronym.
12. Do not begin a sentence with an abbreviation or an acronym.
13. Put sentences in the active voice (“I did it”; “They did it”) instead of the passive voice (“It was done”).
14. Use the first person (“I” or “we”) rather than third person (“the author”) to describe what you yourself did.
15. Write in your own voice; be natural. Use simple language. Avoid jargon and “fancy language.” Omit needless words. Do not use a phrase when a word will do, a sentence when a phrase will do, or a paragraph when a sentence will do.
16. Avoid use of slang and “informal language.” Refrain from using “you” and do not refer to individuals by their first name.

17. Avoid language that might be interpreted as denigrating to ethnic, racial, gender, or other groups. Be particularly careful in dealing with gender, where long-established customs, such as the use of certain pronouns (e.g., “a physician...he” or “the nurse...she”) can imply gender-based discrimination. Use of plural pronouns or reframing the sentence usually helps.
18. Always use proper grammar and correct spelling.
19. Be consistent in your use of grammar rules (e.g., use of a comma before a conjunction in a list, verb usage and tense in a list of bullet points, use of numbers and numerals)
20. Edit and proofread carefully. Review your writing carefully for readability, clarity, spelling, grammar, and typographical errors. Your writing should flow smoothly and coherently.
21. Provide appropriate citations in an accepted format. Provide references for all concepts, thoughts, ideas, quotations, etc., from other sources (e.g., books, journal articles, personal interviews). Identify direct quotations appropriately.
22. Acquire a collection of references on writing that can help you. In addition to a good dictionary and thesaurus, here are a few suggestions.
  - Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu. *The Business Writer's Handbook*.
  - Munter. *Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and Speaking*.
  - Shertzer. *The Elements of Grammar*.
  - Strunk and White. *The Elements of Style*.
  - Walsh. *Plain English Handbook*.
  - American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition.