

# A Guide to Academic Writing

Helpful advice for students of the Global Studies Programme

Global Studies Programme (Master of Social Sciences)  
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

May 2018



## **Table of Content:**

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. READERSHIP, AUTHORSHIP, AND THE WRITING PROCESS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. FORMAL OUTLINE .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Cover Page:.....	5
2.2 Table of Content with page numbers.....	7
2.3 Layout:.....	7
<b>3. STRUCTURE AND LINE OF ARGUMENTATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	8
3.2 Main Part.....	9
3.3 Conclusion .....	9
3.5 Some General Remarks .....	9
<b>4. DOCUMENTATION OF SOURCES AND PLAGIARISM .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 Citing within the text .....	12
4.2 Bibliography or Works Cited.....	14
4.3 Citing Sources from the Internet.....	15
<b>5. IMPROVE YOUR WRITING STYLE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. USEFUL SITES FOR FURTHER READING.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>19</b>

## **Introduction**

During the course of the Global Studies Programme (GSP), you will have to write a number of term papers, essays, and eventually a Master thesis. Since the GSP is comprised of students coming from very diverse academic backgrounds with a vast number of different subjects, this guide shall serve as a short introduction and overview of some rules, regulations and conventions that might be helpful to follow during the writing process.

Most information within this guide is based on the official MLA Handbook (7<sup>th</sup> ed.), the document “Guidelines: How to Write an Academic Paper” by Birkle, Heil, Rojek (revised Oct 2012), University of Marburg, as well as the “General Guidelines for Academic Writing” by the International Studies department, University of Lapland (2006). Constant references to these sources would be very reader-unfriendly and are, therefore, omitted. Please note that the compiler of this guide does not claim authorship, but is simply responsible for the collection and representation of this information.

Furthermore, please note that this overview does not claim completeness and that each of the universities involved in the Global Studies Programme, even each lecturer, may have their own preferences on how to use references or format and present written assignments. Hence, it is always advisable to check with your respective lectures at the beginning of each semester.

### **1. Readership, Authorship, and the Writing Process**

Before you start writing, it is helpful to clarify who your readers are, and what your role as an author is, accordingly. In general, your paper shows that you are part of an academic community and its specific discourse. Your paper is situated within the academic discourse, draws on previous findings, and adds new aspects, perspectives, or insights to a specific topic. During your studies, you usually do not write with the intention to publish, which means your paper might not find its way into the “real” academic community. Nevertheless, imagine your readers as your fellow students (who e.g. took a different class), i.e., people who have some knowledge of your subject, but who do not necessarily know about specific concepts, theories, and approaches. As the author, you should guide your reader through your thinking process (i.e., the structure of your paper), make clear what your main argument is (i.e., your thesis statement), and point out where your ideas come from (i.e., document your sources), and how you approach your topic (i.e., methodology and/or theory). Try finding a topic that you are actually interested in, since the paper is the product of a relatively long process of research, analysis, and writing.

Since you will have to attend a course on Data Management during your first semester at Freiburg University, this guide is not providing you with detailed instructions on how to find the appropriate sources for your papers (Katalog plus, DBIS, full text search, lending system at the university library, etc.). However, as a general rule, it is important to pay attention to the kind of sources you are using. For instance, the aim should always be to have a fair balance between primary and secondary literature, and to find as recent publications as possible. In addition, a rough rule of thumb which is easy to remember states one source per page of the final paper (e.g. if the entire paper is 15 pages long, one should not use less than 15 different sources).

Ideally, once you have your topic and consulted your sources, your actual writing process begins. How exactly you structure this process depends on your mode of writing/ what kind of writer you are. However, following these steps is a useful start for all writers:

- Gather and evaluate information
- Work out and formulate your main argument or research question
- Structure what you intend to do
- Collect your empirical data (in case you are writing an empirical paper)
- Start writing
- Get feedback
- Restructure what you intend to do
- Proof-read

This strategy of recursivity will help you in checking whether or not the part you are working on is relevant for your overall structure and whether or not it fits where you have placed it. It will help you in restructuring your paper and/or even defining a new thesis if you realize that new information and aspects change the direction of your paper. In addition, feedback by your fellow students or your instructor will help you get over writer's block, to refocus, and to check if your line of argumentation makes sense. Please do not forget to have someone proofread your paper, since you are bound to overlook typos and other mistakes – the more so if you are not an English native speaker.

## 2. Formal Outline

Formalities in academic writing are very important.

The basic structure of a written assignment should contain the following formal parts:

1. *Cover Page*
2. *Table of Contents*
3. *Introduction* that sets the context and significance of the topic, creates interest and sets the tone for the paper
4. *Theoretical Background*
5. *Methods and/or material* that informs the reader of the possible data and methods of analysis that you have used in your paper
6. *The actual body of writing* that presents the transition from introduction to the development of your ideas/ research with supporting theories
7. *Conclusion* that ties together the writing by presenting possible research results and discussing and summarizing the main points of the paper
8. *Bibliography*
9. *Appendix*
10. *Plagiarism Statement*

Each of the individual parts of the paper can include one or more chapters that are marked in the Table of Contents with separate chapter and subchapter headings. However, avoid excessive use of headings and subheadings (see 3.4). The list of references and the possible appendix with enclosures, figures and tables should be located at the end of the assignment. For essays, there are slightly different rules and conventions, since they are commonly less formal, e.g. they often do not include a table of content or a very refined structure.

### 2.1 Cover Page

In addition to these basics it is essential to create a cover page, number each page after the first, and, if a hardcopy is required, use one-sided printing of the paper only. The cover page should include all the following information:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Upper section:  | University, department, winter/summer semester, complete title of the course, instructor's name |
| Middle section: | Title of the paper, type of paper (e.g. essay, term paper,...)                                  |

Lower section: Author's full name, email ID, student ID/registration number, date of submission, optional: author's address

In a short essay, it can be sufficient to use the header of the first page to specify the course, lecturer, assignment and submission date, name and matriculation number.

*Please note:* For an academic thesis (BA, MA, etc.) the information provided and the structure of a "Title Page" is a little bit different than what is indicated above. For a Master Thesis at the University of Freiburg the cover page has to be made in accordance with the following template:

<p style="text-align: center;">Title of the Thesis</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Master's Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Master of Arts (M.A.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">awarded by the Philosophical Faculty of Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg i. Br. (Germany) and the .....(your 2<sup>nd</sup> semester university)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Submitted by: .....(first and family name) from .....(place of birth)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WS.../....., or SS.../.....(semester of handing in your thesis)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Social Sciences</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor: .....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor: .....</p>
---

For more detailed information on the thesis format check the final examination documents.

## 2.2 Table of Content with page numbers

Many word processing programs provide templates for tables of contents which update and format chapter and page numbers automatically. Depending on your type of paper and topic area, a table of content could look like the example below:

1. Introduction	1
2. [Main Part I: Theoretical Background]	2
2.1. [Theory 1]	3
2.2. [Theory 2]	4
2.3. [...]	5
3. [Methodology]	6
4. [Main Part II:]	7
4.1. [Empirical Results/ Discussion of topic]	8
4.2. [Bringing theory and own work together]	9
4.3. [...]	10
5. Conclusion	11
Bibliography (and Annex, if needed)	12
Plagiarism Statement	13

## 2.3 Layout

Even though each university or department may have slightly differing recommendations for formatting their assignments, here are some general guidelines:

**Spacing:** Unless otherwise requested, the main assignment text should be according a 1,5 line-spacing format. The only exceptions to this are the Table of Contents, potential abstracts and the List of Reference/ Bibliography sections, where a line spacing of 1,0 must be used.

**Font:** Within written assignments, commonly used fonts are “Times New Roman” or “Arial” and the letter size 12. It is important to use the same font for the whole text. Additionally, one should use the “Justification” format to align the text to both sides of the page, and to leave margins on the left (2,5 cm), right (3 cm) and top and bottom (2,5 cm). For first level headings you can use letter size 14, but decrease the size for subheadings. Headings can be either bold or underlined, but never both. If you want to add emphasis to a word within the text, you can use italic, but keep the overall usage to a minimum and stay consistent. All-caps spelling is used for acronyms only, not for highlighting.

Numbering: It looks more professional to use different page numbering styles in your thesis (or in a longer paper). A good rule to follow is to use small, Roman numbers (i, ii, iii) for all pages which are put after the cover page and before the introduction (e.g. abstract, acknowledgements, list of abbreviations). Starting with the introduction, use Arabic numbers for all the remaining pages, including bibliography and annexes.

It might be helpful to prepare one correctly formatted template, which you can then use for all future papers.

### **3. Structure and Line of Argumentation**

A term paper or thesis should adhere to a logical and coherent line of argumentation. If you are not sure whether you have sufficiently narrowed down your topic, the following three questions may help:

- What is the topic of your paper? What are you dealing with? What methods do you use for your analysis? What theories do you base your analysis on?
- In what order do you present the main arguments of your paper?

#### **3.1 Introduction**

As its name says, the introduction introduces the reader to the topic and provides a preview or outline of the content and structure of the paper. It has to observe several formal rules and contains a specific set of information.

The introductory part should approximately make up one tenth of your entire paper. For regular term papers this usually adds up to 1 page. According to its function, it can simply be entitled “Introduction”, if nothing catchy comes to your mind. A good introduction catches the reader’s interest while also giving them an accurate sense of what to expect. Formally, it is important to contextualize your topic area within the academic realm. It has to include an elaboration on the relevance of your topic and develop your research question, i.e., what you intend to conduct your analysis on. Here, you should also briefly outline how you want to approach the topic (*method*) and what aspects you focus on in which order. You also have to shortly introduce the *theories* you will use. In doing so, it often makes sense to relate to the present state of academic research on the topic, identify possible gaps within the existing research and point to important controversies related to the topic (if there are any). Also, since you will only have a limited amount of time and (written) space for your paper, it is advisable to narrow down your topic as much as possible. Also, if you are using central terms within your



paper (e.g. “gender”, “refugees”, “globalization”, etc.), it is advisable to clarify them already in the introduction, by giving a definition based on which you intend to work in the following.

### **3.2 Main Part**

The main part can be divided into different chapters. If you are writing a paper based on empirical work, it makes sense to divide it into at least three chapters (see the table of contents in the example above). First, review the necessary literature. In a second step, define your methodological approach. In doing so, it is also important to explain why you chose a specific method, what its benefits are, but maybe also its disadvantages. In a next step, you present your own findings and afterwards bring your findings together with the theory you introduced.

Hence, the main part contains the actual implementation of your entire line of argumentation. Based on a thorough literature review of existing work on the topic, you develop your own thoughts about a specific theme. In doing so, you could compare the chosen literature with each other, back up your empirical findings with a certain theoretical approach, or independently criticize certain texts, depending on your research question. It is important to never lose sight of your research question during the entire process! The different chapters should always follow a coherent logic and structure and be connected through fitting transitions.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The conclusion summarizes the main arguments of the paper and adds the results of the main part to the thesis of the introduction (in a shorter essay, this might be only a concluding paragraph). It provides answers to the research question(s), yet should not necessarily recap the various arguments. A helpful strategy to find out whether a paper is well structured is to read the introduction and then the conclusion, as both should transmit the paper's focus, methodology as well as your results.

Optional: Within the conclusion, one can also give recommendations for further research or identify possible solutions for the research questions (e.g. policy recommendations, call for action, etc.).

*Please note:* Writing an academic thesis (e.g. the final Master thesis) is a somewhat special case, since it might also include an ‘Abstract’, a paragraph about ‘Acknowledgements’ and potentially a ‘List of Abbreviations’. Those parts belong right at the beginning, between the Table of Contents and the Introduction.

### **3.5 Some General Remarks**

- Whatever you write about, a critical re-evaluation as well as accurate documentation of

your sources are essential to an academic paper. Your paper should be based on a consistent line of argumentation that constitutes your own approach. Document your sources carefully to avoid plagiarism!

- Your argumentation needs to be based on (textual) evidence. Whatever you argue, support your arguments with examples from secondary literature, newspapers, online sources, etc. You are not re-inventing the wheel with a term paper, after all.
- Not only quotes from sources/authors that you have consulted during your research need to be documented, but also those whose ideas you have modified by either paraphrasing them or integrating them in your research. Please also see the section on Plagiarism for further information on how to avoid intellectual and academic theft. By the way: the term plagiarism derives from the Latin word *plagiarius* and means “kidnapper.” Just as the term suggests, it is academic fraud.
- Most GSP-students and lecturers are not English native speakers. Hence, minor imperfections within the English writing will not lead to lowered grades. However, try to perfect it as much as possible. It is always advisable to ask a native speaker to proofread the final paper, especially the thesis.

**Watch out:**

- Every paragraph should constitute a logical unity of meaning, which deals with a part of your overall line of argumentation. It should be placed according to the structure you have outlined in your introduction. No one-sentence paragraphs! The general rule is: one thought, one paragraph. One-sentence paragraphs which are not related to one another are a sign of poor writing style as they show that the text is not logically structured and not based on proper logical argumentation. If you find that one of your thoughts really makes up only one sentence, check closely: Is it really substantial? If not (so much), omit it or move it to a footnote. If yes, your sentence might need to be split up and/or your thought elaborated in more detail.
- One chapter consists of a minimum of three paragraphs. One paragraph consists of a minimum of three sentences.
- Do not list many disconnected details that may be interesting observations or examples, but are not related to the coherent structure of your paper. If at all, these can be added in footnotes.
- Footnotes can be used for occasional explanatory notes (also known as content notes), which refer to brief additional information that might be too digressive for the main

text. They should be formatted in the same font as the remaining text, but in smaller size (e.g. 10 in Times New Roman). Footnotes should not take up more space than the actual text.

- Think about transitions from one paragraph to the next. Ideally, one paragraph refers to the preceding paragraph.
- Exaggerated /Inflationary use of subheadings: while the main part should have a meaningful heading (not simply “Main Part”), not every paragraph needs its own subheading. This is especially inappropriate in term papers that are only 10-12 pages long. In practice, it should be possible to read a term paper even without the inclusion of subheadings, i.e., as a homogenous entity featuring smooth transitions that link one thought with the other. Headings and subheadings do not replace transitions between the paragraphs. Also note: if you have a first point, you need to make a second one, e.g. if you have chapter 3.1., you need chapter 3.2.

#### **4. Documentation of Sources and Plagiarism**

There is no general rule on how many quotes should be used in a term paper/ thesis. It depends on your personal style of writing as well as on the topic. However, quotes should never replace your own line of argumentation or act as mere ‘decoration’ of your text. They should be well chosen, for example to summarize central elements in one precise sentence.

The careful documentation of sources is crucial to good scholarly writing. Whenever you draw on the work of another person or institution, you must document your source by indicating what you borrowed – whether fact, opinions, or quotation – and where you borrowed it from. Whether you quote from another text directly, paraphrase it, or take from it an idea which you express entirely in your own words, you must properly document that source.

- Plagiarism is the most severe crime in academia! You plagiarize when you use someone else’s formulations directly but also when you display someone else’s ideas, trains of thoughts, or line of argumentation as your own without acknowledging the sources. If found out, you will not receive credit for the work. In addition, depending on the severity of the misconduct or if multiple cases take place, you might even fail the entire course. If you plagiarize, you severely damage your academic reputation. And remember: your instructors have discovered the internet as well!

The following website offers a self-test with which you can test your knowledge of various types of direct and indirect plagiarism:

<http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/quiz/index.html>.

The last page of your paper must be a statement by which you guarantee that you have not used any unacknowledged sources. You may use the example below:

### **Confirmation of Authorship**

I hereby formally declare that the work submitted is entirely my own and does not involve any additional human assistance. I also confirm that it has not been submitted for credit before, neither as a whole nor in part and neither by myself nor by any other person.

All quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas that have been taken from sources used are cited appropriately with the corresponding bibliographical references provided. The same is true of all drawings, sketches, pictures and the like that appear in the text, as well as of all internet resources used.

Violation of these terms will result in failure of the seminar and no credits will be awarded. I am aware that plagiarism is serious academic misconduct, which can lead to further sanctions on reoccurrence.

Freiburg, \_\_\_\_\_

(Date)

(Signature)

### **4.1 Citing within the text**

As most of you probably know, multiple acknowledged citation styles exist (APA, MLA, etc.). The most important aspect is to stick to a chosen style of citation. If not further specified, most professors do not mind which style you choose, as long as you proof consistency within your paper. For the well-established ones like APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association), it is always possible to find official online manuals describing the latest state of the art. Within this guide, the MLA style of the MLA Handbook (7<sup>th</sup> edition) is used.

A citation is not needed when quoting familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge. Common sense and ethics should always determine your need for documenting sources. Apart from this, all references to primary and secondary sources have to

be included in the text. As soon as more than three words from the original source are taken (no matter if it is a written or recorded source), it has to be marked as a quote. You must include all the information necessary for finding the quotation, using parenthetical documentation and the bibliography at the end of your paper. If you are quoting short passages up to three lines of text, integrate them into your own sentence. Use American quotation marks “...” (i.e., check the language settings of your word processing program). In case there is a quote within the quote you are citing, indicate it by using the single quotation marks ‘...’. When you quote from a text and leave out parts of the original text, indicate the omission by adding three spaced periods [...] (or four, if the omission is at the end of a sentence. If the original text already contains an ellipsis *and* you leave out parts of the text, indicate the omission in the following way: (page number, ellipsis in orig.).

Parenthetical references are directly linked to your list of works cited or your bibliography. The author’s last name, year of publication and a page reference are usually sufficient to identify the source. In the following example, the reference (Townsend 2010: 10) indicates that the quotation comes from page 10 of a work by Townsend from 2010. Your readers can then find complete publication information for the source in your Bibliography at the end of the paper.

The standard parenthetical reference is simply the author’s last name followed by a space, the year of publication and then a page number. A parenthetical reference in your text must clearly point to a precise location in a specific source listed in your works cited, but at the same time you should keep the reference as brief as possible. If, for example, you include an author’s name in a sentence, you need not repeat the name in the parenthetical page citation that follows. Place the parenthetical reference where a pause would naturally occur (preferably at the end of a sentence), as near as possible to the material documented. Whenever you use ideas, lines of argumentation, etc. from a text without directly quoting, you still need to indicate your source. Use “see” if you point to a source that gives more information of the same kind. In the following, there are some sample entries for parenthetical references:

- Citing a work by a single author: Between the 1960s and the 1990s, television coverage of presidential elections changed dramatically (Hallin 2011: 5).
- Citing a work by two or three authors: Others, like Gilbert and Gubar (2009: 1-25), hold the opposite point of view. Or: Others hold the opposite point of view (e.g., Gilbert and Gubar 2009: 1-25).
- Citing authors with the same last name: Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 2000: 12), others note that the advantages for medical

research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 2005: 46).

- Citing indirect sources: Samuel Johnson admitted that Edmund Burke was an "extraordinary man" (qtd. in Boswell 450).

## 4.2 Bibliography or Works Cited

The bibliography should contain an entry for each of the works cited in your paper. All entries are listed alphabetically. Alphabetize entries by the author's last name; works listed under the same name are listed according to the date of publishing. If the author's name is unknown, alphabetize by the title, ignoring any initial A, An, or The. The following paragraph is the basic structure of an entry (a period usually follows each of the numbered components, but very few entries will contain all components):

1. Author's name, last name first; 2. Year of publication; 3. title of the book, in italics or quotation marks; 4. name(s) of the editor, translator, and/or compiler; 5. edition used; 6. number(s) of the volume(s) used; 7. place of publication [only the first one is necessary]; name of the publisher; 8. page numbers.

Generally, the rules for citing electronic sources are similar to the ones pertaining to printed material. Please note that all major words should be capitalized (see *MLA Handbook* 3.6.1). Page numbers should be given in the following way: 55-57; 255-57; 3255-57; 102-03. The basic structure of an entry citing a periodical is slightly different. After giving the title of the journal or periodical, indicate the volume and issue numbers, followed by the date in parentheses, then a colon, then the page numbers.

Sample entries for works cited:

- A book by a single author: Berlage, Gai Inghara (1994): *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History*. Westport: Greenwood.

- A book by two or three authors: Marquart, James W., Sheldon Ekland Olson, and Jonathan R. Sorensen (1994): *The Rope, the Chair, and the Needle: Capital Punishment in Texas, 1923-1990*. Austin: U of Texas P.

- A book by more than three authors: Gilman, Sander, et al. (1993): *Hysteria beyond Freud*. Berkeley: U of California P.

- Two or more books by the same author: Frye, Northrop (1957): *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP., 1957.

--- (1991): *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion*. Toronto: U of Toronto P.

• A work in an anthology or a collection of essays: Allende, Isabel (1992): "Toad's Mouth." Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. *A Hammock beneath the Mangoes: Stories from Latin America*. Ed. Thomas Colchie. New York: Plume. 83-88.

• An introduction, a preface, a foreword, or an afterword: Drabble, Margaret (1985): Introduction. *Middlemarch*. By George Eliot. New York: Bantam. vii-xvii.

• A translation: Dostoevsky, Feodor (1964): *Crime and Punishment*. Trans. Jessie Coulson. Ed. George Gibian. New York: Norton.

• A second or subsequent edition: Feuer, Jane (1993): *The Hollywood Musical*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

• A multivolume work: Lauter, Paul, et al., eds. (1994): *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Lexington: Heath.

• A work (article, essay, short story, or poem) in an anthology: Wright, Louis B. (1973): "Human Comedy in Early America." *The Comic Imagination in American Literature*. Ed. Louis D. Rubin. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP. 17-31.

• An article in a journal: Baum, Rosalie Murphy (1986): "Alcoholism and Family Abuse in *Maggie* and *The Bluest Eye*." *Mosaic* 19.3, 91-105.

• An article in a newspaper: Manegold, Catherine S. (1994): "Becoming a Land of the Smoke-Free, Ban by Ban." *New York Times* 22 Mar. 1994, late ed.: A1+.

• An article in a magazine: Murphy, Cullen (1993): "Women and the Bible." *Atlantic Monthly* Aug. 1993: 39-64.

#### **4.3 Citing Sources from the Internet**

One general word of warning concerns the scholarly seriousness and reliability of materials found on the Internet. Since among the millions of items you can find both well-researched articles and highly subjective speculations about authors and literary works, you should be as selective as you are with printed sources.

1. Name of the author, compiler, director, editor, narrator, performer, or translator of the work;
2. title of the work;
3. title of the overall Web site if distinct from item 2;
4. version of edition used;
5. publisher or sponsor of the site (if not available, use n.p.);
6. date of publication (if nothing is available, use n.d.);
7. medium of publication: Web;
8. date of access.

Cite as much information as necessary in order to find the resource. Only include the URL if the reader would not be able to find the website without it. Place the URL at the end of the entry and enclose it in angle brackets <> followed by a period.

Sample entries for sources from the Internet:

- A work cited only on the web: Taylor, Rumsey. "Fitzcarraldo." *Slant*, 13. Jun. 2003, <www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/fitzcarraldo/>.
- A work on the web cited with print publication data: Cascardi, Anthony J. *Ideologies of History on the Spanish Golden Age*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997. *Penn State Romance Studies*. Web. 12 May 2007.
- A scholarly journal: Armstrong, Grace. Rev. of *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency*, by Daniel Heller-Roazen. *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature* 6.1 (2007): n.pag. Web. 5 June 2008.
- A periodical publication in an online database: Russell, Tony, et al. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*, 2. Aug. 2016, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/.

### **Helpful hint:**

Using a reference management software can help you save a lot of time and work and prevent mistakes. It commonly takes some time to get used to its mode of functioning, hence it is recommended to get used to it first – e.g. while writing a term paper – before using it for a final thesis. Well-known reference management software such as Citavi or EndNote require a license (not for free!), but there are also multiple other versions freely accessible on the net, (e.g. Zotero or Mendeley). Wikipedia offers a well-structured overview of different types of software currently available and also compares them according to multiple parameters:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_reference\\_management\\_software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software)

## **5. Improve your writing style**

Academic writers need to be sure that their communications are written in the appropriate style. The chosen style must not only be consistent but also appropriate both for the audience as well as for the message being conveyed. A difficulty in doing so is knowing what is considered as academic and what is not, the more so for non-native English speakers. This is further complicated by the fact that academic styles differ in terms of what is acceptable from one area of study to another – e.g. contractions such as "don't" may be used in philosophy, but are not



widely used in most other fields. The following examples from Swales and Feak (2010: 16-25) summarize some useful hints to improve your writing:

- The English languages often gives multiple options to express an action or occurrence. Use a single *verb* wherever possible. Example:
  - According to some biologists, coming up with a clear proof (...) has been difficult. (less formal style)
  - According to some biologists, offering clear proof (...) has been difficult. (academic style).
- Nouns and other parts of speech: always try to choose words that are less informal in nature and also precise. Example:
  - Crash test dummies are really important for automotive crash tests. (informal)
  - Crash test dummies are an integral part of automotive crash tests. (academic)
- Generally avoid contractions (e.g. won't, don't, I'm).
- Use the more appropriate formal negative forms (e.g. no; little; few instead of not ... much; not ... many; not ... any).
- Limit the usage of “run-on” expressions, such as “and so forth” and “etc.”.
- Avoid addressing the reader as you (e.g. “the results can be seen in table 1” instead of “you can see the results in table 1).
- Place adverbs within the sentence. Example:
  - Actually, very little is known about the general nature of scientific dishonesty. (informal)
  - Very little is actually known about the general nature of scientific dishonesty. (academic)
- Aim for an efficient use of words. Use only as many words as you need to express your points and no more than you really need.

### **Some useful verbs and phrases:**

- maintain, illustrate, demonstrate
- emphasize, highlight
- scrutinize, investigate, examine
- accordingly, as a result, consequently, subsequently, in conclusion, therefore, hence, thus, in this way, likewise
- besides, furthermore, moreover, even more, what is more, in addition,

- first(ly)/second(ly), etc., finally, in the first place, next, then, also
- still, nevertheless, nonetheless, however, now, even so
- for example, for instance, similarly, in other words, that is, specifically
- on the contrary, on the one hand, on the other hand, conversely, instead, otherwise
- as a matter of fact, indeed, certainly, actually, in fact, after all
- anyhow, anyway, at any rate, of course
- at the same time, meanwhile

## 6. Useful sites for further reading

### Helpful literature and websites on Academic Writing:

- Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak (2010): *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Caplan, Nigel (2012): *Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- William Strunk, Jr: *The Elements of Style* (standard American textbook)  
<http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>
- Dartmouth College Composition Center:  
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~compose/student/index.html>
- Advice on Academic Writing (University of Toronto):  
<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/advice.html>
- Writer's Handbook (Writing Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison):  
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/handbook.html>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- Plagiarism <http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/quiz/index.html>

### Miscellaneous Readings:

- Evaluating Internet Resources: <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/internet/eval.htm>
- The Heath Anthology of American Literature Online:  
<http://college.hmco.com/english/heath/litlink.html>
- Project Gutenberg: Primary Texts Online <http://promo.net/pg/>
- The Literary Link (useful materials, tips and links, as well as suggestions for teachers)  
<http://www.theliterarylink.com>
- E-text sources: [www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com), [www.bibliomania.com](http://www.bibliomania.com)

- Postcolonial Web: <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/>
- Basics of English Studies: <http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/Home01.htm>

### Useful Databases for Research:

The first stop for research is the library of the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg. The online catalogue can be accessed via the library website: <https://katalog.ub.uni-freiburg.de>

Further useful databases are the following:

- Oxford Reference Online
- [http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/BOOK\\_SEARCH.html?book=t56](http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/BOOK_SEARCH.html?book=t56)
- MLA database: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/search?vid=2&hid=4&sid=3813353f-f8d1-4e23-95f4-e4f702666413%40sessionmgr14>
- JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/?cookieSet=1>
- Cambridge Collections Online: [http://cco.cambridge.org/uid=10484/private\\_home](http://cco.cambridge.org/uid=10484/private_home)

## 7. Bibliography

Fachbereich Fremdsprachige Philologie, Philipps Universität Marburg “*Guidelines: How to Write an Academic Paper.*“ 3rd ed., 2012, <https://www.uni-marburg.de/fb10/iaa/institut/personal/birkle/MLA.pdf>.

International Studies Department, University of Lapland Lapin Yliopisto “*General Guidelines for Academic Writing.*“ 2008, <https://www.ulapland.fi/loader.aspx?id=50b23fac-e65a-4797-bdb7-433993a00723>.

Kruse, Jan (2006): *Einführung in die Anfertigung von Hausarbeiten.* Freiburg: Albert- Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.

Modern Language Association (2016): *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* 8th ed. New York: MLA, Print.

Russell, Tony, et al.: “*MLA Formatting and Style Guide.*” The Purdue OWL, 2. Aug. 2016, [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/).

Swales, John M. and Christine B. Feak (2010): *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills.* 2nd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.