

**Academic Writing Guidelines  
and  
American Psychological Association (APA, 6th ed.) Style**

**Master of Adult Education**  
Saint Francis Xavier University

**Revised September 2009**

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The following guidelines comprising this document have each been developed to help students in St. Francis Xavier University's Master of Adult Education program in the preparation and typing of their papers. They encapsulate the key features of good academic writing style and APA that characterize the standards of graduate level papers.

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## Tips for Academic Writing

StFX's Master of Adult Education program uses the American Psychological Association's (APA) general style for communicative writing. The current edition is 6th, issued July 2009. The APA manual contains general information on preferred writing style for academic communications in the social sciences as well as specific guidelines for presentation and referencing details. Passages in the APA manual that may be useful during your coursework are listed in Table 1.

For example, favour active voice over passive voice. Short, declarative sentences, few acronyms, and minimal jargon are hallmarks of effective academic writing. Complex ideas sometimes require complex sentences, but often two simpler sentences convey the idea more clearly. Contractions are best avoided except in direct quotations, and use imperatives (e.g., must, should) cautiously, when mandatory, or in a recommendation. Remember that the author suggested, argued, assessed; articles and chapters do not (i.e., you will never write, "This article suggested...").

Remember the basics. Keep a clear focus on the topic; make sure the narrative flows smoothly and is easy to understand by someone not already steeped in the topic at hand. As you write, keep in mind a reader of your basic situation who is not already familiar with your work details or literature readings. Rather than thinking of your advisor as reader, write for the naïve reader. Introduce the topic in general terms—in your own voice—before getting into the details of the paper. An introduction should concisely explain why the paper was written or why the topic is important, and it should set up the subtopics as a framework for the reader.

Use headings that tell the story (key features) for the busy reader who may skim before deciding whether to read it. Headings serve as signposts for the reader. They also help you, as writer, ensure that the paper is organized logically and the points are easy to follow. Develop an effective title, one that catches the content and direction of the paper.

Document carefully all information sources. The reader should be able to identify easily the source for all parts of the information. Direct quotations should illustrate the ideas rather than do the work of making the point. They add voice and a sense of authenticity for the ideas. As you do the literature research, remember to keep track of all sources in your notes, including page numbers for direct extracts.

A summary briefly restates the main points already made in text, for reinforcement. A conclusion, when used, captures your "so what" spin to the information already presented. Neither should introduce new information; new ideas or quotations should be placed in the main body of the document.

Remember that the content is the most important part of the paper. When writing your initial draft, let the content ideas flow as they may. Revise and edit the narrative flow and APA format once the main ideas have been laid out in a preliminary draft. Provide transitions between sections. Good writing comes through a process of rewriting and revision, as the main ideas become more clearly identified and expressed.

## The Six Cs of Informative Writing

- Concise** Do you stay on topic without uneconomic wording, elaboration, repetition, or interesting but tangential diversions?
- Complete** Do you say everything you need to say in order for the reader to understand your points and perspectives?
- Consistent** Do you maintain consistent wording choices, from sentence to sentence, page to page, and throughout the paper?
- Clear** Are the sentences direct, short, and are complex ideas organized so that they flow; are the verbs active; is the vocabulary understandable by your target readers without more than occasional reference to a dictionary; are technical terms explained when first introduced; do you avoid jargon and frequent use of acronyms; and is passive voice used sparingly?
- Coherent** Do you use headings like signposts, to let a busy reader skim the headings and get a sense of what is in the paper? Do you maintain a logical development or flow of ideas; do you let the reader know in advance where you are going with the paper and how it is organized; do you use explicit transitional sentences or paragraphs where the focus shifts from one topic to another; and do you bring closure to a topic before shifting, and to the paper at the end?
- Correct** Do you clarify for the reader what is your idea, and what is your source for ideas you obtained from elsewhere; are your citations from other sources accurate and not misleading; and do you say what you mean (i.e., will the reader likely perceive your intended meaning)?

**Sample Title Page for a Paper**

*[see thesis guidelines for specific format for thesis title page]*

Saint Francis Xavier University

**Finding a New Friend: Navigating the APA Style Manual**

*[give the paper a title that conveys a sense of the specific topic of the paper]*

By

Wendy L. Kraglund-Gauthier  
200912345

AE 530  
Learning Evaluation

Dr. My Professor

Antigonish, Nova Scotia  
September, 2009

## **Heading Levels Normally Used In a Paper** [Level 1]

Begin the paper with one to three paragraphs that set up the purpose and explain what it is about. Subsequent sections should begin with a paragraph or two that explains the main focus of that section and sets up any subsections in it. Note there are no extra line spaces between sections. The introduction section of a paper is not labeled.

### **Major Section Headings** [Level 1]

A section consists of paragraphs and possibly subsections. Usually an introductory paragraph is used to set up the main themes in the section before the first subsection heading. If short, there may be no subsection headings. Generally avoid stacking two headings without intervening text.

### **Subsection Headings** [Level 2]

Subsections typically contain much of the basic data in a report. Occasionally long reports may contain secondary order subsections.

**Secondary order subsection headings** [Level 3]. Secondary subsections contain subthemes within a subsection. These headings are usually part of the first paragraph.

## APA Style Rules for Punctuation

APA 6th edition outlines specific rules of style for punctuation. However many people are often confused by the various lengths, names, and spacing of ellipses, dashes, and hyphens. This page can help clarify their uses and typography.

The *ellipsis* is used in direct quotations to indicate that intervening text (one word to several sentences or even more) in the original was left out: “Older learners take longer ... to learn a second language” (Smith, 1998, p. 23). Note that a space precedes and follows an ellipsis.

An ellipsis can be typed by using Ctrl + Alt + . where . is the period key, or from the special character symbols under the insert menu.

An *em dash* is used for asides, etc., and looks long—like this.

In MS Word the shortcut for typing a full-size em dash is: Ctrl + Alt + - where - is the minus key on the far upper-right corner of the numeric part of the keypad. (Push all 3 keys at the same time.)

An *en dash* is mid-size and is used to replace “to” in a range, or for parallel adjectives: like 1952–1953; 27–33 year range; student–teacher relationships. Do not forget en-dashes in your references containing page ranges (i.e., a chapter in a book would appear as pp. 5–12; a journal article page range would appear as 5–12)

An en dash can be typed by using Ctrl + - where - is the minus key on the far upper-right corner of the numeric part of the keypad. (Push both keys at the same time.)

Another option, the menu sequence using the mouse to insert an em or en dash is: Insert; symbol; special characters (at top above the matrix); em dash or en dash.

Some publishers add spaces around an en dash and use it in lieu of an em dash – like this – but APA does not.

A *hyphen* is short and is used when one adjective modifies another adjective, like in a three-horse carriage, etc.

### Other Punctuation

APA employs the “serial comma” rule between elements (i.e., the height, width, or depth ... ). See APA pp. 88–90 for specific comma rules for clauses.

There is only one space after a comma (,), colon (:), or semicolon (;)

**There are two spaces after a period or a question mark at the end of a sentence.**

There is one space between reference elements and initials (e.g., J. E. Doe).

There are no spaces after internal periods in abbreviations (i.e., another rule).

**Table 1. Useful Passages in the Publication Manual of APA (6th ed.)**

Topic	Pages
<b>APA's Guidelines for Writing Style and Formatting</b>	
Abbreviations; when to use them	106–111
Ampersand (& used in parentheses; in reference list)	175, 184
Anthropomorphism, editorial we, use of first or third person	68–69, 79–80
Commas before “and” (serial comma)	64, 88–90
Economy of expression	67–68
Heading Levels	62–63
Linguistic devices, metaphors	70
Misplaced or dangling modifiers; use of adverbs	81–83
Numbers, written as numerals or words	111–114
Parallel construction	84–85
Parenthetical citations	174–175
Personal communications	174, 179, 213
Precision and clarity, word choice	68–70
Quotation marks for other than direct quotes	91–92
Quotations; use of ellipses	172–173
Reducing bias in language	70–77
Reference citations in text	174–179
Relative pronouns (i.e., who, whom, that, which) and subordinate conjunctions (would, since, while)	83–84
Seriation (a, b, c; 1, 2, 3)	63–65
Smoothness of expression	65–66
Subject/verb, pronoun/noun agreement	78–79
Verbs for active voice	77–78
<b>Reference List Examples</b>	
Audiovisual media (films, TV programs, music, podcasts)	209–210
Books	202–205
Chapters in an edited book	204
Cities and state abbreviations in reference list	186–187
Doctoral dissertations and Master's Theses	207–208
Internet message boards, electronic mailing lists, and online communities	214–215
Order of references in reference list	181–183
Periodicals	198–202
Reports, papers at conferences and meetings, theses	205–207
Unpublished and informally published works	211–212

### Departmental Exceptions to APA Style

The MAdEd Department has several exceptions from APA for student papers, because their nature varies from that of journal articles (see APA 6th ed., pp. 321–322). These differences include:

1. Page margins are to be one inch for the top, bottom, and right side. The left margin is 1.5” in your thesis only.
2. Start page numbering on the first page of text (not the title page), with it and each subsequent page (including the reference list) numbered at the top right margin.
3. Do not use running headers.
4. Reference lists should be single spaced, with double spacing between citations.
5. Use an easily readable font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Tahoma for your papers. **You must use Times New Roman 12pt font for your thesis.**
6. Use Canadian spelling (change your “Language” in your word processor)

## WHAT IS A DOI?<sup>1</sup>

Internet content can be moved, redesigned, or removed, resulting in broken hyperlinks and URLs in your reference list. In a move to address this issue, many scholarly publishers now assign a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to journal articles and other documents.

The DOI System is used to identify digital intellectual property, identifying where they (or information about them) can be found on the Internet. “Information about a digital object may change over time, including where to find it, but its DOI name will not change” (DOI.org, 2008). A DOI name differs from commonly used Internet pointers to material such as the URL because it *identifies* an object, not just its current Internet address.

Sometimes DOIs are hard to find or may not be there. The DOI resolver provided by CrossRef.org, a registration agency for scholarly and professional publications, is one way to try to find them if they are not prominently displayed at the front end of the journal article. When a DOI is available, include the DOI instead of the URL in the reference.

### APA Referenced Examples:

Amis, J. M., & Silk, M. L. (2008). The philosophy and politics of quality in qualitative organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods, 11*(3), 456–480. doi: 10.1177/1094428107300341

Stultz, J. (2006). Integrating exposure therapy and analytic therapy in trauma treatment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 76*(4), 482–488. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.76.4.482

Note the 9432 refers to the journal, the 76 is the volume, the 4 is the issue, and the 482 is the start of the page range; however, not all DOI numbers are this transparent.

### Other Examples of DOIs:

doi:10.1000/1047935X

doi:10.1000/ISSN1047-935X

doi:10.2345/S1384107697000225

doi:10.4567/0361-9230(1997)42:<OaEoSr>2.0.TX;2-B

doi:10.6789/WendysPaper13

### Note:

A DOI is **not** the same as the Document ID number, which is often used by journal databases, i.e., ProQuest. Document ID numbers are only searchable within that particular database.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified from the updated *Publication Manual* (APA, 2010) from <http://www.doi.org>

## A Checklist for Submitting Papers

Before submitting, take time to review these important questions. **As well, it is your responsibility to check the “For Enrolled Students” section of the MAdEd Web site for the most current requirements in style and formatting.**

(See [http://www.stfx.ca/academic/adulted/for\\_enrolled\\_students.html](http://www.stfx.ca/academic/adulted/for_enrolled_students.html))

### Proofreading

- Have you made use of the services of the StFX Writing Centre to identify and revise patterns of error, learn self-editing practices, and hone writing and documenting styles?
- Did you have a second reader proofread the text for typographic errors and sentence clarity?

### Bolding and Italics

- Did you reserve bold for headings only?
- Did you use italics (rather than quotation marks) for emphasis, technical or key terms, linguistic examples, and to distinguish your reflective narrative from text narrative?

### Formatting

- Did you left-justify your thesis margins (i.e., not full-justify)?
- Did you indent the first line of every paragraph (excluding headings and block quotes) by 0.5 inch?
- Did you begin page numbering with page 1 on the first page after your title page in the top right header, and continue consecutively numbering every page including the reference list and appendices?
- Did you check each page for widows and orphans, and re-format if necessary?
- Are footnotes used sparingly, if at all?

### Verb Tense and Voice

- Did you write in the present tense, except when writing about activities in your study that occurred in the past?
- Did you write in the active voice throughout the thesis (e.g., “I ordered the books,” not “the books were ordered”)?
- Did you vary your verbs to introduce quotations, (e.g., asserted, emphasized, maintained, observed)?

**Numbers** (see APA, pp. 111–124 for a complete list of rules and exceptions)

- Did you write numbers 10 or greater as figures, and numbers less than 10 as words?
- Did you write numbers for *specific* time and dates as figures, but as words for approximates (e.g., 1 hour, 6-year-olds, 4-month course, but approximately two weeks)?
- Did you write numbers grouped together with numbers 10 or greater, as figures (e.g., “I noticed that 4 of the 15 participants were writing,” but “two of the five pages were blank”)?

**Wording**

- Did you consistently use one term to refer to your work (e.g., study, course, program)?
- Did you use a consistent term to refer to your participants (e.g., learners, participants, co-workers, colleagues)?
- Did you use abbreviations and acronyms sparingly (APA pp. 106–111) or provide a list of acronyms if you use more than five?
- Did you avoid using contractions? (e.g., can't, we'd)—except in verbatim narrative and direct quotations?
- Did you hyphenate compound adjectives when used to qualify a noun, (e.g., “university-level program” but “a program at university level”)?
- Did you avoid plural pronouns for singular antecedents (a participant ... they ...)?

**Punctuation**

- Did you use two spaces after punctuation at the end of sentences, but only one after author initials on the References page and none when using the (n.d.) [used when no date is given on a publication]?
- Did you use commas for two or more items in a list (e.g., “David, Mary, and I went.”)?
- Did you put commas and periods *inside* quotation marks (e.g., He said, “I went there.”)?
- Did you use (a), (b), and (c) for lists within a paragraph?
- Did you use 1., 2., and 3. to number each paragraph in a seriated list?
- Did you reserve quotation marks primarily for use around direct quotations? APA uses quotation marks sparingly otherwise (for irony, slang, and coined words).
- Did you use the en-dash (–) to separate numbered items (e.g., numbered page ranges 23–34 in your Reference pages) and em-dashes (—) for “asides”?

**Capitalization**

- Did you write grade 1, page 12, chapter 2, in lower case?
- Did you capitalize other nouns followed by numerals: Phase 1, Day 2, Session 3, and Table 4?
- Did you capitalize proper nouns (the Master of Education program at StFX; the course, Biology of Northern Lakes), but use lowercase for generic terms (2 participants had a master's degree in education; she is a biology teacher; I used action research; the theory of lost domino pieces)?

**Headings and Paragraphs**

- Did you avoid stacking headings one after another, without intervening text?
- Do all headings of the same level appear in the same format?
- Is each paragraph longer than one sentence?

### Quotations

- Did you block and left indent all quotations of 40 or more words?
- Did you double-space your blocked quotations?
- Did you avoid using quotation marks around blocked quotations?
- Did you give page numbers for all direct quotations?

### Tables and Figures

- Did you include copies of all tables and figures cited, if any?
- Are all tables and figures cited in the text, numbered in the order cited, and provided with captions?
- Did you present tables (pp. 162–169) and figures (pp.181–187) in APA style?
- Did you obtain written permission from the copyright holder to use any previously published tables, figures, poetry, etc. (see APA pp. 174–175)?

### References in Text

- Did you eliminate the repetition of the *date*, in subsequent references to the same author/date in the same paragraph? (e.g., Brookfield (1996) in the first reference, but Brookfield only in subsequent references in the same paragraph)?
- Did you use et al. only after the first citation for references with three or more authors?
- Did you alphabetize multiple references within parentheses (e.g., Apps, 1999; Conte, 1998)?
- Did you separate multiple references in parentheses with a semi-colon?
- Did you use the ampersand (&) only in parentheses and the reference list?
- Did you cite multiple references illustratively—for example: I hold with proponents of experiential learning (e.g., Boud & Miller, 1996; Lindeman, 1926), rather than exhaustively listing all experiential proponents you have reviewed?
- Did you avoid appropriating a reference's voice or actions for your own—for example: I asked the teachers to reflect on their activities in their journal (similar to Jones' procedures, 2003, p. 27); not, I asked the teachers "to reflect in a journal on what you have done" (Jones, 2003, p. 27); also use *see* to reference background information on a concept in your actions (I investigated the concept of emotional intelligence (see Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

### Confidentiality

- Did you ensure people and institutions are anonymous (e.g., fictitious names are not transparent) unless permission for identifying the persons and places has been granted?
- Did you include only personal data for which you received informed consent (such as audio-taped interviews), not from informal conversations for which consent was not specifically extended?

### Inclusions

- Did you include your reference list with the submission?
- Did you remember to include a table of contents with every submission?
- Did you include copies of all appendices cited in the submission?

**Reference List**

- Did you cite every reference in the text with exactly the same spelling, name(s), and date as those in the reference list?
- Did you match every reference in the reference list with those in the text?
- Did you follow APA style (6th edition) in your reference list?
- Did you use lower case titles for articles and books in the reference list?
- Did you use upper and lower case titles for journals in the reference list?
- Did you single space each reference, use hanging indent paragraphs, and double space between references?
- Did you order references from the same author and different years from oldest to newest (e.g., Doe, J. (2005), then Doe, J. (2009))?
- Did you distinguish between two references with identical authors and date by assigning “a” and “b” in date by *title* alphabetization—for example: Doe, J. (2009a). *Doing it right*; Doe, J. (2009b). *Making do with what you have*—regardless of which you cited first in text?
- Did you incorporate the DOI number for journal articles if they are available?

**Appendices**

- Are the appendices labelled A, B, C, in order of citation in thesis, and are their pages numbered consecutively with the rest of the thesis?
- Do all appendices conform to requirements for margins and APA style?
- Did you use original text (i.e., retyped for the thesis) rather than photocopies for appendices?

**APA Samples**  
**American Psychological Association Style Guide**  
**(APA, 6th ed., 2010)**

The samples outlined below are by no means exhaustive; they merely represent the most common references used by M.Ad.Ed students. Always refer to the complete APA Style Guide (2006) and its updates (2007). Also, check out the resources available on the APA website at [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

**Quotations**

(Note that these samples are single spaced for display purposes only)

1

**Direct quotation, reference in text,  
ellipses**

She stated, “The ‘placebo effect’ . . . disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner” (Miele, 1993, p. 276), but she did not clarify which behaviours were studied.

[See APA, 2010, pp. 172–173]

2

**Quotation marks within quotation  
marks, inserted text**

Miele (1993) found that “the ‘placebo effect,’ which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when [only the first group’s] behaviors were studied in this manner” (p. 26).

[See APA, 2010, p. 92]

3

**Block quotation, reference in text**

Miele (1993) found the following:

The placebo effect, which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner. Furthermore, the behaviors were even worse when reel [*sic*] drugs were administered. This caused researchers to reexamine existing studies and to seriously reconsider their findings. Earlier studies (e.g., Abdullah, 1984; Fox, 1979) were clearly premature. (p. 276)

[See APA, 2010, p. 92]

4

**Multiple references in text,  
summary of authors’ point**

Newell, Shaw, and Simon (1980) have examined many aspects of computer studies. One example of computer simulation of human problem-solving performance is the General Problem-Solver (Newell et al.; Newell & Simon, 1961, 1972).

[See APA, 2010, pp. 177–178]

5

### Secondary Citation

Tough's studies of self-directed learning projects revealed that "it is common for adults to spend 700 hours per year engaged in learning projects" (as cited in Brown & Baxter, 1975, p. 129).

### Sample Reference List Items

6

#### Reference to Entire Books

##### Book, two authors, third edition

Mitchell, T. R., & Larson, J. R. (1987). *People in organizations: An introduction to organizational behavior* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

[See APA, 2010, pp. 202–205]

7

#### Chapter in Edited Book

Dewey, J. (1938). Expectations of students. In S. J. Morey (Ed.), *Education for life* (pp. 35–39). Mobile, AL: Preston Press.

[See APA, 2010, p. 202–205]

8

#### New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (Jossey-Bass Series)

Wilson, A. L. (2000b). Professional practice in the modern world. In V. W. Mott & B. J. Daley (Eds.), *Charting a course for continuing professional education: Reframing professional practice* (pp. 71–79). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 86. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

[See APA, 2010, p. 253]

9

#### ERIC Document

Bardine, B. A. (1995). *Using writing journals in the adult literacy classroom. Teacher to teacher*. Washington, DC: Department of Education. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED386596)

[See APA, 2010, p. 212]

10

### Conference Proceedings Published Online

Wilson, A. L. (2000a). Place matters: Producing power and identity. In T. J. Sork, V. L. Chapman, & R. St. Clair (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Adult Education Research Conference* (pp. 502–506). Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia. Retrieved from <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/wilsona1-final.PDF>  
[See APA, 2010, p. 207]

11

### Journal Article without DOI

Klimoski, R. S. , & Palmer, S. (1993). The ADA and the hiring process in organizations. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 45(2), 10–36.  
[See APA, 2010, p. 199]

12

### Journal Article with a DOI

Stultz, J. (2006). Integrating exposure therapy and analytic therapy in trauma treatment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76(4), 482–488. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.76.4.482  
[See APA, 2010, p. 198]

13

### Journal Article Found Online without a DOI

Hager, M. H. (2007). Therapeutic diet order writing: Current issues and considerations. *Topics in Clinical Nutrition*, 22(1), 28–36. Retrieved from <http://www.topicsinclinicalnutrition.com>  
[See APA, 2010, p. 199]

14

### Electronic Book

O’Keefe, E. (n.d.). *Egoism & the crisis in Western values*. Retrieved from <http://www.onlineoriginals.com/showitem.asp?itemID=135>  
[See APA, 2010, pp. 203–204]

15

### Master’s Thesis Retrieved from a Database

McNiel, D. S. (2006). *Meaning through narrative: A personal narrative discussing growing up with an alcoholic mother* (Master’s thesis). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 1434728)  
[See APA, 2010, p. 208]

## Websites and Other Electronic Sources

### [Corporate website]

Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE). (n.d.). *Internet resources to research in adult education*. Retrieved September 24, 2009, from [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/Research\\_and\\_books/casalink.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/Research_and_books/casalink.html)

### [Message posted to a newsgroup, online forum, or discussion group]

Rampersad, T. (2005, June 8). Re: Traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions [online forum comment]. Retrieved from [http://www.wipo.int/roller/comments/ipisforum/Weblog/theme\\_eight\\_how\\_can\\_cultural#comments](http://www.wipo.int/roller/comments/ipisforum/Weblog/theme_eight_how_can_cultural#comments)

### [Message posted to an electronic mailing list]

Smith, S. (2006, January 5). Re: Disputed estimates of IQ [Electronic mailing list message]. Retrieved from <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/ForensicNetwork/message/670>

### [Technical or research report (i.e., “gray literature”), available online]

Furst, M., & DeMillo, R. A. (2006). Creating symphonic-thinking computer science graduates for an increasingly competitive global environment. Retrieved from Georgia Tech College of Computing website: [http://www.cc.gatech.edu/images/pdfs/threads\\_whitepaper.pdf](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/images/pdfs/threads_whitepaper.pdf)

### [Online reference work, e.g., encyclopedia]

Graham, G. (2005). Behaviorism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. (Fall 2007 ed.). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/behaviorism/>

### [Newspaper article]

Prial, F. J. (2002, February 20). The ratings game gets simpler. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>