

Common Style Errors on Professional Doctoral Papers (May 2011)

Grammar:

1.) Minimize use of passive verbs (is, was, has, etc). “As it was realized that change was needed in the community of...” Change to “As the director realized that the community needed change...” Changing passive statements to active makes the material more academic in nature and easier to read.

2.) Avoid using forms of the phrases “There is” or “It is.” Those phrases are wordy and take up space. Also avoid using the vague wording “this is”. One example of a way to change this form is: “There must be an outside influence that brings peace in life” to “An outside influence must bring peace in life.”

3.) Main comma usage: A comma is used with a coordinating conjunction (and, for, but, so, nor, or, yet) that combines two complete sentences. It is also used in a series following every element of that series. “I like dogs, cats, and turtles.” It also follows an introductory clause. “As the hurricane approached, the students went surfing.” Following these three rules will assist in the catching the majority of the comma errors that I see.

4.) Review the rules for numbers in Turabian 2.29-.37.

5.) Pronoun- Antecedent Agreements. Example: “The group decided that their purpose was to...” A group is one entity, so the antecedent should be “its”.

6.) Subject – Verb Agreement. “The ministry team consider the response” should be “the ministry team considers or considered the response.”

7.) Avoid use of clichés and assumed terminology. Cliché = “off the top of my head” or “right off the bat.” Assumed terminology, usually biblical or religious in nature = “lost people” or “people outside of Christ” or “unbelievers” or “build God’s kingdom”.

8.) Always check verb tenses (present, past, future) for appropriate uses.

Mechanics:

1.) Margins. Top, bottom and right margins should be one inch and the left margin should be 1 and ½ inches. Page numbers are included within the margin, not outside the margin.

2.) Margins part 2. Supplemental material found in the appendices are not exempt from the margin rule. Documents, e-mails, photos, certificates, examples and PowerPoint slides (with or without notes) should be shrunk to the correct margins.

3.) Date. The date on the title page should be the month and year only.

- 4.) Vita and Approval documents. Include vita and approval documentation for each expert evaluator/tutor in separate appendixes, referenced via footnotes in the document.
- 5.) Page numbering. Numbers should be in a consistent font and all appendixes should be numbered.
- 6.) Order of Chapters. Make sure that you are aware of the proper order of chapters for the Final Project Proposal and the Project Report. Review the information in the D.Min. or D.Ed.Min. Handbook concerning contents and their ordering.
- 7.) Footnote font and font size not matching the font and font size of the document.
- 8.) Improper spacing between text/footnote separator line, and footnote. Consult the Turabian guide produced by Dr. Stevens on the ProDoc website Resources page.
- 9.) Lengthy paragraphs without new paragraph breaks. In most cases, a minimum of 2 or 3 paragraphs per page. Except in a rare care, it is improper to have one paragraph encompassing an entire page.
- 10.) Too many consecutive Ibids in the footnotes. “Rule of thumb” – no more than two or three consecutive.
- 11.) Bibliography including only books. Should involve books, journal articles, websites, D.Min. projects, Ph.D dissertations.
- 12.) Appendixes should be in order of when referenced in the document.