

The HRTM 440 writing guide

Do you want to do well on writing assignments? This class prepares you to be a professional and the penalty for a sloppy paper is severe. Assignments should be a spell-checked and written in formal business English. Consider finding someone else to proofread your homework (e.g., Student Success Center). Please use size 12 font, set a one-inch border, and add page numbers. Written assignments for this course should conform to the following standards.

Never write “I think” on a report for this class. Read “When should I think” to understand why.

General Instructions

1. Please write in formal English

a. *Do not write in the first person (e.g., I or we)*

Weak: Below, **we** have outlined a number of proposals that you should consider.

Better: The outlined proposals below deserve consideration.

b. *Never use contractions (e.g., won't)*

Weak: A push strategy **won't** be effective in this case.

Better: A push strategy will not be effective in this case.

c. *Do not leave the reader in suspense*

Weak: **This** is not close to the amount of resources needed to accomplish the task.

Better: **This budget** is not sufficient to accomplish the task.

d. *Write in active tense and present tense: Make a conscious effort to reduce reliance on the standard “being” verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been, do, does, did, may, might, must, will, shall, can, would, should, could).*

Weak: Adding a colorful background will help to visualize Hawaii’s beauty.

Weak: Adding a colorful background helped to visualize Hawaii’s beauty.

Better: Adding a colorful background **helps** to visualize Hawaii’s beauty.

e. *Do not use the word **it**. What is it?*

Weak: Adding a colorful background helps visualize **it**.

Better: Adding a colorful background helps visualize Hawaii’s beauty.

f. *Be succinct: avoid long strings of prepositional phrases*

Weak: The reason for this joint promotion is to provide another resource to push the product further and to establish a relationship within the pet industry.

Better: Joint promotion pushes the product further and establishes a relationship within the pet industry.

2. Avoid direct quotations: Reading a document filled with quotes from other people’s work does not impress. Either cite the author who provides support for your statement or paraphrase the author and cite. If you must use a quote, please note the placement of the ending parentheses and full stop (the period).

“The rain in Spain is mainly on the plain” (Loewe & Lerner, 1956).

- 3. The power of possessives:** Using an apostrophe to convert a noun to the possessive form eliminates prepositional phrases and makes sentences shorter. Below are some basic rules for correct use of the apostrophe to create a possessive form noun.

Weak: Fifty students need to rate the importance **of these attributes** on a ten-point scale.

Better: Fifty students need to rate the **attribute's importance** on a ten-point scale.

Possessives Guidelines

Single noun not ending in "s": add an apostrophe and "s"

The **student's** question; my **dog's** ears

Single noun ending in "s": add an apostrophe and "s" of just an apostrophe depending on which one sounds better

The **boss's** car; the United **States'** car manufacturing industry

Possessive form of a plural noun ending in "s": add only the apostrophe

Two **months'** work; **five hours'** sleep

Possessive form of a plural noun not ending in "s": add an apostrophe and "s"

Men's fashion; business leader's opinions; women's rights

Attributive nouns need no apostrophe: Attributive nouns function as adjectives rather than possessively.

Veterans Day; Boys and Girls Club

- c. Refrain from using "I think...."** Information to make good decisions comes from some combination of theory, practice, and data.
 Weak: **I think** Trader Joe's will not open a store in Lexington.
 Better: A crowded retail market and logistics issues prevent Trader Joe's from opening a store in Lexington (Shimogawa, 2013).
- d. Be an ethical professional:** Remember, you are writing a professional business report. Apply what you have learned. Do not copy materials from other sources and take credit for them. Impress readers by demonstrating a competence of the theories reviewed during this course.
- e. Outside references/data are expected.** Use the resources that our library provides. Please use the American Psychological Association (APA) citation method. A "Google" paper demonstrates minimal effort on your part.

Citations in text

According to the World Trade Organization (1999), world exports of commercial services totaled \$1.3 trillion in 1998.

Foreign businesses do not take the trouble to find out what Japanese customers want (Inuzuka, 1990).

Several studies show buyer dissatisfaction affects purchase intention (Hansen, Powers, & Swan, 1997; Martin & Aluri, 2015).

Three or more authors in a citation: For the first time listed in the report, list up to five authors. For any following citations of the same source, just list the first author and *et al.*, a comma, and the date. For example, the citation above would list the first source (Hansen *et al.*, 1997).

References

Book:

Single Author

Hall, I. P. (1998). *Cartels of the mind: Japan's intellectual closed shop*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Two Authors

Schmitt, B. H., & Pan, Y. (1994). *Marketing aesthetics: The strategic management of brands, identity and image*. New York: The Free Press.

Chapter in a book

Brislin, R. W. (1980). Translation and content analysis of oral and written material. In H. C. Triandis & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Handbook of Cross-cultural Psychology: Methodology* (Vol. 2, pp. 389-444). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Journal or Magazine: Note, the "4" after the journal name is the volume and "9-28" lists the page numbers.

Clark, T., Rajaratnam, D., & Smith, T. (1996). Toward a theory of international services: Marketing intangibility in a world of nations. *Journal of International Marketing*, 4, 9-28.

Newspaper:

Corporations take shine to legal action. (1999, October 25). *Nikkei Weekly*, 5.

This article did not have an author listed. If an author is listed, cite like a journal article (see above). The "5" at the end is the page number. In this case, no author is listed. A text citation might look like the following.

In recent years, the Japanese legal system has resolved more business disputes than in the past (Corporations Take Shine, 1999).

Internet: Note, unlike other citations, no period (full stop) is necessary after the hypertext. World Trade Organization (WTO). (1999). World exports of commercial services by category, 1999. Retrieved from http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/j_e.htm

- 4. What is the main point?** Cover the most important areas. Remember that executives do not want to read too many pages. Managers and decision-makers are busy; they want the information presented as succinctly as possible. Statistics or simple charts/graphs greatly improve the power of persuasion in written reports. Supporting information belongs in appendices.