

Writing College Essays in the U.S.

Some professors will expect you to use an “American Style” when writing your essays. Below are some ideas illustrating what the American Style of writing is like:

Directness: What is your main point? The American style of writing is usually very direct, while other cultures may be more indirect in writing. In American Style writing the problem or issue is stated at the beginning of the paper and then specific examples or evidence for this idea is written to support the issue.

Clear Examples: Use clear examples to show and/or explain your main point. After you have stated a problem, or opinion, it is important to give examples to support your point. You may be asked to provide examples from your own life. Personal experience is often seen as the strongest way to back up a point. When providing personal experience, you will be using the first person, “I.” In American Style essays, in contrast to essays written in some other cultures, the writer is expected and encouraged to use I—to tell stories from her own life to support her thesis.

Formatting: American Style essays are typically written in double-spaced paragraphs, using 12 point Times New Roman font. Each paragraph is indented 5 spaces at the beginning and continues for no more than half a page. Each paragraph should be used to develop a point. If you are using an outside quote, the quote should be introduced with a short statement saying who the person is that you are quoting and the source of the quote. Each quote should also be followed by a comment by you, tying the quote into the text.

Audience: Who is the audience of your paper? Professors may ask you to pretend that your classmates or those in your field are your audience when writing an American Style essay. If this is the case, you need to remember that your professor is also the audience so an appropriate formal tone should be used.

Citing Sources - Where did your ideas come from? Be certain to give reference in your papers to any ideas or direct quotes taken from someone else's writing. You may be asked to write in APA or MLA style. These styles maintain specific guidelines for referencing other author's works. To find out more go to [HYPERLINK "http://www.owl.purdue.edu"](http://www.owl.purdue.edu) ~~www.owl.purdue.edu~~ and click on “references” on the right.