

Helpful Hints for Writing the Take Home Questions

- 1. Make sure your tenses match.** If you have a singular subject (“person”), you should not have a plural pronoun (“they”). You should have a singular pronoun (“he or she”). And vice versa.
- 2. Define acronyms the first time you use them.** This should read, “American Psychological Association (APA),” not just “APA.” This should be done the first time you use an acronym in each answer, not the first time you use an acronym in the entire paper.
- 3. Use “who” and not “that” when referring to people.** Say “Psychologists who see clients,” not “Psychologists that see clients.”
- 4. Use the word *diagnosis* correctly.** Diagnosis is a noun—it is what you give someone. Diagnose is a verb—it is what you do to arrive at a diagnosis. So, you diagnose the client and write down his or her diagnosis. You do *not* diagnosis a client.
- 5. Be person-centered, not disease-centered.** We talk about people with depression, not depressed people.
- 6. Criteria is plural; criterion is singular.** So, we talk about one criterion and many criteria.
- 7. Your papers should be left justified, not fully justified.** Thus, there should be a ragged line on the right, not a nice straight line. There is a place for full justification; it is just not in APA style.
- 8. Authors for references should be listed in the order in which they appear, not alphabetical order.** So, the book I use for Abnormal Psychology is cited as Durand and Barlow, not as Barlow and Durand (which is a different textbook altogether). You list the authors this way in the reference section, too.
- 9. Do not directly quote from a lecture.** When you directly quote, you are supposed to give a page number (from a written source) or a paragraph number (from an electronic source) for the quote. However, it is difficult to do this for a lecture, unless it is transcribed in an electronic forum somewhere. But, it is simply easier to paraphrase lecture material.
- 10. Only indicate a page number if you directly quote from a source.** If you paraphrase, you only need to indicate authors(s) and year: “Grieve (2006)”.
- 11. It is better to paraphrase than quote.** A very important skill to have is the ability to succinctly summarize others’ work. Because I want you to hone this skill, I will take points off for direct quotes (usually 0.1 point for each direct quote). If you think the quote

is important, you can include it, but you had better be pretty darn sure that the quote improves the answer more than what I will deduct because of it.

12. Place the reference immediately after the material you gleaned from it. Often times, students want to reference material, but they misplace the reference. For example, this is an incorrect reference: “In the case study, Jenny exhibited a number of symptoms of depression, including anhedonia, fatigue, and suicidal ideation (Durand & Barlow, 2006).” In this case, the student wanted to reference that Durand and Barlow indicate that fatigue, anhedonia, and suicidal ideation are symptoms of depression. However, as it reads, it appears as though Durand and Barlow discuss the case of Jenny. A better approach would be this: “Anhedonia, fatigue, and suicidal ideation are symptoms of depression (Durand & Barlow, 2006). In the case study, Jenny exhibited these symptoms by...”

13. The plural of “psychologist” is “psychologists.” I think people forget the “s” at the end of psychologist because of the consonant blend at the end. However, you still need to add an “s” to make it plural. The same goes for “psychiatrist,” “optometrist,” and any other “ist” profession you know.

14. Do not use contractions. Professional writing avoids contractions such as “don’t,” “isn’t,” and “can’t.” Take the extra time and spell out the words. Also, you should avoid using texting contractions such as “U” for “you.”

15. When writing, use APA style numbers. Thus, you spell out numbers nine and lower and you use Arabic numerals for numbers 10 and greater.

16. You should answer a question in more than one paragraph. The questions I include are usually complex questions. Therefore, they should not be answered in only a single paragraph. Doing so generally does not earn full credit for the answer. Therefore, unless the question is obviously a single-word or sentence answer, provide a lengthy answer to the questions. Further, it still only counts as a single paragraph if you write one very long (say, page length) paragraph. In this case, you should break your long paragraph into at least two to three shorter ones.

17. Use “feel” to refer to emotions and “think” or “believe” to refer to thoughts. It is common vernacular to use “feel” to refer to thoughts, such as “I feel like having a burger.” However, as good Cognitive-Behaviorists in training, we want to get into the habit of distinguishing between thoughts and emotions. Thus, to be consistent, I teach clients (and students) to also distinguish between the two. Which means, we think we would like to have a burger and we feel happy that we were able to get one.

18. Appropriately use “which” and “that.” “That” clauses (called restrictive clauses) are essential to the meaning of sentences; “which” clauses are not essential (called nonrestrictive clauses) and add further information to the sentence. Also, when using “which,” it is set off by a comma.

19. Do not end a sentence in a preposition. This is poor form. You can always rewrite a sentence to eliminate the preposition at the end.

20. Use “empathic” and not “empathetic.” Yes, both words mean the same thing. However, I like empathic better because I am not pathetic.

21. Discuss in more than a single paragraph. There are very few times when I expect a single paragraph for an answer. Unless explicitly specified, you should understand that I want you to provide answers to questions or to sections that are more than a one paragraph in length.