

# Discipline-Specific Writing Guide: Nursing

## Emphasized Writing Skills and Typical Assignments

Most nursing papers involve literature reviews. Students must **gather and synthesize information**, **analyze** it, and determine its **practice implications**. Other necessary writing skills include **introducing** their papers and **summarizing**.

## Some Key Questions to Guide Writing

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## Preferred Patterns of Organization and Use of Headings

Most nursing papers follow the **introduction, body, conclusion** format. The papers should use **APA (6th edition) style headings and subheadings**, following the topics outlined in the thesis statement. Each section should contain transitions between paragraphs and a summary paragraph. Paragraphs should also be properly organized, containing topic and summary sentences.

## Preferred Style or Tone

Nursing students should write **formal** papers. Most assignments, especially scientific papers, should be written in third-person. Reflective papers and those written from the unitary paradigm may be written in first-person, but should still be formal. Some APA standards include:

- APA writers should use the **active voice** and only sparingly use first-person, if necessary, but should be careful that first-person statements do not interfere with their objectivity.
- **Previous research** should be discussed in **past** or **present perfect tense** (*have/has + verb form*, e.g., “Smith’s study *has changed* perceptions”).
- **Results** should be discussed in **present tense** (e.g. “the results of the experiment indicate that”).

## **Important Notes about Terminology**

Terminology varies depending on the theoretical and methodological frameworks students utilize. Qualitative researchers tend to describe results as “supporting” a theory or providing more understanding of a topic. In quantitative research, more statistical terms are used, such as “support/reject,” “fail to support,” “refute,” “reject,” “fail to reject,” and “null hypothesis.” Students should not use the terms “prove” or “disprove.” APA currently refers to humans as “participants” in studies and to animals as “subjects.”

## **Favored Research Methodologies**

**Empirical investigations** using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are employed in the nursing field.

## **Authoritative Sources/Evidence**

**Scholarly articles from peer reviewed journals** are the most authoritative sources in the nursing program.

## **Documentation Style**

APA (American Psychological Association) 6th edition

## **Master’s Level Writing**

Graduate nursing students’ writing should demonstrate **depth of analysis** and **ability to synthesize**.

*Samples of nursing assignments are available for review in the Writing Center.*