Discipline-Specific Writing Guide: Nutrition

Emphasized Writing Skills and Typical Assignments

Nutrition students are expected to develop **clear, concise writing** appropriate for a **scientific** discipline. Some assignments include critiquing published research papers, writing a nutrition article for a popular media source, and conducting and writing about an original research project. Assignments focus on **reason and logic**, **analysis**, and **evaluation**. Literature reviews require **synthesis** of information. Students must also demonstrate ability to:

- develop persuasive arguments with appropriate supporting evidence
- summarize and paraphrase, rather than quote
- explain the relevance of their topics to the field
- make recommendations for future studies

Some Key Questions to Guide Writing

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Patterns of Organization and Use of Headings

Some nutrition papers may be organized into a basic intro, body, conclusion format with no headers. Other assignments require headings according to AMA style and standard scientific research sections such as **introduction**, **background or literature review**, **hypothesis**, **methods**, **results**, **discussion**, and **conclusion**.

Preferred Style or Tone

- Most nutrition papers should be **objective** and contain arguments based on **scientific** evidence.
- Students should **paraphrase and avoid direct quotes**, unless they wish to use the authors' specific definitions or original labels.
- **Previous studies**, methods, and results should be described in **past tense** (e.g."anxiety decreased significantly").
- **Currently accepted facts and results** should be discussed in **present tense** (e.g. "the results of the experiment indicate that").

Important Notes about Terminology

Nutrition students are encouraged to use acronyms to abbreviate longer key phrases after introducing the phrase and acronym once. For example, "essential fatty acid" can be written as "EFA."

Favored Research Methodologies

A variety of **empirical research** designs are valued in the field of nutrition. Qualitative and quantitative methods are both accepted, and researchers may use a number of different designs, such as case studies, surveys, biochemical tests, and experiments.

Authoritative Sources/Evidence

In the field of nutrition, **scientific research published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals** is the most authoritative source.

Documentation Style

AMA (American Medical Association)

Samples of Popular Press Article assignments are available for review in the Writing Center.

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