



Victory Bible College
Academic Standards

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This Ain't High School!

If this is your first year in college, you may notice a change in expectations where written assignments are concerned. Simply put, "This ain't high school", and what passed for an "A" paper *there*, may not earn you an "A" in college. The purpose of this booklet is to outline what will be required of you in your written assignments at VBCI.

So, what sets a paper apart as "College-Level Writing"?

1. Quality of Research

- Use multiple resources. Quote from several. (This, of course, excludes summary-style book reports, where you only ***have*** one source)
- Find at least three sources that back up your position.
- Make sure you use proper citations.

2. Level of Thought / Understanding

- Don't just regurgitate what you heard in class. (This happens a lot! If I get my own thoughts back, I'll give myself 100%. You, on the other hand, will get a zero.)
- Don't just give me the thoughts of others, either – (the authors of your source books). Do some thinking on your own!
- Gather information. Read your sources to gain understanding. Then out of that understanding, write your paper.
- Sound and systematic arguments – Your instructors will be looking for several things:
 - A "Thesis" or Claim – something that makes the reader say, "That's interesting! I'd like to know more". (This is found in your introduction.)
 - Evidence – or reasons for your claim. Why should the reader agree with you, or think that your thesis is plausible?
 - Response to objections – Since your reader won't have the opportunity to ask questions, endeavor to answer his questions before they are asked.
 - Imagine that you're discussing your topic with someone who is interested in your ideas but will not agree with you, simply "because you said it". Speak as you'd speak to someone who wants to hear your reasoning and wants to hear answers to their objections.

3. Attention to Detail

- This includes formatting, spelling, grammar, appearance, etc.
- MS Word includes both spell-check and grammar-check functions. Don't ignore them.
- Use Linking Words – If you have many short sentences in your paper, link some of them together using words like “however, therefore, because, nevertheless, although”, etc.
- Be concise! Cut out the “fluff” – make every word count. (It's possible to reach your word count, yet still get a poor mark on your paper because most of it is “fluff”.)

4. Accuracy of the Assignment

- Start by looking carefully at the wording of the assignment. Did you answer the “question” that the instructor was asking?
- If you're not sure what your instructor is looking for... ask.

Steps in Writing a Paper

I. Pre-Writing

- Make sure you clearly understand the assignment
- Gather Information – It's wise to complete your research before starting the writing process. (Writing before the research is complete can result in a paper with weak, poorly formed arguments.)
- Go through your sources, and mark with a highlighter, everything you find that is relevant to the assignment. Then, re-read the highlighted sections to gain the “general sense” of what you've discovered.
- Try to categorize your quotes according to how they might support the different points of your outline.

II. Outlining & First Draft

- Next you'll want to create an outline for your paper.
- On a piece of paper, start to outline the following sections:
 - Introduction – The introduction tells the reader what you're about to say.

- Body – In the body, you say it. This is your “argument”, and it should logically prove your thesis. Outline your main points and arrange them into a logical sequence.
- Conclusion – In your conclusion you’ll want to say what you’ve just said. (Restate the thesis in different words, reminding the reader what you had said in each section of the paper.)
- Write the first draft of your paper.

III. Reviewing & Revising

- If possible, set the paper aside for a day or two. Then come back and reread your paper with “fresh eyes”.
- Do you need to ...
 - Explain something more clearly?
 - Add more details?
 - Rearrange the order?
- Did you fulfill all of the requirements of the assignment?
- Rework sections until they are strong and sound “polished”.
- Step III may be repeated several times.
- Print your final draft.

Marking Standards for Written Assignments

The Grade of A (90-100)

Summary Style Book Report: The student has skillfully “captured the essence” of each chapter of the book. The points are well articulated and concise. He/she summarized the book, but did not plagiarize.

Critiques/Essays/Research Papers: The “A-level” student has internalized the material, and has moved beyond mere “regurgitation of facts” to display a clear understanding of the subject.

The A-paper has moved beyond adequacy to excellence. The thesis/concept may be more original or interesting, and the evidence is detailed and fully persuasive. The reasoning is thoughtful, the organization clear, and the presentation flows naturally from point to point.

The A-paper fulfills its purpose with excellence.

The Grade of B (80-89):

A grade of B implies sound thinking and a competent level of intellectual performance. “B-level” work is, on the whole, clear, precise, and well-reasoned, but does not display the same depth of insight as A-level work.

The B-paper fulfills the assignment. It meets all of the requirements concerning length and organization and presents a sound central idea supported by relevant, adequately presented evidence.

The Grade of C (70-79)

C-level work is *inconsistent* in its clarity, precision, and reasoning. Concepts are presented at a level which may imply insufficient comprehension of the material. The C-paper fulfills the assignment requirements overall, but lacks the quality of a “B” or an “A” paper.

The Grade of D (60-69)

D-level work represents thinking that is *typically* unclear, imprecise, or poorly reasoned.

The D-paper does not fulfill its stated purpose. Its reasoning is fundamentally flawed or inadequately supported. The evidence presented is lacking, irrelevant or incorrect.

The Grade of F (< 60)

"F-level" work represents thinking that is *seriously* unclear, imprecise, or poorly reasoned.

An F-paper falls seriously short of stated requirements. The thesis and reasoning are poor, virtually no evidence is presented, and the organization is haphazard. The paper moves in several directions with no clear flow, and grammatical errors hinder clarity and basic communication.

Types of Papers

There are primarily four types of papers you'll be required to write as a student at Victory Bible College.

- Summary Style Book Reports
- Book Critiques
- Essays
- Research Papers

This concise guide will help you to understand the difference between them.

Writing a “Summary Style Book Report”

The “summary style” book report is the least complex paper you’ll be asked to write at VBCI. (It’s unlikely that you will see one beyond your first year.) It should include the following components:

Introduction

- Your introduction will include basic information about the book and a sense of what your paper will be about. Begin with a strong introductory sentence that will capture your reader’s attention. Somewhere in your first paragraph, you should state the book’s title (underlined) and the author’s name.
- In the introduction, you “say what you’re *going* to say”. In the Body, you “say it”. And, in the conclusion, you “say what you’ve just said”.

Body

- The body of a summary-style book report starts by summarizing each chapter concisely. Divide the length required (for example, 2000 words), by the number of chapters in the book. (If there are 10 chapters in the book, then you have nearly 200 words to devote to each chapter.) I say “nearly” two hundred, because you’ll have to “save” some words for the Personal Application and Conclusion.

Personal Application

- Write 1-2 paragraphs discussing how the book impacted you. Were you bored, inspired, enriched, challenged, or confused? Has the book affected how you will think about the topic in the future? How and why?

Conclusion

- The conclusion brings the essay to an end. It summarizes the main points that were already discussed. The conclusion should not introduce any new ideas that did not appear in the body, but neither should it be flat and boring. Try to leave a memorable impression on the reader.

Writing a Book “Critique”

What is a Critique?

A critique is a paper that gives a critical *assessment* of a book or article.

Primarily, a critique does two things:

1. It states the author's purpose (as you see it).
2. It evaluates how well, in your opinion, the author has succeeded in fulfilling his/her purpose.

A critique is not a book report or summary. A short summary of the book's content may be justified as a part of the process, but it should not be the main portion of your critique.

Before You Write

- Begin by reading the book and take notes as you read.
- Note the author's main point / thesis statement. (Usually gleaned from the first chapter.)
- Divide the book into sections of thought and write a summary of each section in your own words.

Ask Yourself the Following Questions

- What is the author's main purpose? Is it clearly expressed?
- Does the author give enough evidence to support his conclusions?
- How much does the book agree or disagree with your own views?
- Were your views and opinions challenged by the text?

- How persuasive is the author in getting you to agree with his position? If he/she is not persuasive, why does the author fail?
- Is the organizational plan clear and easy to follow?
- Could you follow the developments of the arguments that were made? What made it easy or difficult to follow?
- What is your overall reaction to the text?

Writing the Critique

Once you've answered the preceding questions, you're ready to begin writing.

- Begin with an introductory paragraph that identifies the author's name, book title and author's thesis statement. (Main point.)
- Summarize the main points of the book. What are the author's main points that back up his thesis statement? What is his conclusion?
- Review and evaluate the book's *content*, using the questions in the previous section.
- Review the author's *style*. Was his writing clear? Is the book well written? Was he successful or unsuccessful in proving his point?
- Describe your overall reaction to the book. How did it affect you?
- Write a conclusion summarizing the main points of your review.

Writing an Essay or Research Paper

What's the Difference Between an Essay and a Research Paper?

An **essay** is a short paper written on a specific topic. When you are assigned an essay, your instructor expects you to give your view of the topic, supported by outside sources (if required). The number of sources depends on the length of the paper and your teacher's instructions. Three would be a good starting point.

A **research paper** differs from an essay, in that "research" takes the front seat. The bulk of the student's learning takes place in the research phase, not the writing phase.

Here's a quick comparison:

The Research Paper

Focuses on others' points of view

Usually 8 pages or more

Requires comprehensive understanding of the topic

The writer compares various sources on the topic and compiles and evaluates the information. The writer then restructures the information and presents it from his own point of view.

Builds the writer's understanding of a topic.

The Essay

Focuses on your own point of view

Shorter in length – a few paragraphs

Does not require comprehensive understanding of the topic

The writer hones their writing skills by presenting their thoughts in a logical manner

Builds the author's writing skills.

Writing a Research Paper

- Make yourself an expert on the subject. Read several books that pertain to your topic. Visit the library. Utilize the internet. Take notes, and immerse yourself in the thoughts of others.
- Hint: When taking notes, don't forget to record *where* you found the information. You'll need this when you're doing your Bibliography.
- While using the internet, try different search words. Enter the same concept using different words and phrases. If you're getting too many hits, enter fewer words. If you're getting too few hits, enter more words.
- Learn to skim books. Skim the table of contents looking for chapters that may be relevant. Read the first few pages of several chapters to see if the information is what you're looking for.
- Glean a little information from a lot of sources.

Analysis

- Now that you have a good knowledge base, begin to compare the *content* of the books you have just read. Which books made the best arguments? Which came to the best conclusions? Which arguments were best backed by Scripture? Write down key points you want to include.

Brainstorming

- What "main point" will you choose for your paper? What do you want the reader to walk away with? What do you want them to learn? Think from several angles. How can you be the greatest blessing?

The Thesis Statement

- Your thesis statement acts as the main assertion of your paper, and usually appears near the end of the introduction. The thesis expresses in one sentence, the purpose of your essay.
- Pick your best idea, and construct a sentence that informs the reader of "where you're going" and why.

Outline

- "Sketch out" your paper. What material will you present? What order will it be in? Create main headings, and use bullet points to describe what

information will be covered under each heading. With a good outline, the paper practically writes itself.

Introduction

- You're finally ready to begin writing your paper. Your introduction should grab the reader's interest, set the stage, and get to the heart of the matter quickly. Remember: In the introduction, you "say what you're *going* to say". In the Body, you "say it". And, in the conclusion, you "say what you've just said".

Body

- This comprises the bulk of your paper. The key elements to remember here are: Say it. Support it. Explain why it matters.

Conclusion

- The conclusion brings the essay to an end. It summarizes the main points that were already discussed. It should not introduce any new ideas that did not appear in the body, but neither should it be flat and boring. Try to leave a memorable impression on the reader.

VBCI Writing Standards

All papers submitted for grading at VBCI must conform to the following format:

Title Page

- Every paper submitted must include a title page which should appear as follows:

TITLE OF PAPER

**By
Student's Name**

Date

(Capitals, Bold)

An Essay (or "Summary Style Book Report" or "Research Paper")
Presented to Victory Bible College
Calgary, Alberta

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For

Name of Class

Instructor's Name

Paper Formatting

As you reach the higher levels of your educational journey, you will be required to format your paper according to proper thesis writing standards. Since you will eventually be required to adhere to these standards, it only makes sense to get used to them now. There are primarily two formats that are acceptable for papers submitted at Victory Bible College:

- the Turabian style. (reference: "A Manual for Writers" by Kate Turabian, Eighth Edition), and
- the APA style

Which Style Should Be Used?:

At the undergraduate level, the required format for all papers will be the Turabian style.

At the Master's and Doctorate levels:

- Theology students will be required to use the Turabian format
- Christian Counselling students will be given the option of using either format. The differences are outlined below:

A) Turabian Formatting - Quick Guide

1) Formatting

- 1" margins
- Times New Roman (size 12 font)
- Double-spaced (see exceptions on p. 375 of the "A Manual for Writers" by Kate Turabian, Eighth Edition.)
Some exceptions include block quotes, figure captions, footnotes, bibliographies, and reference lists.
- Do not number the title page if it is the only front matter. If there is a table of contents and/or other front matter, the title page will be page i (see p. 386 of the "A Manual for Writers" by Kate Turabian, Eighth Edition.)

2) Main Body - Headings

Here is one plan for five levels of headings; however, you may create your own format (see p. 398). *Please adhere to professor guidelines at all times.

- **First level:** centered, boldface or italic type, headline-style capitalization
- **Second level:** centered, regular type, headline-style capitalization
- **Third level:** flush left, boldface or italic type, headline-style capitalization
- **Fourth level:** flush left, roman type, sentence-style capitalization
- **Fifth level:** run in at beginning of paragraph (no blank line after, boldface or italic type, sentence-style capitalization, terminal period

3) Footnotes

All essays and research papers must include footnotes. Footnotes are used to give credit to the *source* of any material quoted, summarized or paraphrased.

Choose **one style!** Be aware of your professor's preference. (see p. 137).

- When referring to a source whose bibliographical data are in the footnote prior, use *ibid.* to shorten the citation (p. 155)
- Since the Bible is considered a sacred work, cite it in footnotes, not the bibliography.

Footnotes are placed at the *bottom of the page* on which the quotes are made.

- Book with a single author or editor
Note Number. Author's First and Last Names, *Title of Book: Subtitle of Book* (Place of Publication: Publisher's Name, Date of Publication), XX-XX.
- Book with multiple authors
Note Number. Author #1's First and Last Names and Author #2's First and Last Names, *Title of Book: Subtitle of Book* (Place of Publication: Publisher's Name, Date of Publication), XX-XX.
- Journal Article in Print
Note Number: Author's First and Last Names, "Title of Article: Subtitle of Article," *Title of Journal* Volume Number (Date of Publication): XX-XX.
- Journal Article Online
Note Number. Author's First and Last Names, "Title of Article: Subtitle of Article," *Title of Journal* Volume Number (Date of Publication), under "Descriptive Locator," accessed date, URL.

- Some examples of proper footnotes:

¹ Billy Graham, *The Billy Graham Christian Worker's Manual* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1981), p. 204-205

² Selwyn Hughes, *The Christian Counsellor's Pocket Guide* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1977), p. 35

4) Citation Style for Referencing Sources (Bibliography)

All essays and research papers must include a bibliography. *Any* material that you use, from *whatever source*, must be noted at the back of the paper in the bibliography. It is not necessary that you quote from every source in the bibliography—what is important is that you give credit to the authors and writers whose material may have influenced your thinking, or contributed to your ideas or arguments.

Style

- Use active voice.
- There are two citation styles in the Turabian format:
 - Bibliography Style and
 - Reference-List Style

a) Bibliography style

- Book with a single author or editor
Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. *Title of Book: Subtitle of Book.* Place of Publication: Publisher's Name, Date of Publication.
- Book with multiple authors
Author #1's Last Name, Author #1's First name, and Author #2's First and Last Names. *Title of Book: Subtitle of Book.* Place of Publication: Publisher's Name, Date of Publication.
- Journal Article in Print
Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Article: Subtitle of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume Number (Date of Publication): YY-YY.

- Journal Article Online
Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Article: Subtitle of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume Number (Date of Publication). Accessed Date. URL.

b) Reference list-style

- In reference list-style, there is one general form used:
Last Name, First Name. Year Published. *Title of book: Subtitle of book.*
Publication City: Publisher.

Choose **one style!** Be aware of your professor's preference. (see p. 137).

B) APA Formatting - Quick Guide

Master's and Doctoral-level students in the Christian Counselling program are permitted to use APA Formatting. Indeed, for Counselling Students, it is the more common format in Health Science fields like Psychology. Be sure to follow the standard you choose carefully and consistently—do not interchange them or attempt to use both!

1) Formatting

- 1" margins
- Times New Roman size 12 font
- Double-spaced
- Left-aligned running head at the top of every page in caps; include "Running head" before the title
On subsequent pages, include the title without the words "Running head."

2) Style

- Use active voice.
- Be specific and concise; avoid poetic and figurative language.
- Use past or present perfect tense for literature reviews and description, if the discussion is of past events. Use past tense when referring to results and experiments previously conducted. (see pp. 65-66)

3) Title Page

- Running head and page number in title
- Center the Title, Your Name, and the Institution Name in the upper-middle of the page.

4) Abstract

- Should be on the second page of the document and contain running head and page number.
- The word "Abstract" should be centered on the first line.
- Brief, comprehensive summary of paper about 150-250 words.
- Do not indent the first line.
- The abstract is not an introduction and will not contain any citations; see pp. 25-27 for what types of information to include.

5) Main Body

Headings

- APA uses headings to separate paper sections. Always use headings in order, beginning with level 1.
- For each section, include at least two subsection headings or none at all (see p. 62)
 - **First level:** centered, boldface, uppercase and lowercase heading
 - **Second level:** left-aligned, boldface, uppercase and lowercase heading
 - **Third level:** indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period
 - **Fourth level:** indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period
 - **Fifth level:** indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period

6) References

In-Text Citations

- Used whenever another author's work is directly quoted or paraphrased
- Citations use an author, date format: (Author, Publication Year)
- Citation for direct quotes should include the page number
- Any quotation longer than 39 words should be made into a freestanding block of text with quotation marks removed (see p. 171)
- If no author is given, use a shortened version of the title

- If publication date is unknown, use "n.d." in its place
- For electronic sources that don't include page numbers, use paragraph numbers (see pp. 171-172)
- For works with three or more authors, list all in the first citation. For subsequent citations, list the first author and "et al."
- Two types of sources are cited only in-text: classical works and personal communications. The Bible is considered a classical book in APA. When citing in-text, include the reference and version used. (see pp. 171-174)

Reference List

NOTE: The second line and all subsequent lines of each item on the reference list should be indented. The reference list should be double spaced.

- **Book**

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle*. Location: Publisher.

- **Article in a periodical**

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical, volume number*

(issue number), pages.

- **Article from an online periodical**

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Online Periodical, volume number*

(issue number if available). Retrieved from
<http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

- **Website**

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of document.
 Retrieved from

<http://Web address>

Policy Regarding Plagiarism & Cheating

Unless otherwise indicated by their instructor, students should assume that all course work /assignments are to be completed individually (without help from another individual).

DEFINITIONS:

Plagiarism: Copying (in whole or in part) from any material(s) that did not originate with the student himself/herself (without documenting the source).

Cheating: Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the following:

a) Copying another student's work.

b) Possessing material during a test that could be used for cheating (ie – notes written on the hands or some other part of the body, pieces of paper, etc). Such actions will be considered as cheating (whether or not the student actually uses the material).

THE POLICY:

Penalties: The penalty for plagiarism/cheating is a grade of zero for that assignment. In such cases, there will be no possibility of revising the assignment or doing an alternate assignment. ALL instances of plagiarism will be retained permanently in the student's file. The disciplinary action for repeated offenses may include suspension, expulsion, or (if the plagiarism comes to light after graduation) even the revocation of a diploma or degree.

Please Note: VBCI randomly runs assignments through plagiarism detection software to help deter and detect plagiarism.

Occasionally an instructor may suspect that a student has plagiarized, but the instructor is unable to locate the source text(s). This can occur when the assignment under suspicion presents content and/or a writing style different from or superior to other work presented by the student. In such instances the instructor will notify the academic dean who will discuss the matter with the student.