

# *The Portable Editor*

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## **Tip 1. Making Lists and Checking Them Twice: APA Style**

Seriation (i.e., arrangement of items in a list or series) helps writers clearly communicate key points or ideas through the use of alphabetized, numbered, or bulleted lists. How the content is organized determines how the list is structured.

**To list items within a sentence**, use lowercase letters enclosed in parentheses:

**Example 1.** The MSW degree is designed to prepare students for (a) direct agency-based practice, (b) management of nonprofit and public agencies, (c) community practice, and (d) leadership positions in the social work profession.

**To list key ideas or points in a series of complete sentences** (or complete paragraphs), use Arabic numerals followed by a period. The number and first line are indented a ½ inch, and the subsequent lines wrap back to the margin. Allow one space between the number and the text. In other words, don't use Word's automatic numbering format!

**Example 2.** Critics cited the following reasons for opposing the "anti-bullying" bill:

1. Equal protection should be for all individuals, and group classification creates an environment in which specific groups get special protection.
2. Sexual orientation does not belong in the group classification because unlike other characteristics such as gender and race, sexual orientation can be changed.
3. Adding sexual orientation to the group classification forces society as a whole to accept what opponents believe is a morally unacceptable lifestyle.

However, numerals can suggest an unintended ranking of importance among the itemized ideas; therefore, **writers may prefer to use bullet points**, which follow the same format rules as numbered lists. Use small round or square bullet points; do not use check marks, fleur-de-lis, or arrows.

**Example 3.** Critics cited the following reasons for opposing the "anti-bullying" bill:

- Equal protection should be for all individuals, and group classification creates an environment in which specific groups get special protection.
- Sexual orientation does not belong in the group classification because unlike other characteristics such as gender, disability and race, sexual orientation can be changed.

APA also allows the use of **bullets to separate three or more elements in a list within a sentence**. Just make sure the listed items are written and punctuated as a complete sentence.

**Example 4.** The mission of the School of Social Work is to

- expand knowledge regarding social problems and programs;
- to educate social workers for advanced practice; and
- to provide leadership in the development of socially and economically just policies and programs that strengthen individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

## Tip 2. Parallel Structure

Parallel structure helps eliminate confusion in your writing by using the same pattern of words (e.g., same verb form) to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. Faulty parallelism can result in illogical comparisons and sentences that lack rhythm and order.

*For example:*

**Not Parallel:** Sarah enjoys skating, hiking, and to stroll down country lanes.

**Parallel:** Sarah enjoys **skating, hiking, and strolling** down country lanes. [Repeats *-ing* verb form]

**Not Parallel:** John's main stressors include school, his boss, and staying healthy.

**Parallel:** John's main stressors include **his school work, his boss, and his health.** [Parallel structure created through repetition of possessive pronoun "his."]

If the same verb form cannot be used, create parallel structure by repeating clauses with the same word pattern.

**Not Parallel:** Students were told to make sure to leave adequate time in class to complete the quiz, read the next chapter in their textbook, and then start an outline for their final written paper.

**Parallel:** Students were told **that** they should make sure that they have adequate class time to complete the quiz, **that** they should read the next chapter in their textbook, and **that** they should start an outline for their final written paper. [Repeats "that"]

**Not Parallel [Incomplete comparison]:** Studies show that victims of bullying have higher school absences, reduced academic achievement, more problematic behavior, and increasingly face the risk of drop out before graduating from high school.

**Parallel [Complete comparison]:** Studies that have compared students who are bullied with their nonbullied peers have shown that victims of bullying have lower rates of academic achievement, more school absences, more behavior problems, and more risk of school drop out.

### Do you suffer from Colonmustus?

Many writers insist on inserting a colon before every list. Remember— when used correctly—an independent clause (i.e., could function as a complete sentence) precedes a colon.

**Not Parallel [Improper Colon Use]:** Social workers assist military veterans in various ways, including: as counselors for individuals or families, helping with end-of-life planning, to identify and refer to treatment facilities for substance abuse, and as trained crisis interventionists.

**Parallel [Correct Colon Use]:** Social workers assist military veterans in four important areas: offering individual and group counseling, addressing issues related to end-of-life planning, referring clients to substance abuse treatment programs, and providing crisis intervention for veterans or their families.

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### Looking for Writing Support?

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- Check out the resources on <http://ssw.unc.edu/students/writing>
- Drop-in Support: Tuesdays, Noon — 2 p.m., Office 548e
- Contact the Writing Support Team (i.e., Susan White, Diane Wyant, Cathy Bryson) for an appointment or help via e-mail/phone at [SOSWwritingsupport@gmail.com](mailto:SOSWwritingsupport@gmail.com)

