

# Writing Advice

Effective Writing Center



# UMUC

Dear Student,

Congratulations on your progress in writing this assignment for criminal justice. You have a lot of great information on drug and alcohol abuse. There is much to cover in your paper and you did a nice job presenting each area.

My name is Michelle, and it is my pleasure to work with you today. I have been a Writing Advisor for over a year and love working with so many diverse students on a daily basis. You might find this surprising, but I learn a lot from you too! I work with students from every major, therefore; I have acquired a lot of knowledge about every discipline! ☺ While I learn about your particular assignment topic, my main goal is to present you with writing skills that you can carry with you throughout your entire college career.

You are welcome to come to the Effective Writing Center for help at any stage in the writing process, whether you are having trouble understanding an assignment or want feedback on a rough draft. At the EWC we are attentive readers who help you improve as a writer by explaining and modeling effective writing skills. For a more detailed discussion of our services, please consult [the EWC Web site](#).

## PLEASE NOTE

- *Advisors may not be experts in the topic your paper covers.*
- *Advisors will not make any judgment about the grade your paper may receive.*
- *Advisors do not copyedit papers. The advisor will use sections of your paper to model editing you should do.*
- *Advisors know only as much about the assignment as you have shared. Please provide an assignment description in the submission form.*

## Advice Overview

Resources to help you revise your writing assignment are hyperlinked within this letter and in the [Resources](#) section at the end. If you have time, I would like you to read your paper again before reading this advice. Since sending your paper in to the Writing Center, you have had a break from it and reading it again will allow you to connect with what you have written. My suggestions and advice will make more sense if the material is fresh in your mind. Thank you!

## Assignment Requirements

According to your assignment guidelines, you are to write a paper about why people get addicted to drugs and provide intervention strategies. I will be giving you advice in all areas of your paper. We will be going over APA citation style as well, so that you can revise your reference page and your in text citations.

## Thesis & Organization

### ***Thesis Development:***

The thesis statement is the most important area of your paper. It should express your point or argument clearly, in the last sentence of your introduction paragraph. Thesis statements always have an academic tone, so they should not include wording such as: “In this paper I will,” or “The point of this paper.” Here is an example of a well written thesis statement: “Although many might disagree, the death penalty is a just method of repaying criminals that have murdered or committed horrendous crimes.” This thesis has a clear argument. If you are not arguing a point, but writing more of a research paper, your thesis would look something like this: “When making steps to improve children’s lives, adults must examine their health and wellbeing, family dynamics, and quality of education.” If this thesis statement was used, the body of the paper would discuss health and wellbeing, family dynamics, and quality of education.

Your thesis statement reads: “There are a variety of drug intervention strategies that can aid in the fight against drugs.” This thesis needs some more detailed focus to let your reader know exactly what your main points will be. In this assignment, you have to jobs: to present the reasons why people turn to drugs and to present ways to rehabilitate. I notice that throughout your paper you talk about each drug and the physical effects. You talk about some of the reasons why people turn to drugs. You touch very briefly about intervention and rehabilitation strategies. In order to develop your paper so that it flows around one focal point (your thesis) you must really examine the assignment requirements and then revolve your thesis statement around the requirement. Now, if you are going to present intervention strategies, pick three main ones and include them in your thesis statement, so that your reader knows you will talk about these three. On the same token, pick some main reasons why people turn to drugs and try to incorporate that in your thesis statement. You want your thesis statement to be as focused as possible and the rest of your paper should be spent proving your thesis statement. If you have any questions on thesis statements, please visit:

[The Writing Center UNC](#)

### ***Introduction Development:***

Your introduction has three jobs: 1) grab attention on your topic 2) present general information on your topic (citation or quote free) and 3) ease into a focused thesis statement. The first sentence should be an attention grabber. Whether you use a statistic, quote, or shocking rhetorical question, the point is to gain some interest from your audience.

You begin your introduction with the following sentence: “In today’s society both legal and illegal drug use has almost become a norm in society.” This beginning sentence is

good, but I think you could take it a step further. Your audience will be more shocked or your statement will be much stronger if you provide a statistic on how many people are using drugs. Providing a statistic or quote from the beginning helps grab attention and make your audience more interested in what you will talk about. The rest of your introduction should lead smoothly into your focused thesis statement. If you have any questions about your introduction, please visit:

[UMUC Audio Tutorial: Introductions](#)

## Development & Research

### ***Paragraph Development:***

Paragraphs are many sentences dealing with a single topic that should possess clarity, unity, and a clear topic sentence to begin every new paragraph. Each of your paragraphs should stick to one topic and ease smoothly into the next paragraph.

Your paragraph sizes are consistent and each one stays on topic. Nice job on this. As I was discussing with you before, your paragraphs should support your thesis statement. Since you do not have a focused thesis yet, your essay is in no certain order. Each paragraph mentions a different drug and the physical effects these drugs have on peoples' health. This is interesting, but I wonder if you should have more about the reasons and more about drug intervention strategies. You will want to examine your paragraphs over again and really ask yourself if you think you are answering your professor's questions for this assignment. If there are some missing links, you will want to add some material that helps support the guidelines of this assignment. You will also want to work on using transition in your topic sentences. We will go over this now. If you have any questions on writing paragraphs, please visit:

[UMUC Audio Tutorials: Paragraphs](#)

### ***Transitions:***

Transitions hold our ideas together, connecting sentences and paragraphs. Transitions are needed to help your reader understand and connect to your ideas in a logical way. We also use transitions to help explain a relationship, whether it is compare and contrast or cause and effect. One of the most common places to include transition is in topic sentences. Here is an example of a smooth topic sentence: "Consequently, the character in the movie did end up moving away." This is a vague example, but shows the tone you want to achieve at the beginning of your new paragraphs.

Here is an example of one of your topic sentences: "Steroids have become the drug of choice for most athletes in order to improve their endurance and performance." When you read this sentence aloud, do you think it sounds a bit abrupt? You want all of your topic sentences to begin with smoothness and ease into your new paragraph. Sometimes rearranging the sentence or adding transition words can really change your sentence into a much better sounding one. Try to incorporate the ideas in the



sentence highlighted in gray above to all of your topic sentences. If you have any questions about transitions, please visit:

[UMUC Audio Tutorial: Transitions](#)

### ***Conclusion Development:***

Some important points to remember when writing your conclusion include:

- A brief summary of main points.
- Restatement of thesis in different chosen words.
- Result or consequence of what you have written about.

Your conclusion gives more of a glimpse about why drug users become addicted to drugs than the body of your paper does. You want your conclusion to match your thesis and your body. It should be a revisit to your focused thesis and restate your main points in different words. I think this will be easier for you to develop once you have narrowed down your thesis and know exactly what you will cover. I know that this is a subject that allows for many different areas to cover! If you have any questions on conclusions, please visit:

[UMUC Audio Tutorial: Conclusions](#)



## Formatting & Citations

I notice that you are having difficulty with APA citation style. I can see that this is your citation choice because you have titled your last page “reference” which usually indicates APA style. In APA, you need to have the author and date of publication in parenthesis with a period after the parenthesis. I notice that you are putting the period after the sentence in place of after the citation. Here is an example: **CBS News reports that “coffee is one of the fastest acting drugs known to man.” (Caffeine Nation, 2003)** Your period should go after the parenthesis and you should have the last name of the author here. If you do not have the last name, then you can present one main word in the title of the piece. In addition, if you have presented quoted material (like this) you should include the page number after the year of publication, if you have it.

Here is one of your sentences: **One theory for this is escape. Writer Ben Whitaker commented that, “the contemporary expansion of drug use is a warning signal of weakness and faults within our society.”** The first sentence is a bit choppy and should include more words to make it complete. In addition, you should have a citation here because you are taking Whitaker’s words and quoting them. You should have a year of publication in parenthesis after any quoted material with a page number if you have one.

I am going to give you some information here on APA. My suggestion would be to read it all over. You had asked about your reference page. You are right. Many websites have different suggestions. When in doubt about this, you need to ask your professor what way he or she prefers it to be. This is the only way to be truly sure you are doing it correctly. I do have a sample reference page below for you to look over and model after.

### [APA Sample Paper](#)

<http://www.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/APAsample.pdf>

It would be helpful to you if you printed this sample paper out so you can refer to it now and for future papers.

A general tip to keep in mind with APA is the in- text style, which is:

You will want to cite your sources in the body of your paper by including parenthesis at the end of the author's piece with the author's last name and the year the work was published. Example: (Bowman, 2006). Or, if there are page numbers involved, you would cite it like this: (Bowman, 2006, 6).

There are different ways to cite journal articles, books, and internet sources in a reference page, which is at the end of your paper. It is important to know these differences when constructing the reference page as well as the overall format of an APA reference page. Here is a great website for citing APA sources:

### [APA Citation Style](#)

<http://www.liu.edu/cwis/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

I also have a website that will benefit you in terms of the reference page format, which you will need for your paper:

### [English Works! APA Sample Reference Page](#)

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/writing/aparef.htm>

This website has a sample reference page, which you can benefit from by printing out and using as a reference when you construct your own.

## Grammar & Mechanics

### **Clarity/Unity:**

There are some areas where you are missing commas. Here is one of them: In today's society both legal and illegal drug use has almost become a norm in society. You need a comma after "society." Since there are other areas where you are missing commas, I will present some comma review for you here:

### **Comma Review**

**Here is a summary of the 12 main comma rules.**

1. Use commas to separate **items in a series**.
  - a. He likes going to the game, drinking beer with his buddies, and dating fast women. (3 phrases)
  - b. She likes spaghetti, lasagna, and manicotti. ( 3 nouns)
2. Use a comma *before* a **coordinating conjunction** when you join two complete sentences.
  - a. The coordinating conjunctions are: FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
  - b. We would like to come to the party, **but** we have to study for final exams.

- c. Nobody said they could come to the party, **so** we decided to cancel it.
  - d. We can go to the party, **or** we can stay home and study.
  - e. We will have to stay home and study, **for** we want to pass the exam.
  - f. We would like to come to the party, **yet** we also want to pass our exams.
  - g. Henry can go to the party, **and** I can stay home and study for both of us.
  - h. We can neither come to the game, **nor** can we go to the party.
3. **Date, Addresses, Titles**
- a. He moved to 23 Elm St., Chicago, Illinois, and he doesn't come visit anymore. (Notice the comma after the state.)
  - b. On June 25, 2006, Tom and Sara will get married. (Note the comma after the year.)
  - c. Mrs. Shirley Jones, director of the after-school program, recommends that kids be supervised while doing their homework. (Title is set off on both sides with a comma.)
4. **Direct Address**
- a. Sally, please take out the trash.
  - b. Take out the trash, Sally.
  - c. You aren't going to win, Sally, with that attitude.
5. Use a comma to separate two **coordinate adjectives** (of equal value)
- a. To determine if the adjectives are coordinate, try putting the word "and" between them or reverse the order.
  - b. We bought ten red balloons. (We cannot say: 'We bought red ten balloons.)
  - c. We gave the kids shiny, new quarters. (We gave the kids new, shiny quarters.)
6. Use a comma after **Introductory Transition words** (words that can stand alone.)
- a. However, therefore, consequently, moreover, furthermore, nevertheless, in fact, of course, finally – etc.
  - b. **Therefore**, we should plan to stay home and study for the exam.
  - c. **Nevertheless**, we decided to go to the party anyways.
7. Use a comma after **Introductory phrases** (prepositional, verbal, and infinitive)
- a. After the game behind the bleachers, a group of kids gathered to have a tailgate party and listen to music. (prepositional phrases)
  - b. Running to the store, Jack almost got hit by a car. (verbal – begins with an incomplete verb form)
  - c. To pass this exam, I must study every night next week. (Infinitive phrase -- "to" + the verb)

### [Proofreading for Commas](#)

#### ***Importance of Proofreading:***

Please also remember to use your spell check and proofread your paper aloud. Reading your paper aloud helps find any errors that you might not have noticed when

writing it. Sometimes we can repeatedly read our own words silently and not notice an error and then read it aloud and find many.

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## Summary

Good luck! As you continue your work on this project, be sure to:

- Focus on the main requirements of this assignment.
- Develop a focused thesis statement with detail.
- Begin with an attention grabber.
- Read over and correct APA style.
- Use transition in your topic sentences.
- Consider proofreading again for missing commas.
- Have a great day!

Writing Advisor:

*Michelle Bowman*

The Effective Writing Center

[www.umuc.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umuc.edu/writingcenter)

University of Maryland University College

3501 University Boulevard East, Adelphi, Maryland 20783

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## More Resources

[The Effective Writing Center](#)