Writing Assignments 1 & 2

The purpose of these papers is to critically evaluate a scientific article about some concept in Psychology. This assignment will assist you in your personal development, integrity and academic excellence. There are many issues that people are concerned about that are relevant to an Introduction to Psychology class, such as ADD, ESP, depression, weight control, PMS, TV and violence, memory boosters, happiness, stress and etc. Choose a topic that is interesting to you, and is mentioned in the courses text. BE mindful that simply gathering existing data and synthesizing it (information as goal) is boring. Instead YOU are on a QUEST, a hunt for the truth (information as a means to solve a problem).

While the first journal article is assigned for Writing 1, the second journal article is your choice. However, the journal article for Writing Assignment 1 (which has been provided for you) has followed the below instructions to provide an example of what you’ll be looking for Writing Assignment 2.

You’ll find the below instructions is what you’ll need to complete the requirements for Writing Assignment 2. You will need to find one (1) psychology journal article about your topic to assist you in answering your questions and remember this is not a research paper. Read it and think critically about it.

The Assignment:

1. Read this whole assignment before you proceed.
2. Choose a topic (only for Writing Assignment 2)
3. Check the textbook to see if your topic is addressed (if not, see the professor)
4. Find a full-text journal on your topic using Saint Leo’s on-line library in PsychARTICLES or PsychInfo database that are within the major database, EBSCO.
   a. Your article must be at least seven (7) pages of content excluding graphs, tables and reference pages in order to give you enough to think and write about.
5. A research article has the following major sections:
   a. Title Page
   b. Abstract, Introductions
   c. Method
   d. Results
   e. Discussion
   f. References
   g. Tables
   h. Figures.
6. An article summary highlights the information in the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion.
   a. Before you can write such a summary, you need to scan, read, and understand the article.
7. Scan the article first.
   a. You will get bogged down in detail if you try to read a new article from start to finish. Initially you should briefly look at each section to identify:
   b. General information about the study (stated in the Abstract and Introduction)
   c. The hypothesis (-es) or research questions (in the Introduction)
   d. The test of the hypothesis, including the sample, variables and operational definitions, and the procedures used (in the Methods)
   e. The findings (in the Results, including tables and figures)
f. How the findings were interpreted (in the **Discussion**).
g. Underline key sentences or write the key point (hypothesis, design, etc.) of each paragraph in the margin. It may also be helpful to write down these key points on a summary sheet as you come across them.

8. Read the journal article carefully.
9. If you’re searching from a home computer, please be sure you can download PDF files. If not, go to [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) and download the free version.

10. **Allow enough time.**
   a. Plan to spend at least one half of the time you devote to this assignment to reading and understanding the article.
   b. Before you can write about research, you have to evaluate it.
   c. Before you can evaluate it, you have to understand it.
   d. Before you can understand it, you have to digest it.
   e. Before you can digest, you have to read it, thoroughly.
   f. This will take more time than you realize.

11. When reading the articles you may want to use [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) for definitions and pronunciations. This site also verbally sounds out the word(s). So turn up the volume!

12. Take notes as you read, using **your own words** (**note cards may be helpful**).

13. **Read for depth.**
   a. After you have highlighted the question, hypothesis, findings, and interpretations (see “**Begin annotating**…” below), go back to the article to read about each area in more detail.
   b. You should expect to read each section more than once.
   c. Expect not to fully understand the article the first time.
   d. You’ll most likely have to read it more than twice before you can talk about it in your own words; let alone write about the journal in your own words.

14. **Begin annotating using the below questions:**
   a. **What are the key terms presented in the journal?**
      i. Are they defined clearly?
   b. **Is evidence used to support the researcher's points?**
      i. What type of evidence is it (case study, observational study, correlation, or experiment)?
      ii. Does the evidence convince you? Why or why not?
   c. **What assumptions or biases does the researcher challenge?**
   d. **What emotions does the article evoke?**
      i. Do your emotions influence you to want to accept or reject the journal?
   e. **What questions arose for you that are still unanswered?**
      i. The answers to the interesting questions in Psychology tend to be complex and have multiple interpretations.
   f. **Is the point of view in this journal consistent with related information presented in your textbook and or supplemental material?**

15. Leave the article behind at this point.

16. Think about what you have read.

17. **Plagiarism and taking notes.**
   a. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Most plagiarism is unintentional, from faulty note-taking and poor understanding of what is being reported. To avoid it:
      i. Take notes in your own words.
      ii. Remember that you are digesting information, not swallowing it whole.
iii. If an idea is relevant to your topic, you should be able to summarize it in your own words. If you can't, you probably don't understand it.
iv. Avoid writing complete sentences when note-taking.
v. When note-taking, distinguish between what the author wrote and your comments about it (e.g., use different inks or put a star next to quoted sections).

Writing the Paper:

Like an abstract in a published research article, the purpose of an article summary is to give the reader a brief, structured overview of the study that was done. It is important that you understand the writing an article summary is a low-stress activity. By using these tips, the task becomes very easy. To write an effective summary, you must know:

(a) What is important to say, and
(b) How to condense important information.

The better you understand a subject, the easier it is to write both knowledgeably and briefly about it (this is the rationale for essay exams).

Getting started.

Put down your pen and read all your notes to get an overview. Eliminate irrelevant notes. Drop anything that does not connect with something else in your notes (the earliest-taken notes are the most likely ones to be dropped).

Writing the first draft.

1. Use the same order as the article itself used. The number of suggested sentences to use is given in parentheses below after each section. This number is arbitrary, but is meant to give you an idea of how much detail is needed to summarize each section of the article.
2. Announce the research question and explain why it is interesting.
3. State the hypothesis/hypotheses tested.
4. Briefly describe the methods (what was done? E.g., design of study, how many subjects, what they did, what the variables are and how they measured them.)
5. Describe the results (what was found).
6. Outline what the author considered the key findings of the study.

Editing for style.

1. Write as though explaining something to 'an intelligent, interested, naive, and slightly lazy listener' (e.g., yourself, your classmates, your parents). That is, expect your reader to be interested, but don't make them have to struggle to understand you. Don't write to your professor; if you do, you will tend to leave out important details by assuming that they already know them.
   a. Eliminate wordiness, including most adverbs ("very", "clearly").
      i. Why say, "the results clearly showed that there was no difference between the groups"?
      ii. You lose no meaning if you just say, "there was no difference between the groups".
   b. Use specific, concrete language.
i. Use precise language and cite specific examples to support assertions. Avoid vague references, e.g., "this" ("this illustrates" should be "this result illustrates").

ii. Sentences that start with "I feel" often signal unsupported statements.

c. Use scientifically accurate language.

i. For example, you never "prove" theories in science, you "support" or "fail to find support for" them.

d. Rely primarily on paraphrasing, not direct quotes.

i. In scientific writing, paraphrasing an author's ideas is more common than using direct quotes. In this assignment, you are only allowed 3 sentences to be quoted directly. If you use a direct quote, use quotation marks and proper citation.

ii. You’ll include the article on the reference page and at least one in-text citation for all paraphrases. In other words, you’ll have an in-text citation for almost every sentence.

e. Check for spelling and typographical errors.

f. Re-read what you have written.

i. Ask other people read it; they will catch things that you miss.

ii. The PeerMark (Peer Review) is great for this!

g. Pay attention to presentation.

i. It has your name on it. Your paper should look as though you are proud of it.

The rough and final drafts require the following components:

1. Page 1 - A title page with your name, affiliation and running header (in APA Format – see www.apa.org and OWL resources);
2. Page 2 - Summarize the your paper in an “Abstract”;
3. Pages 3-5
   a. Your paper’s response is to be both informational (i.e., review what the researcher(s) of the journal reported) and critical (e.g., critique their logic, conclusions, method, implications);
   b. Use terms from the text and journal wherever possible;
   c. Carefully, concisely and thoughtfully write your prose in APA-format using 3rd person language (i.e., he, she, they) and use verbs in the past tense only;
   d. DO NOT include graphs, tables or quotes (paper is too short to includes these items);
   e. Summarize your opinion within the conclusion of the paper; and,
   f. At least 3 (no more than 5) pages of content in length, not including the Title page, Abstract or Reference pages.

g. Here is the recommended format for both Writing 1 & 2 Assignments:

i. Paragraph One:
   1. Tell the reader what the focus of the research is, why it is interesting and state the hypotheses or research questions.

ii. Paragraph Two:
   1. Identify the subjects and the procedures used in the study.
   2. Paragraph Three (and possibly Paragraph Four):
      a. Present the variables and how each was measured.
      b. Be specific.
c. Identify the name of the measurement and a brief description of each.

3. **Paragraph Five:**
   a. Discuss the results of the study.
   b. Did the data support the stated hypotheses?
   c. Use the results and discussion section for this.

4. **Paragraph Six through Eight:**
   a. Critique the study.
   b. Specify what was done well and what could have been improved.
   c. You can also include why this article interested you and how it related to you.
   d. **Some other questions to answer:**
      e. Was the research valuable?
      f. Was the study practical/helpful? To whom?
      g. Was the study done ethically?
      h. Should more research be done in this area?
      i. Who does the results of this study apply to?
      j. What would you recommend the next step to be in this line of research

4. **Page 6** - Include a reference list as the final page “References” that lists all of your references, in APA format;

5. **Reminders:**
   a. Be sure your paper has a professional appearance;
   b. The paper is to be double-spaced, in a legible font (*Times New Roman*), with 1" margins, and typeface that is 12 point;
   c. Ensure that each page is numbered with a page header in accordance with APA format;
   d. **Cite the article, textbook, and other references using APA style; and,**
   e. **Submit paper into www.turnitin.com.**