

I. GENERAL PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

Nurses create medical, legal, and academic knowledge through workplace documents in the form of charts, lab reports, and nursing research. On the job, the health of a patient may depend on a nurse's ability to speak or write. Communication with colleagues is crucial in nursing since it can affect the quality of care for patients/clients. Writing must be supported with accurate observation and up-to-date researched evidence. Writing in this capacity is for audience that includes health care providers, nurses, patients or clients, and staff and administrators at clinics and hospitals.

As a nursing student, writing assignments are an important part of the learning to communicate effectively. There are three major writing assignments in the nursing program for which instructors are the primary audience.

II. TYPES OF WRITING

Professional:

- Nursing Processes (care plans with client history, diagnosis, interventions and outcomes)
- Health Histories
- Statements of Philosophy (principles and experiences that have shaped career, implementation of principles, field of specialization)
- Lab reports and Case Studies (analyses of data, interpretations of lab results)
- Research Papers (Formulate a relevant research question and reach a conclusion based on review of published research; or synthesize information from sources to answer questions about a nursing practice)
- Position Papers (take a stance on relevant controversy in field; construct argument based on research)
- Literature Reviews (synthesis of published work on a nursing issue; summary of arguments or findings of recent scholarship; critical review or analysis of findings)
- Experiential/Reflective Narratives
- Charts:
 1. Flowcharts: context-dependent
 2. Care-plans: a) definition of the problem; b) interventions and/or solutions; and c) evaluation of success of interventions and solutions
 3. Narratives: nurses' notes and observations of patient's treatment history; descriptive assessments of patients' conditions
- Nurse leaders and managers write evaluations, reports, other correspondence
- Nurse educators write teaching plans and tests, as well as scholarly work (manuscripts/research)

Academic:

- Operating Observation paper
- Childbirth/Maternity paper
- A resume, cover letter, and resignation letter in preparation for graduation.

III. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- Empirical evidence
- Quantitative (measurable data)
- Qualitative (observable behaviors)
- Lab test results
- Data from nurses' charting of patient information
- Research finding in journals
- Direct observations of patients' physical or mental health

IV. WRITING CONVENTIONS

Professional:

- Record communications with others; all components of a patient's history must be properly recorded.
- Data-driven evidence must be based on accurate, detailed information.
- Clear, objective tone, and confidentiality and sensitivity are important.
- Avoid first person except for reflective writing.
- Use 3rd person objective voice for research, reviews, case studies, position papers, and when describing nursing practices.
- Passive voice is often used to record observations and procedures.
- Direct quoting is rare; however, when pertinent, direct quotes are used to reflect client statements. Generally, paraphrasing is used to show knowledge and to be more concise.
- Use standard abbreviations.
- Use plain language for clients, avoiding medical jargon.
- For health care professionals, be precise and use relevant medical terminology

Academic:

- Use APA – American Psychological Association formatting for papers.
- Use 3rd person objective voice; however, first person narrative voice may be used for reflection for the operating observation paper.
- Document all direct quotes and paraphrased information.
- Define words/terms prior to using abbreviation, i.e. North Carolina Board of Nursing (NCBON).
- Do not use contractions, i.e. don't.
- Cite only sources used. Article abstracts are not considered a reliable source in and of themselves.
- Use of reliable and valid resources, published within the preceding 5 year time period.

V. COMMON TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- EMR—Electronic Medical Record
- HIPAA—Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act
- PSQIA—Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act
- PHI—Protected Healthcare Information
- OSHA—Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- DHHS—Department of Health and Human Services
- http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/studyaids/clinicalcommunication/page_glossary.php?id=13 (contains a long list of acronyms used in clinical communication)

VI. CITATION STYLE

APA - American Psychological Association

<http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx? ga=2.161016573.1145620899.1531411654-1125241218.1531411654>