

I. GENERAL PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

The field of Social Work is concerned with promoting social change, social justice, and the welfare of others. Social workers take a unique approach to thinking and writing in that they view social issues and problems from a broad perspective. Writing reflects their awareness of practice at multiple levels and the ways in which theory and practice inform one another. Audiences include scholars, scholarly journals, practitioners, politicians, behavioral scientists, community organizers, lawmakers, newspapers, other social scientists, and the general public. Academic writing in social work prepares future professionals to write case notes, treatment plans, grants, and public policy.

II. TYPES OF WRITING

- Research Papers
 - May summarize scholarly literature on a topic
 - Compare opinions of social workers and the public about an issue
 - Apply social work theory to current and critical social issues
- Social Policy Analysis
 - Describe a social policy
 - Use research to argue how the policy is beneficial or harmful to society and vulnerable populations
- Quantitative Research
 - Present a problem, question, or hypothesis to be tested
 - Report format with Title / Abstract / Review of Literature / Methods / Results / Discussion / Conclusions / References / Appendices
- Ethnographic/Field Research
 - Based on observational research, participant research, and interviews (sometimes)
 - Answers what has happened in a group setting, how social relationships are formed, and what it means
- Case Studies/Treatment Plans
 - Provides background of client(s) and a thorough description of their history
 - Describes present issues/problems/diagnoses
 - Uses scholarly and evidence-based research to determine appropriate treatments
 - Formulates a realistic and timely treatment plan for the client(s)

- Process Recordings
 - Records dialogue verbatim that occurs between the student and the client
 - Student writes self-evaluation and responses to each portion of the dialogue
 - Field instructor or professor records their responses and suggestions to the student

III. TYPES OF EVIDENCE

- Primary Sources (interviews, observations)
- Secondary Sources (scholarly journal, books, newspapers)
- Library research

IV. WRITING CONVENTIONS

- I. Concise, direct, and to the point
 - Typically uses Report Format (Title page, Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Discussion and Conclusions, Notes, References)

II. COMMON TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
- NASW Code of Ethics
- Cultural competency
- Field research
- Process recording
- Quantitative data
- Qualitative data
- Dependent / independent variables
- Strengths-based
- EBT/EBP (Evidence-based Treatment/Practice)

III. CITATION STYLE

- American Psychology Association (APA)