



Undergraduate vs. Graduate Writing

Similarities in all academic writing:

- Use of evidence from [scholarly/credible sources](#)
- Use of academic-style formatting ([APA](#) or [MLA](#))
- Free of [sentence-level errors](#)
- Logically organized using academic [essay structure](#)
- Concise, declarative, [formal](#), specific & precise, objective, & non-emotional
- All information from sources is cited & all types of [plagiarism](#) are carefully avoided

Undergrad



Graduate



Topic

Often addresses a specific writing prompt

Often involves coming up with and answering a [research question](#)

Presenting Information

Mostly presents what others have said about a topic

[Enters the conversation](#) as a scholar with own expertise and insights

Research

Exploratory research required

Extensive & comprehensive research required

Direct Quotes

Use of direct quotes is accepted

Less reliance on direct quotes, favoring [summarizing & paraphrasing](#)

Synthesis

Synthesis of research is not typically reached & the full scholarly conversation is not presented

Studies & expert opinions are [synthesized](#) to show similarities, differences, etc. of the full scholarly conversation

Audience

Written for a general academic audience

Written for other scholars and professionals in the field of study

Vocabulary

Uses general vocabulary, with defined terms whenever discipline-specific language is used

Uses technical vocabulary specific to the field, with no need to define these terms

Formatting

Basic academic essay structure with introduction, body of ~3-10 paragraphs, and conclusion

Formatting specific to the field, with use of sections such as literature review, methods, results, etc.

Revision

Revision & editing should occur

Time & care should be spent on multiple revisions and detailed editing

Purpose

Writing is done to show that understanding/learning has taken place—as assessment

Writing is done to further knowledge in the field—to contribute to the field of study

Additional Expectations for Doctoral-Level Writing



Students design their own
research methods



Students must analyze their own
collected data and the data of others



Exhaustive research is required with
further synthesis of that research



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