Check Your Paper: Some General Expectations for Papers

At the discourse level

- For research and reaction papers, there is a clear thesis/theme stated and is all of the information presented is explicitly connected to the thesis
- For an assigned question, the paper clearly responds to the question posed
- Each paragraph contributes to the topic or question and all of the sentences in each paragraph are related to the topic of that paragraph
- Uses transition words/phrases/sentences to mark the flow of ideas
- Uses section headings for longer papers to contribute to clarity of organizations
- Doesn’t repeat ideas or words

At the word choice and sentence level

- Uses concise language; avoids excessively wordy phrases
  - e.g. Wordy: The researchers did a study to examine the effects of
    Concise: The researchers examined the effects of....
  - e.g. Wordy: The reason that people like bright colors is that...
    Concise: People like bright colors because....
- Uses active rather than passive voice
  - e.g. Passive: The questionnaire was completed by 20 respondents
    Active: Twenty respondents completed the questionnaire.
- Refers to people or groups as “who”, not “which” or “that”
  - e.g. Incorrect: People that like vanilla ice cream also like ....
    Correct: People who like vanilla ice cream also like...
- Avoids vague pronouns such as “this”; “these” without adding the referent
  - e.g. Not: This explains why people with a growth mindset were more persistent
    But: Because they believe people can change, respondents with a growth mindset were more persistent
Uses parallel sentence structure
  o e.g. **Not**: The client enjoys reading and visiting friends as well as to ride his bicycle.
  **But**: The client enjoys reading, visiting friends and riding his bicycle.

Uses consistent verb tense throughout a paragraph

Subjects and verbs agree in number; data is plural
  o e.g. The data are gathered...

Avoids jargon and defines technical terminology

Uses commas to contribute to clarity and to separate clauses but not before every “and” or “which”
  o e.g. **Incorrect**: She was working in a hospital, and going to school at night.
   **Correct**: She was working in a hospital and going to school at night.
   **Correct**: She was working in a hospital, and she was going to school at night.

Does not overuse direct quotes and does not paraphrase by changing a word or two but, rather, summarizes the ideas in one’s own words.
http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism/

**APA Style** (a few of the rules…for more, see the APA manual or Purdue OWL)

  Correct use of **level headings** (see p. 62, APA Manual, 6th edition)

  Correct **APA format of citations** in text and references (Examples: Ch. 7, APA Manual, 6th edition)

  **Quotes** of >40 words get block format with no quotation marks (p. 92 APA Manual, 6th edition)

  **Numbers** <10 are written in words; ≥10 in numerals; numbers written as words at the beginning of sentence (p.111, APA Manual, 6th edition)

  Refers to previous authors or research in the **past tense**
  o e.g. **Incorrect**: Blank and Blank (2014) assert that high achievers are motivated by....
    **Correct**: Blank and Blank (2014) asserted that high achievers are motivated by....
  o e.g. **Incorrect**: Frank’s theory states that...
    **Correct**: Frank theorized that...

  Only **capitalizes** proper names, not generic nouns, names of diseases, theories (see more rules of capitalization (great source: http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2012/02/do-i-capitalize-this-word.html

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Uses an ampersand (&) in citations but when “and” when listing authors within the body of the text.
  (e.g. “Abercrombie and Fitch (2002) found that style is important” but “Style is important (Abercrombie & Fitch, 2002).”
When listing citations in text, lists citations alphabetically by first author’s name
  (e.g. Baker & Barista 2001; Moan, Groan & Whine, 2012; White & Black, 1998)
In the reference section, cites the DOI number of articles