



## University of Vermont Graduate Writing Center Graduate Writing Program in Counseling Guide to Writing Brief Ethical Papers

The brief ethical assignments show your professor that you can argue the ethical responsibilities and role(s) of a counselor on grounds of state laws and multiple codes of ethics and state laws—being thorough, knowledgeable, *and* concise as a (future) practicing clinical mental health or school counselor.

These papers are notoriously challenging because you must be thorough, clear, and exceptionally concise as you cover the ethical nature of the dilemma; the relevant statutes, theories, and ethical codes; your determination of the most ethical course of action; and more—in just three pages! show kindness to yourself! It can be done—but writing and submitting these assignments can indeed create stress and panic. Beyond the tips below, be kind to yourself. Taking care of yourself emotionally and physically will also bolster your ability to write and learn through these assignments.

### Citation and Style

The paper must follow APA style. Be sure to find out if your professor expects you to use APA's 7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> edition. For both editions, the Purdue OWL [Online Writing Lab] is a helpful resource:

[owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

### Planning, Drafting, Revising, and Editing

While precise APA style, including appropriately placed citations and meticulously formatted references, are necessary for the maximum amount of points, so is scrupulous attention to the rubric plus the quality and clarity of your writing. Plan and draft this paper through the eyes of your professor, using the rubric as your guide. The ethics professor will rely on the rubric to read and grade your paper; if you are missing any element called for in the rubric, you will not receive those allocated points.

After you have a first draft, try using “reverse outlining” to (1) doublecheck that your paper covers each of the ethical paper's required elements; and (2) see if you should reorder paragraphs for greater clarity or combine and condense paragraphs where you are repeating yourself. To create a reverse outline,

- read each paragraph and write the gist of that paragraph in the margins. If there is more than one gist (signaling that you may have more than one paragraph packed into one), write both or all down.
- Recopy your gists on another piece of paper or in another document. This is your reverse outline, a skeleton view of your draft to help you see what's missing, what's out of order, and where you have repeated yourself. This outline becomes your guide to revising.

If you are struggling with creating a complete discussion without going over the length limit, consider these two Graduate Writing Center guides to editing for concision:

- <https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/Concision.pdf>
- [https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/Sentence\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Flow.pdf](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/Sentence_Strategies_for_Flow.pdf)

### We Can Help!

Make an appointment with the Graduate Writing Center! Our consultants are experienced graduate student writers who are trained to support and guide their peers.

- If you want to meet with a consultant who has specific experience in APA style or precision editing, visit <https://www.uvm.edu/gradwriting/meet-consultants>