ACLP Writing Tips & Word Usage

The following is a brief overview of ACLP style and usage guidelines, along with some helpful writing tips and resources. These basic standards will serve as the authority for all ACLP communication vehicles, including the ACLP website, the ACLP Bulletin/Child Life Focus, ACLP publications, and any other printed or electronic materials made available to the public.

WRITING FOR ACLP

ACLP encourages a writing style that is clear, concise, and free of spelling and grammar errors. Strunk and White’s classic *Elements of Style* is an easy pocket reference on writing well, and is widely available in bookstores. Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL) is also an excellent resource (visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu/).

All ACLP communications published should be free of political, racial, religious, gender or ethnic bias. Authors are encouraged to use terminology that is sensitive to individuals who have a disease or disability. ACLP endorses the concept of “people first, not their disability.” Whenever possible, terminology should reflect the “person with a condition” (e.g., children with diabetes, families of children with emotional disorders) rather than the condition as an adjective (e.g., diabetic children, emotionally disturbed youth).

STYLE GUIDELINES—APA

All print and online communications from ACLP follow the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA Style Guide). If you cannot find information on this Tip Sheet, please refer to the APA Style Guide, or contact the Manager of Communications at communications@childlife.org.

REFERENCES

If your statements or conclusions are based on someone else’s work, they must be referenced. Any information that comes from a source other than you must be properly acknowledged. The following is a small selection of examples. Please consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA Style Guide) for a comprehensive guide on how to properly cite and reference a wide variety of printed and electronic references.

**Sample In-Text Citation:** Studies comparing levels of social interaction between chronically ill children and their healthy peers report that ill children experience significantly more isolation than other children (Krulik & Florian, 1995).

**Reference List:** Your list of references should contain only those works cited in the manuscript, and they should be alphabetized by the first author’s last name. A full list of references in the APA format is available at Purdue University’ Online Writing Lab (OWL): http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01
Sample Journal Reference:

Sample Book Reference:

ACLP Style and Terms

child life: Similar to the term “social work,” child life is not capitalized when referring to the field in general.

child life specialist: Similar to referring to someone as a “nurse” rather than a “Nurse,” child life specialist should not be capitalized except when it is part of a formal title.

Certified Child Life Specialist: As a formally recognized title and credential (like “Registered Nurse”) Certified Child Life Specialist should be capitalized.

credentials/degrees: Use no periods (BA, MSc, PhD, CCLS).

titles (executive director, president, etc.): Do not capitalize a title unless it directly follows a person’s name, identifying their position (e.g., “Carla Oliver, President, ACLP”). Exception: capitalize President when referring to the President of the USA.

health care/healthcare: Two words.

caregiver/care giver: One word.

family-centered care: Always hyphenate.

family: Use instead of “parents” wherever possible.

names of children: Use pseudonyms when giving real-life examples.

evidence-based practice: Always hyphenate.

ACLP Forum: Official name of the ACLP list serve (not listserv).

list serve: Generic term for ACLP Forum.

email: No capitalization, hyphen or space.

website/Web site/Website: One word, no capitalization.
**Writing Tips**

**Use Active Voice,** which makes clear who is doing what. For example:

- **Passive:** “It was observed that the child was experiencing anxiety due to the procedure.” (Who observed?)

- **Active:** “The child life specialist observed that the child was experiencing anxiety as a result of the procedure.”

**Read your work out loud.** You may hear awkward phrasing or errors that you miss when reading silently.

**When using general terms like “patient” or “child,”** avoid plural or gender specific nouns and pronouns when possible. To avoid the wordy his/her construction, it is often better to rewrite the sentence in the plural. Please refer to [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/595/01](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/595/01) for specific guidelines.