

Description

Academic articles often include lists, which organize the material and provide the reader with a quick overview of a section. There are different ways to format lists, but some general principles apply to all of them: they should be constructed in a parallel fashion, and they should be consistent. Numbers, letters, and bullet points are not required in all cases. Academic writers who use *The Chicago Manual of Style* will find various formats there, but four common list formats are presented here.

Types of List Formats

Run-In Lists

A run-in list, as the name suggests, is included as part of the general text. Elements can be separated in different ways, as shown in the examples below.

Separated with a Colon: When a complete sentence is followed by a list of items, separate the sentence from the list with a colon.

E.g. "*Do not venture into the wilderness without these items: a knife, a book of matches, a flashlight, and a map.*"

Separated with Numbers: When the list is part of the sentence, you can separate the items by numbering them.

E.g. "*The Housing Committee passed resolutions on (1) annual salaries, (2) fundraising efforts, and (3) community building.*"

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Vertical Lists

A vertical list should be preceded by a complete sentence that gives an overview of the points being listed. The list does not need to have a bullet point format and a punctuation mark is not at the end of

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the entries. For example:

Your admissions packet should include these items:

The three-page statement of purpose

The financial questionnaire

Your contact information

If the lead-in sentence is a complete one and all entries in the list are complete sentences, a punctuation mark should follow each entry. For example (using bullet points):

Make perfect banana bread every time by following these easy steps:

- *Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.*
- *Grease an 8 x 8 baking dish.*
- *Combine all the dry ingredients (listed above).*
- *Gently fold in the wet ingredients (listed above).*
- *Pour the batter into the dish and bake for 45 minutes.*

Again, note that because each entry in the list is a complete sentence, a final period is used.

Vertical Lists Punctuated as a Sentence

When a list is too long or convoluted to be presented as one sentence, you can use a vertical list that is punctuated like a sentence. This format is especially useful when the phrases include internal punctuations or the reader might find it difficult to follow the meaning. An example follows below.

Biology instructors have made significant changes to their curricula and classrooms, and today it is common to find

1. *innovative research techniques, especially those requiring knowledge of anatomy, in labs;*
2. *greater focus on teamwork;*
3. *in-class lectures customized for learning styles; and*
4. *bilingual lesson plans.*

Vertical Lists with Subdivided Items

A complex vertical list may be formatted in a way that resembles an outline, using numbers and letters to provide a logical structure. The lead-in (introductory) line should be a complete sentence, as seen in the example below.

Students should be prepared to discuss the following topics:

1. *Regional History*
2. *Geography and landmarks*

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3. *Erosion in mountainous areas*
4. *Notable Figures*
5. *The first tribal chieftains*
6. *The emergence of political divisions and leaders*
7. *The role of women*
8. *Cultural Developments*
9. *The spread of language*
10. *Music used to bind communities*

Conclusion

The next time you read a research paper, look for lists and examine how they were constructed. Do the entries use a consistent format? Are the numbers and/or letters correctly placed and in the proper order? Is the lead-in line a complete sentence? If you find that these steps are all present, chances are that the author took the time to research the structure of lists and present them accurately. Now you can do the same.

References:

- Get It Write. *Handling Vertical Lists.* Retrieved from https://www.getitwriteonline.com/archive/101406VerticalLists.htm

Category

1. Journal Guidelines
2. Reporting Research

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daveishan

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