

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PARAGRAPH?

### Writing Exercise

The following paragraph has many things wrong with it. The author has borrowed too much from the original authors' writing, failing to paraphrase completely, and documenting quotations inadequately. There's also one case of inaccurate citation of a source. Your job is to track down the mistakes and correct them. Save this paragraph from the plagiarism police!

Compliments are rewarding and fun, but they have their bad side too. According to Knapp, Hopper, and Bell (1985), the difficulties and contradictions associated with compliments make them peculiarly fascinating to us. They are a threat that we nonetheless crave. On the one hand, we desire compliments because they make us feel good about ourselves. On the other hand, they often put us on the defensive or raise our skeptical antennae because they come across as artificial. "The frequency with which compliments are used in our culture increases the problem of believability" (p. 25). Such uncertainty about the sincerity of compliments can cause us discomfort because we do not know how to take them. For example, Knapp et al. found that 66% of their participants reported feeling uncomfortable, defensive, or cynical after getting compliments. Still, compliments can have powerful and positive effects on our personal and vocational lives--we love to get them.

Below is the original source for the material used in the plagiarized paragraph. The first three paragraphs of the article are reprinted verbatim:

Compliments--we love to get them. They let us know we are appreciated; they make us feel good about ourselves. And we love to give them. They make people like us; they make people do things for us. But, compliments have their bad side too. We may react negatively if we think a compliment has been delivered insincerely or that we are being set up to do something we don't want to do. We usually don't appreciate getting praise from someone we think lacks intelligence or taste. And the frequency with which compliments are used in our culture increases the problem of believability. Most letters of recommendation, for example, are overwhelmingly complimentary, which both cheapens the praise and makes it difficult to decide what is true and untrue.

Even when praise is sincere, we may have difficulty in knowing how to respond. Sociologists Ronny Turner and Charles Edgley reported that two-thirds of the 245 people they observed receiving compliments later said they felt uncomfortable, defensive or cynical about the compliment.

The difficulties and contradictions associated with compliments make them peculiarly fascinating. They are a potentially threatening phenomenon that people seem to crave; a form of behavior that has powerful and positive effects on our personal and vocational lives, despite its suspect credibility; and an aspect of conversation that people experience every day yet still have trouble dealing with.

Knapp, M. L., Hopper, R., & Bell, R. A. (1985, August). I really loved your article, but you missed your deadline. *Psychology Today*, 19, 25 - 28.

This exercise appears as handouts 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 in Strohmets' (1999) *Instructor's Manual*, which accompanies Rosnow and Rosenthal's 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Beginning Behavioral Research: A conceptual Primer*. Used with permission. Judith Nye symposium paper presented at the 71<sup>st</sup> annual meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Baltimore, Maryland, March 24, 2000.

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