Guidelines for Writing Student Papers

In Sixth Edition

American Psychological Association Style

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Author Note

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Abstract

An abstract is a condensed summary of the contents of the article or paper. It needs to be readable, well organized, concise, and self-contained. It should include key words that allow the reader to evaluate content. Begin the abstract on a new page, using the page header and page number 2. Type the abstract as a single paragraph in block format. It can contain from 150 to 250 words, depending on publication guidelines given by various journals. According to APA a good abstract is (a) accurate, (b) nonevaluative, (c) coherent and readable, and (d) concise. “The label Abstract should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered, at the top of the page. Type the abstract itself is a single paragraph without paragraph indentation” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 27).
Guidelines for Writing Student Papers in Sixth Edition

American Psychological Association Style

This document is a brief guide to the essential elements for formatting student papers in the American Psychological Association (APA) style as published in the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in the summer of 2009. Adaptations of the publication guidelines are appropriate in student papers, which are not prepared for publication, and should be specified in writing by individual faculty. The following guidelines are appropriate for students in the Child and Family Studies Department at Weber State University. A formatting tutorial, published by the APA is available at http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm

A cover page is not required in APA style, but may be required for a student paper by a course instructor, who will provide the guidelines. The elements required by APA style are a title page, an Abstract, body of the paper, and a References page.

Typing the Manuscript

Formatting Basic Elements

Begin the first page of the manuscript with the full title typed in uppercase and lower case letters, centered at the top of the page. Use the header function to insert a running head and the page number 2. Use 12 point Times New Roman font, and double-space all lines. Indent each new paragraph 5 to 7 spaces (0.5 inches) using a tab. Leave a 1-inch margin at the top, bottom, right, and left of each page. Do not justify the right margin. Use standard-sized white paper.
The Running head.

Identify each page with a Running head, which is a shortened version of the title (50 characters or less), displayed in all caps. Use the automatic functions of a word processing program to insert the Running head and page number on each page. The Title Page is page one.

Line spacing and punctuation.

Space only once after commas, colons, and semicolons and twice at the end of sentences. Space once after periods that separate parts of reference citations and after the periods of initials in personal names. EXCEPTION: Do not space after internal periods in abbreviations (e.g., a.m., i.e., U.S.) or around colons in ratios.

The manuscript introduction.

The body of the paper opens with an introduction presenting the specific problem or theme and summarizing findings or conclusions. Because the introduction is clearly identified by its position in the article, it is not labeled.

Formatting Section Headings

Carefully consider the hierarchy of the ideas you wish to present and use headings to convey the sequence and levels of importance. Headings function as an outline of the manuscript organization. For most student papers eight to ten pages in length, two or three levels of heading are sufficient,

Selecting level of heading.

For a short article, one level of heading may be sufficient. In such case use level one. When two levels of heading are needed, use level 1 and level 2. If three levels of heading are needed, use level 1, level 2, and level 3. The number of heading levels a paper requires may be
determined by using heading levels to correspond with the draft outline levels. In an outline the Roman numerals I, II, and III represent one level, capital letters A, B, and C represent a second level, Arabic numbers 1, 2, and 3 represent a third level.

Level of headings.

Articles in APA journals use from one to five levels of headings (the level is identified by the numbers on the left).

1. **Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**

2. **Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**

3. **Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.**

4. **Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.**

5. **Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.**

Note: The designation of level number in the 6th Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is a change from the earlier edition. This change lends ease to the selection of required levels.

**Formatting Quotations**

All direct quotations require a citation of the author’s last name, publication year, and page number. “If the quotation comprises fewer than 40 words, incorporate it into text and enclose the quotation with double quotation marks” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 170).

If the quotation comprises 50 or more words, display it in a freestanding block of text and
omit the quotation marks. Start such a *block quotation* on a new line and indent the block about half inch from the left margin (in the same position as a new paragraph). If there are additional paragraphs within the quotation, indent the first line of each an additional half inch. Double-space the entire quotation. At the end of a block quotation, cite the quoted source and the page or paragraph number in parentheses after the final punctuation mark.” (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 171)

When quoting, always provide the author, year, and page number and include a complete reference on the References page.

**Typing the References**

**Reference Citations in Text**

Document throughout the text by citing author and date of the work researched. This style of citation identifies the source for readers and allows them to locate the source in an alphabetical reference list at the end of the paper. For a direct quotation in the text, give the author, year, and page number in parenthesis; when paraphrasing, the page number is not required, but recommended. Paraphrasing does require author and publication year (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 171). Some examples: (a) In his work, Jones (2008) found…; (b) In 2008 Jones published a study documenting…; (c) Studies show that children suffer from divorce (Jones, 2008); (d) “When parents divorce, their child feels responsible” (Jones, 2008, p. 201).

When citing electronic sources that do not provide page numbers identify the quoted material by paragraph number if such numbers are visible. Use the abbreviation *para.* If paragraph numbers are not visible guide readers to the appropriate section by giving a heading
and counted paragraph number or by giving a shorted title and counted paragraph number. (Find examples in the Publication Manual on p. 173 or in The Official Pocket Guide on p. 175.)

Citations on the References Page

Sources cited are listed on a References page. Start the reference list on a new page titled References. Double-space all entries, and use hanging-indent. List entries in alphabetical order by author’s last name. References cited in the text must appear in the reference list and visa versa.

Note: Personal communications, such as letters, e-mail, interviews, and phone calls, do not appear on a References page, but are cited in the text only. Give the initials as well as the surname of the communicator and provide as exact a date as possible. For example: H. K. Lawrence (personal communication, August 10, 2009) stated…. 

Proofing the Manuscript

Final preparations of the manuscript include proofreading after typing, correcting any errors and making changes before submission. Be sure the pages are in the correct order; review an APA style checklist and type a cover page if required. Use the spell check function of your computer program.

Order of Pages

The manuscript begins with the title page, numbered as page 1, followed by the Abstract, page 2 (include the Running head on each page of the manuscript). The text begins on page 3 with the full title of the article centered and typed in uppercase and lowercase letters. Do not label the introduction. Number all pages consecutively and including, which are given on a
separate page labeled References. Add a cover page on top of the manuscript if desired. The cover page may include course number, paper title or assignment, student name, and date.

**Checklist**

Be sure to (a) double space all lines, (b) remember that the Title Page does not include a course number or date, but does include an Author Note, (c) be sure sources cited are listed alphabetically by author’s last name on a separate page titled References, (d) check that citations are displayed in hanging-indent, (e) be sure author’s first names are not included in reference citations, only initials are given, (f) remember book titles and journal article titles are cited with only the first word and proper nouns capitalized, (g) remember a capital letter follows a colon in a title, and (h) give the doi in reference citations when it is available.

References


Rampersad, T. (2005, June 8). Re: Traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions [Online forum comment]. Retrieved from http://wipo.int/roller.comments.ipisforum/Webblog/theme_eight_how_can_cultural#comments


