

A Guide to APA Style: Paper Formatting

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Author Note

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### A Guide to APA Style: Paper Formatting

First published as an article by The American Psychological Association (APA) in 1929, the *Publication Manual* is now in its sixth edition as a book (2010, p. xiii). While very detailed, students need not read all 275 pages to cite or format assignments correctly. Online, *APA Style Central* and *The APA Style Blog* are regularly updated, searchable platforms. The website, *Purdue OWL* is also a widely used guide.

### Formatting

*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2017) defines format as: “the shape, size, and general makeup” of print material. It is the appearance of a paper as opposed to its contents; using a standard structure puts focus on ideas rather than style.

### General Formatting Guidelines

Papers should be entirely double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Times New Roman 12 point font is preferred; this handout is in Arial which is a more accessible font. *APA Style Blog* posts from 2009 and 2011 require two spaces after a period before the next sentence in the body; use one space in the References section. Papers should have separate pages for the title, abstract, and references list. Paragraphs should be indented ½ inch. Headings are used to indicate major sections within the body. See Table A1 for how to create them.

**Running header.** For Word programs, follow ten steps to create the header:

- 1 Double click in the header area in the top one inch of the document to open it
- 2 Check the box labeled Different First Page
- 3 Click on Page Number then in the drop box choose Top of Page and Plain Number 1
- 4 Type in the following words, Running head: SHORTER TITLE IN ALL CAPS
- 5 Use the tab key to move the number all the way to the right
- 6 Make sure the font in the header matches font of the paper, then close the header
- 7 Go to page 2 and double click to open the header
- 8 Click on Page Number then in the drop box choose Top of Page and Plain Number 1
- 9 Type SHORTER TITLE **\*only\***. Use tab key to move number to the far right
- 10 Close the header

**Title page.** Place the title, your name, and school about halfway down the page centered, and double-spaced in normal text. An optional Author Note may be placed at the bottom of the page. The header should have a running head with a short title on the left and page number on the right. On the title page only, include the words “Running head” followed by a colon and a short title for the paper in ALL CAPS. The second page header has only the short title and page number.

**Abstract.** If required, place an abstract by itself on page two. Title it Abstract centered in normal text one line above the paragraph. It is double-spaced, but the first line is not indented. A one paragraph overview about 150-200 words long, its purpose is to help researchers decide if they want to read the entire work. Important sections of the paper should be summarized briefly. Identify conclusions or proposals using as many key words as possible. Providing keywords is optional. If used, the word “Keywords” is italicized and indented one half inch, one line below the paragraph, like this:

*Keywords:* APA, abstract, format, summary, research

**Headings.** Headings in the body are an important tool for organizing. They map the paper and help readers navigate an argument. See Table A1 for a chart on how to format the five levels of headings. Please note, the opening paragraph is headed by the title, so it is not labeled as an introduction.

**Tables.** Tables display information using columns and rows. They may be located in the paper near the content to which they refer or placed after the references list on their own page. Instructors may specify where they should be placed. Tables are numbered at the top and given a name that appears in italics with key words capitalized. Content within tables may be single or double-spaced, but notes should be double-spaced. For an example, see Table A1 in the Appendix.

**Figures.** Figures are graphs, charts, illustrations, maps, photos, or images not in column-row presentation. They can appear near the content to which they refer or after the references list. Number and caption them under the figure. The caption helps readers understand its purpose and provides citation; see Figure 1 “Formatting the References List” for a model. Source information for tables and figures can, but does not have to, appear in the references list.

### In-Text Citation

Citation is how authors give credit, gain credibility, and distinguish their ideas from others. According to the APA (2010), writers should cite the source of any research, concept, or theory unless it could be considered common knowledge (p. 169). What qualifies depends on the audience, so when in doubt, cite. There are three core pieces of information to include: author name, date of publication, and location. Citations are matched exactly to an entry in the references list by the last name of the author. If no author can be found, use either the organization or the title. Even when paraphrasing, "provide a page or paragraph number . . . when it would help an interested reader locate the relevant passage" (APA, 2010, p. 171).

### Examples

**When paraphrasing or quoting.** College students reported they were much more likely to use the campus network than they were ten years ago (Ing, 2008). In 2008, Ing reported data indicating an explosive rise, "the campus server has increased capacity by two hundred percent since 1998" (Discussion section, para.1).

**When the date has already been given in the same paragraph.** To avoid repetitive information, use only the author's name for subsequent in-text citations in the same paragraph. For example: Ing's (2008) video was instrumental in changing school policy. Additionally, Ing's work influenced businesses.

**Secondary sources.** Secondary sources can be indicated as follows: In a tragic case of irony, Abraham Lincoln (as cited in Statton & Gomez, 2003) wrote in his diary, "attending a theater performance is an excellent way to relax" (p. 145). Statton and Gomez appear in the references list because you read their textbook, not Lincoln's diary.

**No publication date.** If no date can be located, n.d. (no date) is used. For example: Fisher (n.d.) advises cat owners should plan ahead when thinking about getting a new kitten.

**Quotes within a quote.** Use double quotation marks for the main quote and single quotation marks for the internal quote. In 2009, Carrey, Hua, and Madaki reported, "single mothers earn half as much as their married counterparts; 'married women are given preferential status in this country' one woman complained" (p. 90).

**Multiple authors.** For two authors, use both names every time you cite. For three to five authors, list each author the first time, but for subsequent citations, use the first author's name and et al. which means "and others" in Latin. Thus, the above example becomes Carrey et al. (2009) spent five years gathering data. For six or more authors, use the first author's name and et al. for every in-text citation.

**Removing/adding words from a quote.** According to our fictional author, Chau (2017), "if removing words, use an ellipsis, like this . . . to indicate where they were in the quote. If adding words, use square brackets [added words] to enclose them" (p.23). In 2006, Keltan et al. wrote that "tribal norms . . . were critical predictors of the varying responses different Africans had to the arrival of [European] explorers" (p. 44). Whether adding or subtracting words, the meaning of the original quote must not be changed.

**Block quotes.** A long quote is presented in a special format that signals an especially important piece of research:

If the quotation comprises 40 or more words, display it in a freestanding block of text and omit the quotation marks . . . [place it] on a new line and indent . . .

Double-space the entire block. At the end of a block quotation, cite the quoted source . . . in parentheses after the final punctuation mark. (APA, 2010, p. 171) Use block quotes sparingly; be sure to discuss their meaning and relevance. Overuse can create the appearance that an outside source is making your argument for you.


**Interviews.** Any personal communications not recoverable by a reader should be cited in the paper but do not appear as entries in References (APA, p. 179). Provide the initials and last name of the person as well as the full date of the interview. T. S. Bryzinski noted that writing in this style requires attention to detail (personal communication, July 24, 2017).

### **Formatting the References List**

Place the references list after the body of the paper. Each entry has detailed information of any source "referred to" in the paper. There are four main parts: author name, year published, title, and publication information/location. The first element of an entry is matched to the name used for in-text citation, see Figure 1 for an illustration.

**Things to Note About References**

1. Begin on a new page and double-space the entire list.
2. Alphabetize by last name of the author or organization.  
If no author is named, use the name of the organization responsible. If no organization can be identified, use the title (APA, 2010, pp. 176 & 183).
3. Align the first line flush left for each entry, indent the rest of the lines one half inch. Use the Ruler in the View tab or the Hanging Indent function; see the example References section.  
Under Home tab, click arrow in lower right of Paragraph section.  
Under Indentation & Special, select Hanging.
4. The order is: Author. (Year). Title. Location.
5. List all authors up to seven. For eight or more authors, list the first six names, insert an ellipsis . . . then add the last author.
6. List works by the same author from oldest to newest.
7. List works by the same author in the same year alphabetically by title, and give the year a lower case letter:  
Dimitri, J. (2001a). Made up article title: With subtitle ...  
Dimitri, J. (2001b). *Next fake title of a book* ...
8. Italicize titles of whole works: books, journals, websites, movies, etc.
9. For most titles, capitalize only the first letter of the first word in the title, the first word after a colon, question mark or exclamation mark, and proper nouns.
10. For titles of journals, magazines, newspapers, or periodicals, capitalize all words except prepositions, articles, and conjunctions.
11. For an online source, write "Retrieved from" then provide URL or only the DOI, use only one address form:  
Retrieved from <http://www.totallymadeupaddress>  
**\*or\***  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1234/abc0000008>

 <b>Key to Citations &amp; References</b>	
<b>Citation (in text)</b>	<b>References (list at end)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Author</li> <li>2. Year (date)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Author</li> <li>2. Year (date)</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Page # (Location)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Title</li> <li>4. Publication Information</li> </ol>

Critical Concept: The Citation and the Reference are linked by the Author & Year!

*Figure 1.* Author and year are the two attribution elements that serve as a key between citations and references. Reprinted from the PowerPoint presentation, *Basic APA Skills for Students*, R. Johnson (2010).

## References

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Appendix

**Table 1**

*Formatting for Five Levels of APA Headings*

Format for Five Levels of Headings

Level 1	<b>Centered, Bold, Key Words Capitalized</b>
Level 2	<b>Flush Left, Bold, Key Words Capitalized</b>
Level 3	<b>Indented, bold, only first word capitalized, period.</b> Text
Level 4	<b><i>Indented, bold, italics, only first word capitalized, period.</i></b> Text
Level 5	<i>Indented, not bold, italics, only first word capitalized, period.</i> Text

*Note.* Adapted from *American Psychological Association Publication Manual* (2010), p. 62. Sources for tables and figures should be thoroughly cited in the table note or figure caption. They do not need to appear in the references list.

**Reference Entry Examples**

**The basic format looks like this**

Author (Year of Publication). Title. Publishing details.

**Here is an example for an online journal article from *Purdue OWL***

Author last name, A. A., & Author last name, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of fictional article. *Title of Online Periodical, volume number*(issue number if available). Retrieved from <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

**For more than seven authors with a doi**

Keltan, L., Sun, A., Lee, A., Abebe, C., Drenlow, F., Deutsch, W., . . . Fogel, H. (2009, September 9). Colonialism and history. *Time*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1234/rmh0000008>

**For unusual situations use square brackets to provide explanation and/or parentheses for additional publishing details**

Chau, B. (2018). *APA style in history: A book*. [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

Eco, U. (2015). *How to write a thesis* (C. Mongiat Farina & G. Farina, Trans.). Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. (Original work published 1977)

Google. (n.d.). [Google Maps directions for driving from St Paul to Midway campus]. Retrieved August 4, 2015 from <https://xxxxxx/fakeurl>

**For a government report**

Government Author. (year). *Title of report: Subtitle of report if applicable* (Report No. 123). Retrieved from <http://xxxxx>