APA Citation Style for Academic Writing

Center for Writing Excellence
What is APA Style?

Manuscripts in the social sciences most commonly use American Psychological Association (APA) citation style. APA regulates—

- In-text citations
- References
- Formatting and punctuation
- Construction of tables
- Presentation of statistics
APA General Format

- Double-spaced throughout
- 1” Margins
- 12 pt. Times New Roman (however, Arial, a sans serif font, is now preferred for accessibility reasons)
- 2 spaces after period in text; 1 space after period in references
- Printed on standard-sized paper (8.5” x 11”)

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There is no great writing, only great rewriting. - Justice Brandeis
Writing is 1% inspiration and 99% elimination. - Louise Brooks
Major Paper Sections

APA Style Includes Four Major Sections:
1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Main body (can include subsections)
4. References

Two Common Formats for Manuscripts:
1. Literature review
2. Experimental report/general research study
Literature Review

1. Title Page
   - Include running head, title, author’s name and institution affiliation, author note

2. Abstract
   - Provide if appropriate

3. Introduction (note that “Introduction” does not appear as a heading)
   - Define and clarify problem

4. Main Body
   - Present discussion of sources
   - Organize chronologically, thematically, or methodologically

5. Conclusion/Future Research
   - Identify relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature
   - Suggest next steps in solving the problem

6. References
   - Include all sources cited

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Experiment/General Research Study

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction (no heading)
4. Literature Review
5. Method
   - Include participants, sampling procedure, materials, measures, research design, etc.
6. Results
   - Summarize collected data, data analyses, and results
7. Discussion
   - Interpret results, discuss implications, and draw inferences related to hypotheses
8. Implications/Conclusions
9. References
10. Footnotes
11. Appendices/Tables/Figures

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Title Page

A title page should include:

- The title of the paper (preferably no more than 12 words)
- Author’s name
- The institutional affiliation
- Page header/running head—example below for title page

Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER
Running Head and Page Numbers

The running head should use—

- Capital letters
- Left justification at top of page
- A maximum of 50 characters, including spaces.

Pages after the title page should have a running head that looks like this:

TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

Page numbers:

- May include author’s last name
- Right justification at top of page
Abstract

• Center the title (Abstract) at the top of page
• Do not bold or underline title
• Provide a concise summary of the key points of your research
• Write a single paragraph, double-spaced, flushed to the left
• Limit the abstract to 150-250 words
• Use keywords, if appropriate
• Place on page 2 of paper after title page
Abstract Example

TITILE OF YOUR PAPER

Abstract

Example of abstract

Keywords: example
Main Body

• Center manuscript title at the top of the page
• Do not bold or underline title
• Double-space text and begin on page 3 after abstract
• Use 12-point type
• Do not use “Introduction” as a heading title
Reference Page

• Center the title (References) at the top of page
• Do not bold or underline title
• Double-space reference entries
• Flush left the first line of the entry and indent subsequent lines (hanging indent)
• Order entries alphabetically by the last name of the first author of each work
In-Text Citation

Two Methods

Signal Phrase: Author name in running text
Knight (2012) reported that …

Parenthetical Citation: Author name in parentheses at end of sentence
The study indicated …(Knight, 2012).
In-Text Citations

Work by One Author

Example 1: Signal Phrase
Smith (2012) found...

Example 2: Parenthetical Citation
...school mascots boosted school spirit (Smith, 2012).
In-Text Citations

Work by Two Authors

Example 1: Signal Phrase
Smith and Jones (2012) found that...

Example 2: Parenthetical Citation
... (Smith & Jones, 2012).
In-Text Citations

Work by Three to Five Authors

The first time you cite the work:
Example 1: Signal Phrase
Research by Smith, Jones, Adams, Brown, and Cook (2012) …

Example 2: Parenthetical Citation
… (Smith, Jones, Adams, Brown, & Cook, 2012).

In subsequent citations:
Research by Smith et al. (2012)…
… (Smith et al., 2012).
In-Text Citations

Work by Six or More Authors

Example 1: Signal Phrase
Research by Smith et al. (2012)…

Example 2: Parenthetical Citations
… (Smith et al., 2012).

Use the first author's name followed by et al. in the signal phrase or in parentheses
In-Text Citations

*Unknown Author*

“Title of work” … (2012).

OR

… (“First words of title,” 2012).

Cite the source by its title in the signal phrase or use the first word or two of the title in the parentheses.
In-Text Citations

Organization as an Author

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA; 2015), …

OR

… (Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2015).

If the organization has a well-known abbreviation, include the abbreviation in brackets the first time the source is cited and then use only the abbreviation in later citations.

In subsequent citation:

… (FDA, 2015).
In-Text Citations

Two or More Works in the Same Parentheses:
Order the works alphabetically, separated by a semi-colon
(Smith & Jones, 2014; Williams, 2008)

Authors with the Same Last Name:
Use initials with last name

Two or More Works by an Author in the Same Year:
Use lower-case letters (a, b, c) with the year
(Cook, 2012a)
(Cook, 2012b)
In-Text Citations

Quoting Sources

• Use direct quotes sparingly and only when critical for meaning
• Instead summarize argument or evidence
• Include page number in the in-text citation

Examples:
According to Jones (1998), “Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time” (p. 199).

OR

According to the researcher, “Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time” (Jones, 1998, p. 199).
References

Crediting Authors

Single Author:
Last name first, followed by author initials

Two Authors:
List by last names and initials; use the ampersand instead of “and”

(Paiz et al., 2012)
Three to Seven Authors:

List by last names and initials; separate with commas; last author name preceded by ampersand

References

Crediting Authors

More Than Seven Authors:
After the sixth author's name, use an ellipsis in place of the author names; provide the final author name

References

Crediting Authors

Two or More Works by the Same Author:
Use the author's name for all entries and list the entries by the year (earliest comes first)


When an author appears both as a sole author and in another citation as the first author of a group, list sole author entries first

Crediting Authors

Two or More Works by the Same Author:
For references that have the same first author and different second and/or third authors, arrange alphabetically by last name of second author


References

Crediting Authors

Two or More Works by the Same Author in the Same Year:

Organize sources alphabetically by the title of the article or chapter; assign lower-case letter suffixes to the year


References

Books

Basic Form:
Author, A. A. (Year of publication). Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle. Location: Publisher.

Example:

Publisher name should be as brief as possible, but write out university presses and association names. If the publisher name includes books or press, those words are included. Include state or country in location.
References

Articles in Periodicals

Basic Form:

Example:

*Use issue number only if a journal paginates by issue, and not by volume. Check journal website or database to find this information.*
References

Journal Articles in Electronic Sources

General principles:

• Include the DOI in the reference if one is assigned
• Do not include the name of the database; Use this format: Retrieved from http://xxxxx
• Do not include retrieval dates unless the source material is likely to change over time such as Wikipedia or the UpToDate database.
References

**DOI Style**

Recommended DOI Style:
- [https://doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxxxx](https://doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxxxx)

Older DOI Styles:
- [http://dx.doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxxxx](http://dx.doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxxxx)
- doi:10.xxxx/xxxxxxx

*Whatever style is used should be consistent in format.*
References

Journal Articles Online (DOI Display)

Basic Form:

Example:

(American Psychological Association, 2010)
References

Journal Articles Online With No DOI

Basic Form:

Example:
References

Journal Articles Advance Online Publication

https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.kmrp.8500141

If no DOI is assigned and you retrieved the article electronically, give the URL of the journal home page: 
http://xxxxx
References

Dissertations/Theses Online

Doctoral dissertation or master’s thesis retrieved from a database service:
Author, A. A. (year). Title of doctoral dissertation or master’s thesis (Doctoral dissertation or master’s thesis). Retrieved from Name of Database. (Accession or Order No.)


Unpublished dissertation or master’s thesis:
Provide website name and URL:

• Include the name of the website to which the article was posted in the retrieval statement

• If this information is not part of the URL, use the following format…

  Retrieved from Site Name Website: http://xxxxxx

• Provide document type if relevant
References

Electronic Sources: Other Periodicals

Magazine Article:

Newspaper Article:

For magazines and newspapers, include the month or day of publication.

(American Psychological Association, 2010)
Citing an Entire Website, Feed, and Page:

*If not citing a particular document on a website:*

- It is sufficient to give the address of the site in the text
- No reference list entry is needed

**Examples:**

KidsPsych is a wonderful interactive website for children (http://www.kidspsych.org).

President Obama often used Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/barackobama) and Twitter (http://www.twitter.com/barackobama) to keep citizens up to speed on his initiatives.
References

Electronic Sources: Press Releases


References

Electronic Sources: Unpublished

Manuscript:

Online Lecture Notes or PowerPoint Slides:

Paper or Poster Presentation:
References

Electronic Sources: Film or Video

Film:
Producer, A. A. (Producer), & Director, B. B. (Director). (year). Title of motion picture [DVD, video file, etc.]. Retrieved from http://xxxxx

YouTube:

References

Electronic Sources: TV

Entire Television Series:

Episode or Webisode:
Writer, A. A. (Writer), & Director, B. B. (Director). (year). Title of episode or webisode [Television series episode or webisode]. In C. C. Producer (Executive Producer), Television series name. Retrieved from http://xxxxx
A timestamp is like a page number, showing the point at which the quotation begins.

In-Text Citation:
One patient who experienced the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy stated that it was so remarkable for her that “I began to think impossible things, like I could even invite people home” (OCD-UK, 2009, 4:50).

Reference:
References

Electronic Sources: Art

Work of Art:
Artist, A. A. (copyright year). Title of work [Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Photograph, etc.]. Retrieved from http://xxxxx


References

Electronic Sources: Music

Full Album:
Writer, A. A. (copyright year). *Title of album* [Recorded by B. B. Artist if different from writer; CD, MP3, Record, Cassette, etc.]. Retrieved from http://xxxxx (Date of recording if different from album copyright date)

Single Track:
Writer, A. A. (copyright year). *Title of song* [Recorded by B. B. Artist if different from writer]. On *Title of album* [CD, MP3, Record, Cassette, etc.]. Retrieved from http://xxxxx (Date of recording if different from song’s copyright date)
References

Social Media

Basic Form:

Examples:
• Blog post
• Blog comment
• Electronic mailing list
• Twitter update/Tweet
• Facebook page/status update
• Online forum comment
Facebook Status Update:

In-Text Citation: (APA Style, 2011).

Facebook Page or Note:

In-Text Citations: (Pinker, n.d.)


In-Text Citations: (American Red Cross, 2009)
References

Twitter

Twitter Update or Tweet:

In-Text Citation: (Obama, 2009).
References

Blogs

Blog Post:
In-Text Citation: (Laden, 2011).

Blog Comment:
In-Text Citation: (MiddleKid, 2007).
A personal communication is cited in the body of the paper but not included in the reference list.

The journal has reported a large increase in submissions (M. Knight, personal communication, October 3, 2018)
# APA Headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Headings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Left-aligned, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For Levels 3, 4, and 5, begin body text after the period.*
APA Style

**Basic Characteristics**

**Clear**
Be specific in descriptions and explanations

**Concise**
Condense information when you can

**Plain**
Use simple, descriptive adjectives and minimize the figurative language
APA Style

Point of View

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

APA Style encourages using active voice

Active Voice:
The subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb.
Example: Researchers conducted an experiment to test the hypothesis.

Passive Voice:
The subject is acted upon.
Example: An experiment was conducted by researchers to test the hypothesis.

But, there are times when passive voice is preferred in some disciplines or for particular purposes. Look at relevant journals and studies to see what style is being used.
APA Style

Verb Tense

Past Tense or Present Perfect Tense:
- Literature review
- Description of procedure or method
- Reporting of results

Present Tense:
- Implications of results
- Presentation of conclusions
APA Style

Avoiding Bias

• Respect people’s preferences.
• Call people by the pronouns or other designations they prefer if known.
• Make an effort to determine what is appropriate for your situation; you may need to ask your participants what they prefer.
• Singular “they/their” has become increasingly accepted in many publication venues.
APA Style

Person-First Language

- Person with disability (not disabled person)
- Children with autism (not autistic children)
- Individuals with mental illness (not mentally ill people)
- Hard of hearing or deaf (not hearing impaired)
New Edition of APA Style

A new edition of the Publication Manual, the 7th, is coming out in October, so some guidelines may change. Check our Digital Dashboard for a revision of this presentation.
APA Resources

American Psychological Association Online
http://www.apa.org

APA Style Blog
http://blog.apastyle.org/

CWE Digital Dashboard
https://www.montclair.edu/center-for-writing-excellence/cwe-digital-dashboard/resources-for-writers/citing-sources/#APA

Online-Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association
Q&A and Discussion

• There is no great writing, only great rewriting.
  --Justice Brandeis

• Writing is 1 percent inspiration, and 99 percent elimination.
  --Louise Brooks