

APA STYLE QUICK REFERENCE
For the 5th Edition of the APA Publication Manual
Modified for Use By Students at
Missouri Western State University
June 2006



"APA style" is a collection of rules developed by the American Psychological Association to contribute to clearly written communication. It is frequently used by many other disciplines, including nursing, social work, business, and education.

TYPING THE PAPER. The paper should be typed, double-spaced. Margins should be 1 in. on all sides. *Everything* is doubled spaced (No exceptions). Use 12-pt Times Roman or Courier typeface only. If something can not be typed double-spaced, then it must be a Figure. Do not hyphenate words at the end of a line.

TITLE PAGE. The title page includes

1. The page header (first 2-3 words of your title and page number; Note: EVERY page has a page number on it)
2. The running head for publication
3. The title
4. Your name (with middle initial)
5. Your institution

The title should be a **concise** statement of the main topic and inform readers of the content of the paper. The recommended length for a title is 10 to 12 words.

The title is centered on the page with your name two spaces below the title and your institution below your name. The running head is an abbreviated title (no more than 50 characters, including punctuation and spaces) and is typed at the top of the title page between the page header and the title. Note the capitalization of the running head.

The diagram shows a rectangular box representing a title page. At the top right corner, it says "The Title 1". Below that, on the left side, it says "Running head: YOUR RUNNING HEAD GOES HERE". In the center of the page, it says "The Title of Your Paper", followed by "Your M. Name", and "Missouri Western State University" at the bottom.

CITATIONS. APA does not use footnotes or endnotes for citations. Every citation must in appear in your reference list, and the only items in your reference list are papers you have cited! A reference is only cited once within a paragraph; however, a reference must be cited again if it is used in a different paragraph. Citations are included in the text in either of the following ways:

1. Suppression can be a healthy defense mechanism (Antonovsky, 1987); or
2. Antonovsky (1987) suggests that suppression can be a healthy defense mechanism.
3. When citing two or more studies together, the citation looks like this: (Antonovsky, 1987; Jones, Brown, & Smith, 1977).
4. After a study with three or more authors is cited in full the first time, use the first author's name followed by et al., e.g. Jones et al., 1999. If there are more than five authors, use et al. the first time the study is cited.

Note that the format is the author and year of publication. Page numbers are not used.

Multiple citations in parentheses are placed alphabetically and are separated by a semicolon and a space. For example, many authors have indicated this to be true (Cronk, 1990; Mullican, 1988).

REFERENCES. The references for your papers should be predominately from scientific journals. "Trade" books, magazines, encyclopedias, and personal web sites are not appropriate for scholarly papers. A few of these may be used if they are extremely relevant, but they should be used very sparingly. **Do not reference any source that you have not actually held in your hands and read yourself!** If you are using someone else's summary of a paper, you need to cite it as (Jones, 1980, as cited in Smith, 1992). [that would be an example of you having read Smith, 1992 and using a summary Smith wrote of Jones, 1980; Smith 1992 would go in your reference section]

The title (References) for the reference list is centered at the top of the page. References are listed in alphabetical order according to the first author's last name. Titles of BOOKS and JOURNALS are italicized. Titles of articles are NOT italicized, nor are they placed in quotations. Only the first word of article and book titles, the first word after a colon, and words that would normally require capitalization are capitalized, e.g. *The United States medical report: Healthy people, healthy places*. Each word of a journal is capitalized.

The date is placed in parentheses (1980) and immediately follows the authors' names. Use only the initials of the author's first and middle names. The author's last name is placed first. (All of the authors are included in the references, even if et al. was used in the citation.) A period follows the date, article title, book title, and journal page numbers. A comma follows the journal title and (Ed.). The *APA Publication Manual* (5th ed.) uses the hanging indent for reference pages.

Sheridan, C. L., & Radmacher, S. A. (1992). *Health psychology: Challenging the biomedical model*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Radmacher, S. A., & Sheridan, C. L. (1995). An investigation of the demand-control model of job strain. In S. L. Sauter & L. R. Murphy (Eds.), *Organizational risk factors for job stress* (pp. 127-138). Washington, D.C.: APA.

Rocha, R.F., & Rogers, R.W. (1976). Effects of competition on aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 63-73.

Online References

Doe, J., Noname, G., & Sillysam, C. (2001). Silly stuff on the internet: Don't be fooled [Electronic version]. *Journal of Silly Stuff*, 5, 117-123.

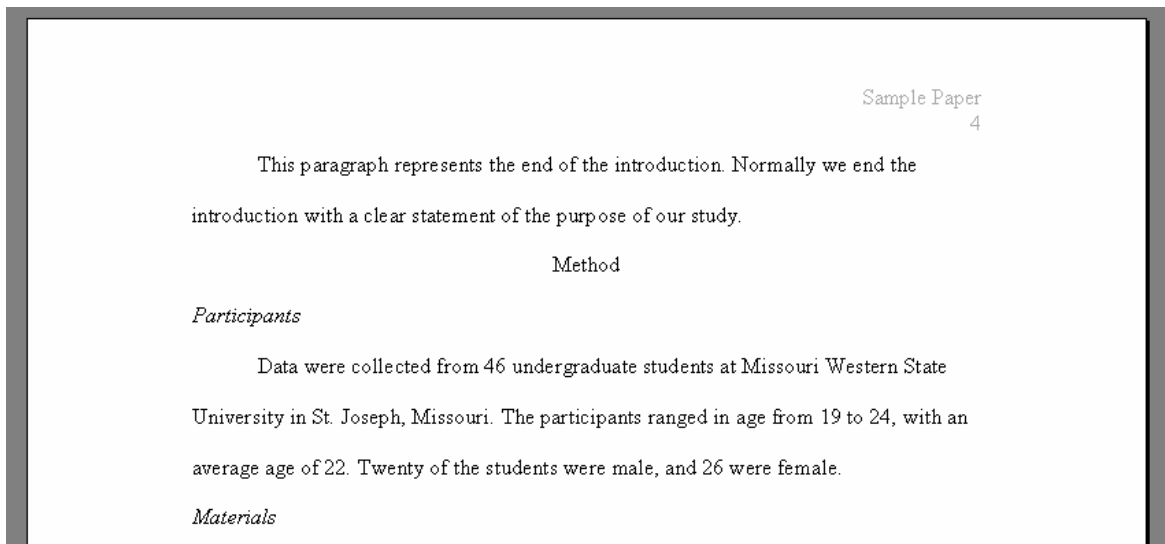
Doe, J., Noname, G., & Sillysam, C. (2001). Silly stuff on the internet: Don't be fooled [Electronic version]. *Journal of Silly Stuff*, 5, 117-123. Retrieved August 8, 2003, from <http://br.org/articles.html>. (This format is used if the online article has been changed in any way from the original.)

United States Sentencing Commission. (n.d.). *1997 sourcebook of federal sentencing statistics*. Retrieved December 8, 1999, from <http://www.ussc.gov/annrpt/1997/sbtoc97.htm>

University of California, San Francisco, Institute for Health and Aging. (1996, November). *Chronic care in America: A 21st century challenge*. Retrieved September 9, 2000, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Web site: <http://www.rwjf.org/library/chrcare/>

For other kinds of references such as newspapers, periodicals, etc., see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.), which may be found in the library or the bookstore.

HEADINGS. For most papers, you will only use two levels of headings. Level 1 headings identify the main sections of your paper. They are Capitalized, and centered on the line (see Results in the example to the right). Level 2 headings identify subsections. They are in italics and typed on the left margin (see Participants in the example). Note that the sections follow each other on the same page double-spaced under the previous section. There are no extra spaces or new pages.



STANDARD EMPIRICAL MANUSCRIPTS

ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER. The first page of the paper is the title page, followed by the abstract, the review or project, and finally, the references. Do not place the paper in a folder; just staple the upper left-hand corner.

If you have written a standard empirical paper (where you have collected data), the order of sections is:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Title Page | 7. References |
| 2. Abstract | 8. Appendixes |
| 3. Introduction | 9. Tables |
| 4. Method | 10. Figure Captions |
| 5. Results | 11. Figures |
| 6. Discussion | |

TITLE PAGE. Please see the section on page 1 of this quick reference guide.

ABSTRACT. The abstract is actually the second page of your paper, but it should be written last. The abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper. An abstract is one paragraph and limited to 100

to 120 words, and should describe the topic, the purpose or scope of the paper, and a summary of your conclusions. The word, Abstract, is centered and the body of the abstract is not indented. The abstract generally does not have any cited references.

INTRODUCTION. The introduction of an empirical paper serves two primary purposes. It provides the theoretical background for the study, and it establishes the purpose of the current study.

The Introduction is labeled with the title of the paper (exactly like it is on the title page) centered at the top of the page. Do *not* put the word Introduction at the top.

The Introduction starts out broad and becomes more and more specific. Most studies have at least one dependent variable, and at least one independent variable with at least two levels. A good introduction provides background information on each variable, and a summary of previous findings relating to each variable.

If work exists comparing the exact variables in your study, summarize that. If such work does not yet exist, that is ok. Unlike the literature review section of a non-empirical paper, the Introduction of an empirical paper can be relatively brief. Only the most important work and relevant should be cited, however, a clear connection between past work and the current study should be made.

The final paragraph should contain a clear statement of purpose. Do not be afraid to start the sentence “The purpose of this study is ...” Note, however, that the purpose should *not* be stated anywhere else in your introduction.

METHOD. The method section of an empirical paper is traditionally divided into three subsections: Participants (sometimes called Subjects), Materials (sometimes called Apparatus), and Procedure. Method is a level one heading (see the section on headings later in this guide). Participants, Materials, and Procedure are level two headings.

The purpose of this section is to describe your study in enough detail that someone else could attempt to replicate your study. Always make it sound professional, not like a class project. Assume you are writing for submission to a scientific journal.

Avoid unnecessary or trivial details like “the data were displayed on the computer screen and recorded on the data sheets” or “Data were analyzed using SPSS.”

The *Subjects/Participants* section includes, at the minimum, the number of subjects, who the subjects were (species, culture, etc.), and how they were selected. Any demographics that may have impacted the outcome of the study should be discussed. Any ethical concerns (e.g., informed consent, deception), or exceptional motivation (hunger, extra credit) should be mentioned.

The *Materials* section describes any equipment that you used to collect your data. You should give manufacturer and model numbers for equipment. For tests, you should either cite a complete reference, or include a copy in an Appendix.

The *Procedure* section should describe the design of the study and include a chronological summary of how you collected your data. It should be clear what your independent and dependent variables are, what the levels are, whether it was a repeated measures or between subjects design, etc. You should describe any procedures used to assign subjects to groups, control extraneous variables, etc. Try to be descriptive. For example, don't say “Group A”, say “The group who received a picture of a homeless man”

RESULTS. The results sections is where you present the outcome of any statistical analyses that you conducted. It should be an objective summary of your findings. Avoid references to support for a theory. It should include both descriptive and inferential statistics.

A good way to write a results section is to have one paragraph for each statistical test conducted. For each test, mention the name of the test, what variables were compared, what the result of the test was, and how the descriptive statistics relate to each other. For example, “An independent *t*-test was conducted comparing the satisfaction scores of the experimental and control groups. A significant difference was found ($t(34)=8.75, p < .01$), with the experimental group scoring higher ($M=9.6, s=1.2$) than the control group ($M=7.3, s=1.4$).” Notice that statistical symbols are presented in italics.

The use of Tables and/or Figures is highly recommended if you have more than a couple of descriptive statistics to present. If you have a Figure or Table, be sure you refer to it in the text in the appropriate place (For example, “See Figure 1 for a summary of the mean satisfaction scores”).

DISCUSSION. A good discussion is the most difficult section to write. It is where your understanding of the topic and your results really show. The purpose is to evaluate and interpret the results, especially with respect to the original research question and the previous literature.

A discussion should start with a brief summary of the results without referring to the specific statistical tests conducted. Just tell the reader what you found. Make sure you refer to your original purpose. Make sure your conclusions are appropriate for the design that you had (for example, do not infer causality unless it was an experimental design; don’t say something made a difference if it was not statistically significant). Make sure you understand power and effect size, and you make appropriate statements when your results are not significant.

This section should discuss the relationship between the current results and what the literature you cited in the Introduction would have predicted. Were your results expected or unexpected? What are the theoretical consequences?

A discussion should also talk about limitations of your design and procedure, whether you expect your results to generalize to other situations or samples, and directions for future research.

A good discussion should do much more than summarize what your data showed. It should present the “big picture” that comes into focus as a result of your study.

REFERENCES. Please see the section on page 2 above.

APPENDIXES. The Appendixes provide a means to give the reader information that is not central to the points you are discussing, however, may be useful if attempting to replicate the study. The most common use of an Appendix is to present copies of the scales used, or the stimuli. If there is a single Appendix, it is simply called “Appendix.” If there are multiple Appendixes, they are called “Appendix A” “Appendix B” etc. “Appendix” is centered at the top of the page, and directly underneath it (also centered) is the title of the Appendix.

All material in an Appendix must be typed and double-spaced just like every other page of the manuscript. If something can not be typed, it must be a Figure.

TABLES. Tables textual representations of a series of numbers or other values. In APA Style, you must be able to create a table on a standard typewriter, therefore no vertical lines are allowed. They are double-spaced like all other pages in the paper. It is well worth your time to learn how to get your word processor to format a table correctly using tab stops.

Short Title
8

Table 1

The Title of the Table is in Italics, and Written in Title Case.

	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Satisfaction	6.3	1.1	9.3	1.2
Happiness	12.9	2.3	9.9	1.4

FIGURE CAPTIONS. The Figure Captions page provides the titles (captions) for all of your Figures. A single page of Figure Captions provides the titles for all of your Figures. The word “Figure” and the number of the Figure are italicized. For example:

Short Title
9

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Mean satisfaction scores of the participants who received the experimental treatment.

Figure 2. When you have multiple Figures, you put all of the Figure Captions on a single page

FIGURES. The final pages of a paper are the figures. They are the only pages of a manuscript that do not have the short title and page number on them. Anything that can not be typed on a traditional typewriter must be included as a Figure. Traditionally, this includes graphs, charts, drawings, and pictures.

Figures should be in black and white only, should be professional looking, and should not be drawn in 3-D or anything else that makes it more difficult to interpret them. They should be sized to fill most of the page, and one Figure should be on each page.

Charts should have all axes labeled clearly, and the labels and scales should be in a font large enough to be clearly read. We traditionally use a sans-serif (e.g., Arial or Helvetica) font.

WRITING NON-EMPIRICAL PAPERS

If you have a non-empirical paper (for example, a literature review or historical paper), all of the same guidelines apply, except your section heading will be different. Rather than having the standard Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, you are more likely to break your literature review down into subsections and use a descriptive heading for each. Also, because the focus of these papers is on the theoretical background of a topic, the length, number of cited references, etc. will be much greater than for an empirical paper.

WRITING STYLE GUIDELINES

The most common student writing errors are described below. Please edit your papers using these guidelines.

Numbers. According to APA, the general rule on the use of numbers is to use digits to express numbers 10 and above and words to express numbers below 10. Digits are also used to express numbers that (a) immediately precede a unit of measurement; (b) represent statistical or mathematical functions, fractional or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, and percentiles; and (c) represent time, dates, ages, sample or population size, scores and points on a scale, and exact sums of money. Words are always used to express any number that begins a sentence. In the abstract, use digits for all numbers except when they begin a sentence.

Contractions. Scholarly papers do not use contractions, e.g. can't, won't. It would be preferable to say "can not" or "will not"

Seriation. When it is necessary to enumerate elements in a series, identify the elements by a letter (within a paragraph or sentence or by an Arabic numeral. The seriation in Item 1 (Numbers) above is an example of the punctuation that is used within a sentence of three or more elements that have internal commas. (Notice the semi-colons between elements.) Two more examples follow:

Students have three choices (a) write the paper, (b) change majors, or (c) join the Foreign Legion.

Based on social psychological theory, the professor's dismal spelling is the result of one or more of the following:

1. English is her second language.
2. She has minimal brain damage.
3. Her dominant response for spelling in public is incorrect.

Style. The Publication Manual encourages the use of "I" instead of the third person, e.g. "I found significant results," is preferable to "The researcher found significant results." However, it is not likely that authors will find it necessary to use personal pronouns in literature reviews. Similarly, the pronouns "you" and "we" are rarely used in scholarly papers because authors seldom address their readers directly. It is much preferable to say "The difference between the groups was significant."

Right-hand margins. APA style does not use right-hand justification. Right-hand justification often makes a paper more difficult to read.

Noun/Pronoun Agreement. A pronoun must agree in number (i.e. singular or plural) with the noun it replaces. For example, it is not correct to write, "The child improved their scores dramatically."

Subject/Verb Agreement. A verb must agree in number (i.e. singular or plural) with its subject. The most common error of this type in scientific writing is found with the word "data." The word "data" is plural so its verb must also be plural, e.g. "The data were not accurately represented."

Affect or Effect? One of the most common errors in psychology papers is confusing the word "effect" with "affect." In most cases, "effect" is a noun; e.g. what effect did the independent variable have on the dependent variable? Generally, "affect" is a verb; e.g., The independent variable did not affect the dependent variable. Psychologists sometimes refer to emotion as "affect," so in that case it is a noun. However, as a rule, with few exceptions, affect is a verb and effect is a noun.

Quotations. Long quotations are uncommon in APA style papers (in fact, you may read dozens of papers without encountering a single one), but if you do need to use them, the period and comma are always placed before ending quotation marks, e.g. He said, "They are not here." This is true even if just one word is in quotations, e.g. Don't confuse the noun "effect" with the verb "affect." The semicolon and colon follow ending quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted matter. Citations for quotations under 40 words are outside the quotation marks and inside the period, e.g. The results revealed that "a lifetime of learning had been suspended under the experimental conditions" (Zimbardo, 1957, p. 10).

If a quotation is longer than 40 words, it should be displayed in a freestanding block of lines with the quotation marks omitted. Block quotations are started on a new line, typed double-spaced and indented five spaces from the left margin. The citation is placed in parentheses outside the period. An example follows:

I think that if we are going to reform the world, and make it a better place to live in, the way to do it is not with programs full of things for other people to do. The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands, and then work outward from there. (Pirsig, 1974, p. 285)

Its or It's? Its is the possessive for it, e.g. The dog ate its food with gusto. It's is the contraction for "it is." (although, remember that contractions are not generally used at all in APA style)

Clarity. Clarity is determined by the ease with which the paper can be read and understood. The reader should be able to grasp the information in your paper the first time that he or she reads it. A good way to improve the clarity of your paper is to put the draft of your paper aside and read it aloud to yourself a few days later. Does it still make sense to you? If not, make the necessary changes before typing the final paper. It takes effort to write clearly, but it is important. Information that is communicated in a clear and understandable way commands respect and attention. It also helps to write using words that you are familiar with. Do not try to sound "high and mighty" by using jargon and words with which you are unfamiliar. At the same time, be sure that you write professionally (i.e., use proper grammar, write in complete sentences).

Active vs. Passive voice. Use active rather than passive voice (but without personal pronouns), for example, use "Participants were instructed to" rather than "Participants were given instructions to"

Since and While. The word "since" does not mean "because." The word "while" does not mean "although." Although and because should be used instead. Since and while refer only to references to time.

Tense. Generally speaking, use past tense in the abstract, introduction, and method. Results and discussion sections can be in the present tense. If you are writing a research proposal, you should use the future tense in the Proposed Method and Expected Results sections.

Proofread. Proofread! Do not rely on spell checkers. Make sure you are writing in complete sentences. Be sure that you catch common mistakes such as using "alot" rather than "a lot"

Parenthetical Information. Make sure that information in parentheses is truly parenthetical. The reader should be able to skip the information in parentheses and still understand your paper. For example, “This was clearly demonstrated by (Smith, 1990) in his groundbreaking research.” Has incorrect usage of parentheses.

Guidelines for Nonsexist Language. APA has adopted a policy that requires authors to use nonsexist language. Nonsexist language means that when an individual or a group of individuals is referred to, words are chosen that are accurate, clear, and free from bias. Unless one is referring to a population that is entirely male, words that suggest otherwise are not used. Using the plural is an acceptable way to meet this guideline (assuming, of course, that you are referring to multiple participants). Do not, however, use “they” if you are referring to an individual.

Authors should avoid any language that might imply bias against persons on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age.