

An Example of the American Psychological Association's Format

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The line above this paragraph is the title of the paper from the title page. It is not bold, and it is not a heading. Please also note it is not labeled "Introduction." There is no heading of "Introduction" in APA.

The purpose and format of the paper are introduced here. The purpose of this paper is to provide a basic written example of the format of the American Psychological Association (APA). The first section of this manuscript, APA Basics, is an overview of things used in all APA papers, including the title page and page headers. The next section, Citations and References, focuses on how to cite and reference citations, including the format of the reference page. The third section, Specific Concerns, handles special instances in APA that may or may not be utilized in an APA document (e.g., quotations, the usage of numbers, and seriation). Finally, I will present a conclusion section.

#### **APA Basics**

This section includes information about the standards used throughout every APA document. I will present standards for the entirety of the manuscript (e.g., spacing, font, margins, paragraph length, and person) followed by standards that should be included in every manuscript (e.g., title page, page headers, and headers).

#### **Standards for the Entirety of a Manuscript**

All typing in APA is double spaced. The acceptable font size is 12 point serif font (e.g. Times New Roman or Courier, although Times New Roman is often expected). The spacing between paragraphs should be set to zero. Margins are 1 inch on the top, bottom, and sides. Default font, margins, and spacing in Word documents are not APA standard; wise authors reset the standard margins to 1 inch and the standard spacing between paragraphs to zero. Authors

should maintain the lesson learned in fifth grade: all paragraphs should be at least three sentences in length.

### **Standards to be Included in Every Manuscript**

This section is about standards that happen only once in a manuscript, including the title page and page headers. A title page is similar to a cover for a book, and is necessary for the front of every manuscript. Page headers ensure that the manuscript is in the correct order.

**Title page.** The title page is page 1 of this document. The title page consists of (a) the running head, (b) the title, and (c) the byline and institutional affiliation. The running head is an abbreviated version of the title of the paper, and it indicates what the page headers will be in the “header” of each page thereafter. In order to complete the running head, type an abbreviated version of the title in all capital letters. On the same line as the running head, place the page number flush right.

The title, byline, and institutional affiliations are center justified, in uppercase and lowercase letters, and positioned in the upper half of the page (nothing should be in the lower half of the page). The byline is the author’s name. Institutional affiliation is the name of the university. Please note that the class name and number should not be included in the title page.

**Page headers.** Page headers are typography at the top of the page; they are separated from the body of the text. Think of page headers as insurance in the event that an instructor accidentally drops a stack of papers on a windy day and has to put them back in the correct order. Page headers go in the header field of a document (in Word, go to *insert>header*). Left align the text from the running head and right align the page number.

Please note that the title page has the phrase “Running head:” (capital ‘R’ lowercase ‘h’) before the running head is typed in all capital letters. This is different than all other headers in

the rest of the document (i.e., the phrase “Running head: TITLE OF PAPER” is only on the title page). In order to do this, please do one of the following: create a section break to keep the header from going onto page two, or manually enter the running head in the first line of text in the paper (i.e., go to *header and footer > different first page* in order to complete this in Word).

**Headings.** Headings are similar to chapter titles in textbooks. It is often helpful for the author to begin writing out the headings of the document before actually writing, as it provides the structure for the paper. Headings help the reader know the purpose of the section and allow for others to refer back to a section easily (e.g., information about headings can be found under the *Headings* section of *Standards to be Included in Every Manuscript*). Headings are never underlined, nor do they utilize bullet points or colons.

**Levels of headings.** There are five potential headings in APA, although authors may only use two or three. Regardless of the number of headings used, headings should always be used in order, beginning with level 1. It is rare to only have one heading; one level of heading offers little guidance to the readers as to the purpose/point of the document.

It is likely that most papers for school work will need three levels of heading. This document uses four levels of heading. Most literature reviews should be either three or four levels to provide direction and guidance to the reader. The format of each level is illustrated below:

**Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading (level 1)**

**Left-Aligned, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading (level 2)**

**Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period (level 3).**

*Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period (level 4).*

*Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period (level 5).*

### Citations and References

Citations are credit given to authors in the text. When an author fails to cite others for their ideas, the author plagiarizes. References are included at the end of the document, and include all information needed for the reader to locate the original document (e.g., book, journal, website). The next section covers how to cite in text, followed by how to format the reference page.

#### Citations in Text

Document manuscripts by citing the author and date of the works utilized to compose the document. This allows the reader to quickly identify sources and locate the entire source at the end of the manuscript (in the references). In order to cite a source, first determine if there is/are (a) one author, (b) two authors, (c) three to five authors, or (d) six or more authors. An example of how to cite each of these appears here, both when the author's name appears as part of the narrative, and when it does not. Please note that "within a paragraph, when the name of the author is part of the narrative...you need not include the year in subsequent nonparenthetical references....Do include the year in all parenthetical citations" (APA, 2010, p. 174). See the APA manual for more information.

**One author citation.** McDonald (2009) indicated that red, blue, and yellow helium balloons make her happy. Elizabeth is made happy by red, blue, and yellow latex helium balloons (McDonald, 2009). McDonald discovered that, within a paragraph, authors need not include the year of an already cited source in subsequent citations, so long as it is in the narrative and not in a parenthetical. Citing one author is rather straightforward (McDonald, 2009).

**Two author citation.** McDonald and Merk (2009) are not night owls. Night owls go *whoooo* in the night (McDonald & Merk, 2009). Always cite both names every time the

reference occurs in the text (McDonald & Merk, 2009). McDonald and Merk, however, discovered that the year need not be included in subsequent in-text citations as long as it is not in a parenthetical. Note that when citing multiple authors in the narrative, the word *and* is used, but when the names are in a parenthetical, an *&* is used (McDonald & Merk, 2009).

**Three to five author citation.** Hutchison, McDonald, Reed, and Datti (2006) are crazy people who like APA. It has been found that APA format makes most people very angry (Hutchison et al., 2006). Cite all authors the first time the reference occurs. In subsequent citations, include only the surname of the first author followed by *et al.* and the year in the first citation of the reference within a paragraph (Hutchison et al., 2006). Hutchison et al. found this very confusing, despite their masochistic passion for APA.

**Six or more author citation.** McDonald et al. (1979) are nutso. It is actually kind of nice when there are six or more authors, because only surname followed by *et al.* is cited (McDonald et al., 1979). Cite only the surname of the first author followed by *et al.* (with a period after *al.*) and the year for the first and subsequent citations (McDonald et al., 1979). In the reference list, however, instead of using *et al.*, cite the first six authors, then use ellipsis points, then cite the final author).

### **Reference Page**

The reference page is how readers can locate the original document. Start references on a new page at the end of the document. Type the word "References" in uppercase and lowercase letters, without bolding or otherwise formatting the text, centered at the top of the page. Use hanging indent format (the first line of each references is flush left, and subsequent lines are indented). The reference page of this document is on page 13.

Arrange entries in alphabetical order by surname of the first author. Remember: *nothing precedes something* (e.g., Brown, J. R. precedes Browning, A. R.). If there are two entries with the same author, the earliest date goes first. References with the same first author and different second or third authors are arranged alphabetically by the surname of the second author, or, if the second author is the same, the surname of the third author, and so on.

**Periodical.** A periodical is printed periodically, such as a journal. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a periodical. Note only the periodical title and volume number are in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of an article (and first letter of subheading if applicable) and any proper nouns, such as a place or name. Place a period at the end of the reference.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). Title of article: Subheading if applicable.

*Title of Periodical in Italics*, xx, xxx-xxx.

**Online periodical.** An online periodical is posted online periodically, such as an online journal. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online periodical. Note only the periodical title and volume number are in italics. In the title, capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). For example, in the article "Night Owls Who Love Cheese," there is no period at the end of the reference in the references list. Include the article's DOI (provide the URL for the journal homepage if no DOI is available). The retrieval date and database information are not needed for scholarly articles retrieved from online sources. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). Title of article: Subheading if applicable.

*Title of Periodical in Italics*, xx, xxx-xxx. doi:10.4179/0423198108282008



**Nonperiodical.** A nonperiodical is printed once, such as a book. After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a nonperiodical. Note only the *Title of work* is italicized. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of the article source (and first letter of subheading if applicable). Place a period at end of the reference.

Author, A. A. (2009). *Title of work: Subheading if applicable*. Goshen, IN: Publisher.

**Part of a nonperiodical.** An example of a part of a nonperiodical is a book chapter. After this paragraph, there will be an example of how to reference part of a nonperiodical. Note only the *title of work* is italicized. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of the article or chapter (and first letter of subheading if applicable). Place a period at the end of the reference.

Author, A. A. (2009). Title of chapter: Subheading if applicable. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C. Editor (Eds.) *Title of work* (pp. xxx-xxx). Location: Publisher.

**Online document.** After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online document. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (2009). *Title of article: Subheading if applicable*. Retrieved month day, year, from <http://www.source.com>

**Online multipage document created by a private organization.** After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference an online multipage document. If the date is given, simply omit n.d. (which stands for no date) and insert the date. Note only the title of the webpage is in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.



Name of Organization. (n.d.). *Title of webpage: Subheading if applicable*. Retrieved month day, year, from <http://www.source.org>

**Stand-alone online document, no author.** After this paragraph there will be an example of how to reference a stand-alone online document. If the date is given, simply omit *n.d.* (which stands for no date) and insert the date. Note only the title of the webpage is in italics. Capitalize only the first letter of the title of article (and first letter of subheading if applicable). There is no period at the end of the reference. The website should not have a hyperlink.

*Title of webpage: Subheading if applicable.* (n.d.). Retrieved month day, year, from <http://www.source.org>

### Specific Concerns

There are many specific concerns that the APA manual addresses. This section presents a few of those concerns (i.e., quotations, seriation, i.e. and e.g., and the use of numbers). Please refer to the manual for more information.

#### Quotations

According to the APA manual, there are two ways to quote in a manuscript. One is applicable for quotes containing fewer than 40 words, and the other is applicable for quotes encompassing 40 or more words. An example of both is given here. See the APA manual for more information.

**Quotations fewer than 40 words.** Credit must be given to the source of information, regardless of whether it is a paraphrase or a direct quote (American Psychological Association, 2010). Quotations with fewer than 40 words “should be incorporated into the text and enclosed by double quotation marks” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 292). More information about quotes can be found on pages 117-122 of the APA manual.

**Quotations with 40 or more words.** Quotations with 40 or more words should be used sparingly, if at all. At the end of the quote, after the punctuation, enclose the page number in a parenthetical. The APA (2010) manual said the following:

Display quotations of 40 or more words in a double spaced block of typewritten lines with no quotations marks. Do not single-space. Indent five to seven spaces or ½ in. from the left margin without the usual opening paragraph indent. (p. 292)

**Quotations from electronic documents.** A special note should be given regarding quotations from electronic documents without page numbers. Cite paragraph numbers if given, indicated the abbreviation “para.” in the citation (e.g., 2000, para. 17). If there are no paragraph numbers, cite the nearest preceding section heading and count paragraphs from there (e.g., Smith, 2000, Method section, para. 4).

#### **Seriation**

Seriation is the arrangement or listing of things in a series. To show seriation within a paragraph or sentence, use lowercase letters (not italicized) in parentheses. For example: Students correctly used APA format in the (a) margins, (b) title page, (c) page headers, and (d) headings. This will ensure that instructors are happy!

#### **Use of “e.g.” and “i.e.”**

The Latin phrase *Exempli gratia* (which means *for example*) has been shortened to *e.g.* in APA format. A mnemonic device to remember this may be helpful (e.g., if *example* were to be spelled like it sounds, it would start with *eg*). Use *e.g.* when the phrase *for example* can be substituted. Often *e.g.* is used when a complete listing is not possible (e.g., fruit), so examples are given (e.g., apples, bananas, and kiwi). The Latin phrase *id est* (which means *that is*) has

been initialized to *i.e.* in APA format. Use *i.e.* when the phrase *that is* can be substituted (i.e., when writing completely, not simply giving examples).

### **Numbers**

In general, numbers nine and below should be expressed in words. Use numbers or figures to express numbers 10 and above. Do not begin sentences with numbers. See the APA manual for exceptions.

### **Conclusion**

Just as fifth grade teachers instruct, every well-written document summarizes what was covered and identifies the most salient points of the paper. The last section is perhaps the most important section of the entire paper, as it clarifies the author's intention. Think of the conclusion section as the punch line to a joke; the rest of the information is important to understand the punch line, but without the punch line, the purpose of the joke is lost.

This document serves as a visual example and written direction of writing in APA format. It is not meant to be a substitute for the APA manual, but it lays the foundation for those who are new to the APA format. It covered the logistics of APA format including how to write a title page, format a document, cite and reference others, and conclude the document.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Hutchison, B., McDonald, K. E., Reed, E., & Datti, P. (2006). APA regresses wellness of counselors. In J. E. Roose, & B. W. Corn (Eds.), *APA for dummies* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 275-290). State College, PA: PSU Publishing.
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- McDonald, K. E., & Merk, H. L. (2008). Everything you need to know about night-owls and ampersands. *Journal of Things That Go Bump in the Night*, 3, 7-13.