Writing a Paper in APA Style

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Commented [BMLJ1]: Pagination begins on this page, the title page.

Commented [BMLJ2]: Use Times New Roman font, 12 pica, with double-spacing throughout your paper.

Commented [BMLJ3]: The title summarizes the main ideas of the paper without using superfluous words. Use title case capitalization which is similar to capitalization of a book title.

Commented [BMLJ4]: Your name should go on the title page. Do not include any information about your class, your professor’s name, or the date.

Commented [BMLJ5]: Include the name of your institution, not the department.

Commented [BMLJ6]: These three lines of information should be centered, and placed just above the middle of the page.
The abstract should be a paragraph or two that describe the paper much like the back cover of a book describes the contents. Let your reader know the major points that are in your paper without going into detailed descriptions, without using new terminology, and without critiquing your topic or research. This is not another introductory paragraph; rather it is a way to objectively report about your paper. In order to write a good description of the paper, you should write the abstract after you have completed your paper. A well-written abstract will allow the potential reader to determine what your paper is about and whether or not they want to read it. The abstract begins at the left margin, without indentation. The word “Abstract” is written without quotation marks, centered on the first line of the second page of the paper, and is not formatted in any other manner. The abstract should be at least 150 word long, but not more than 250 words long.
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Writing a Paper in APA Style

An APA-styled paper begins with the title of the paper on the third page (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010). The title is centered, is not in bold-faced type, and uses title case style capitalization (similar to the capitalization of a book title) for the important words of the title (Lee, 2012). An APA paper always begins with an introduction. The word “introduction” is not used as a heading. The introduction is simply the beginning paragraph(s) of the body of the paper where you introduce your research. It is not an objective description, such as the one you used in the abstract, but rather a preliminary description of your research. You should describe your hypothesis, i.e., the reason that you wrote this paper (APA, 2010). That does not mean that you will say that you wrote this paper as part of a class assignment. It means that you will let your reader know what you expected to find through your research, then you will describe in your paper what you found using your resources. You will tell the reader about the different parts of your paper and conclusion(s). You will structure your paper using the APA structure style.

Structure

Types of Papers

APA papers are written using a specific structure. The structure will be slightly different depending on whether you are presenting experimental research or a research assignment. Most, if not all, of the papers that you will write for your classes will fall into the research assignment category which means that you will not have to present methodology, participants, or procedures. The sixth edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA Manual) gives further information about structuring an experimental research paper (APA, 2010). The author of this paper will discuss the best methods for writing a research paper using...
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the APA Manual. APA Manual papers are structured through the use of a title page, an abstract, the main body, and the references. APA-styled papers are internally organized using headings (APA, 2010).

Levels of Headings

The paper that you write for your research assignment should be organized hierarchically through the use of headings. Major points should be level one headings. Subtopic ideas within the major points may be organized into level two headings. Follow this pattern with all subsequent levels of headings. Name the headings by using a few significant word(s) (APA, 2010). A chart of the five possible levels of headings is located on page 62 of the APA Manual (APA, 2010). The main headings used are levels one, two, and three (APA, 2010).

Level one headings. Level one headings are centered, bold-faced, and title capitalized (APA, 2010). The word “structure” on the previous page is an example of a level one heading.

Level two headings. Level two headings are left justified, bold-faced, and title capitalized. Never use a level two heading unless you have more than one point to make about your level one heading (APA, 2010). An example of a level two heading is the heading with the words “Levels of Headings.”

Level three headings. Level three headings are indented and bold-faced with only the first word, proper nouns, and acronyms capitalized. Wording follows directly after the period without dropping down a line (APA, 2010). An example of a level three heading is the heading with the words “Level three headings.” Headings frame the writing within your paper.

Writing Your Paper

Style

The style of writing used in an APA-styled paper is clear and concise (APA, 2010).
Write without using creative writing techniques or variations such as you would use in an essay. Examples of APA style writing are the paragraphs following level one, two, and three headings on the previous page. Notice the repetition of similar sentences used in each paragraph.

APA writing style is objective, not familiar, and does not anthropomorphize. Avoid bias by writing objectively. Also, avoid wordiness; use as few words as possible to convey your meaning (APA, 2010). Write your paper in third person meaning that you never write using “I”; instead you might refer to yourself as “the author” (without the quotation marks). The familiar style is used in this paper to help you better understand; however, do not write a paper for your class using “you.” Another required stylistic point is to never anthropomorphize. This means that you do not attribute human characteristics to inanimate objects or to animals (APA, 2010). An example of anthropomorphism would be: “This paper describes the conflict between good and evil.” A paper is incapable of describing. The correct sentence would be: “The conflict between good and evil is described in this paper,” although this conflict could not actually be described in a single paper! To produce a well-crafted APA-styled paper, you will have to practice these writing skills, edit your paper numerous times, and consult the APA Manual for citation rules.

Source Citations

The basis for your paper is what you learned through reading published articles, books, and other resources. As a result, your paper is a blend of your own words and thoughts with those from your sources. In order to avoid plagiarism and to properly acknowledge your sources, you must give credit to the author(s) when you incorporate information from their publications in your paper (APA, 2010). Table 6.1 on page 177 of the APA Manual shows exactly how to cite various numbers of authors with in-text and parenthetical formatting (APA,
2010). Credit is given through citation of direct quotes and paraphrases (APA, 2010).

**Paraphrasing.** Paraphrasing is done by using your own words to describe the information you gleaned from a resource. Paraphrasing should be used frequently throughout your paper and is preferred to quoting (Parrish, 2006). Always cite paraphrased knowledge, otherwise you will have used someone else’s idea and/or work and misrepresented it as your own (APA, 2010) which could get you in big trouble with your professor and the university.

**Quoting.** Quotes should only be used if your source uses a unique term, has a particularly expressive manner of conveying knowledge, or when citing statistics (APA, 2010). When quoting, use exactly the same words as the author. Use a block quote if the quote contains 40 or more words. To block a quote, drop down one line from the text and indent one-half inch from left margin, still using double spacing. Credit the source by enclosing the author(s)’ name(s), date of publication, and pagination (abbreviated by using “p.”) within parentheses at the end of the quote. Do not use quotation marks with a block quote (APA, 2010).

**Ending Your Paper**

Your paper will end with your concluding paragraph(s). Do not use a heading for the conclusion (unless your professor instructs you to do so). Use this paragraph(s) to summarize your research. The conclusion is the only place within your paper that you may give your outlook on your research (APA, 2010). References page(s) follow the end of the body of your paper.

**Reference(s) Page(s)**

According to the APA (2010), the reference(s) section must include, in alphabetical order, all of the sources cited within the paper, but may also include other resources used in researching your topic. Include only references that may be obtained, not personal...
communications. The reference(s) page(s) begins on a new page after the conclusion of your paper. Only the first page is titled with the word “References” without quotation marks, not in bold-faced type, and centered on the first line of the page. Each reference is listed double-spaced with the first line of the reference left-justified and each subsequent line(s) of that reference in a hanging indent. Chapter seven of the *APA Manual* is entirely devoted to examples of references (APA, 2010).

The author wrote this paper with the intention of helping students learn how to write in APA style in order to meet the requirements of their classes and to produce excellent papers in the APA style.

Learning to write using APA style is a task that requires attention to detail, adhesion to the latest edition of the *APA manual*, and repeated editing. Structure your APA paper through the use of headings. Remember that APA-styled writing is clear, concise, and without bias. Give credit to paraphrased and quoted material through the use of citation, and list all cited references, except personal communications, on the reference(s) page (APA, 2010).
References


Use these tips to make the writing of your APA paper easier:

1. Make sure that the running head, shortened title, and page numbers are in Times New Roman font and 12 pica since Microsoft Word defaults to Calibri font and 11 pica.

2. To format for double spacing: Click on the lower right-hand corner in the “Paragraph” dialog box, and set your line spacing to double. Then, do one of the following:
   a. Check the box in front of “Don’t add space between paragraphs of the same style.”
   b. Reduce the spacing before and after the paragraph to 0 (zero).

3. To set up a different first page header and page numbers, follow these steps exactly:
   a. From your current document, select the “Insert” tab.
   b. Click on “Page Number.”
   c. Select “Top of Page,” then “Plain #3.”
   d. In the Header/Page number area type “Running head: YOUR TITLE.”
   e. Highlight “Running head: YOUR TITLE, and the page number”, then right click to change the font to Times New Roman and the font size to 12 pica. Once these are changed, copy this information, including the page number.
   f. In the Design tab, check the box for “Different First Page.” All your previously typed header information will disappear. Do not fear!
   g. Click the mouse in the left-hand corner of the header area and paste in previously copied information. Your header and page number will appear again.
   h. Place the mouse in between the word “TITLE” and the page number, then tap the “Tab” key to align the page number to the right.

Commented [BML33]: Label additional material with “Appendix” and “A, B, C, etc...,” unless only one appendix is used; then label it as “Appendix.”

Commented [LW34]: Include the title of the document centered, not in boldfaced type, and in title case capitalization.

Commented [LW35]: Use appendices for information that might be distracting within the text, that is brief, and/or is “easily presented in print format” (APA, 2010, p. 39).
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i. Go to page 2 of your document and delete the words “Running head.”

j. Place your mouse between the word “TITLE” and the page number, then press the “Tab” key to align the page number to the right side of the paper.

k. Finally, press the “X” in the command ribbon for “Close Header and Footer.”

4. After setting up your paper with tips one through three, make writing papers for all your classes easier by creating a simple four page template which includes: title, abstract, body, and references. To create a new paper simply copy of this template into a new document and type your paper using your new document.

5. To locate DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) for articles on the Reference page:

   a. Go to http://www.crossref.org/guestquery. Fill in the form with citation information (author, first page number, journal title, and ISSN).

   b. Click “Search.”

      i. If the response is “No DOI found,” check for any spelling errors or mistakes, then resubmit.

      ii. If the response remains the same, follow the guidelines given in the APA Manual or on the APA Style Blog (http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2009/09/a-doi-and-url-flowchart.html) regarding what retrieval information to include and additional guidelines.

*Addendum: This paper was written after viewing a similar model written by Mark Parton, a graduate student assistant for the Dean of Student Success at Tarleton State University.