

Running head: APA STYLE (5th ed)

Using the 5th Edition of the APA Style Guide

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Abstract

As consumers of research information and authors of technical reports, students need to have familiarity with APA report writing style. This article presents a brief summary of guidelines and examples for students whose written assignments must adhere to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Listed are guidelines and examples for phrasing and tense, formatting, headings, citing within text, and referencing resources.

Using the 5th Edition of the APA Style Guide

Although there are obvious methodological and substantive differences among scientific disciplines, all require technical writing and most require beginning students to utilize specialized writing conventions. The interdisciplinary use of the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) suggests the need for an expedient means of disseminating the essential features of this editorial style guide. Psychology students, like those of most other disciplines, invariably encounter difficulties in preparing papers that conform to this style.

This article provides a simplified guide for the development of technical writing skills reflecting the recommendations in the manual. The intent was to summarize essential features of this editorial style and include sufficient suggestions and examples to assist the undergraduate student with the organization and presentation of papers that conform to this latest edition of the *Publication Manual*.

Phrasing and Tense

In general, the *Publication Manual* recommends that one's writing reflect brevity, orderliness, and flow of ideas, as well as decorum in phrasing. Flow of writing is enhanced by use of first-person pronouns (*I* and *we*) and is preferred over such phrases as *the Researcher(s)* when referring to oneself or the authors of the study. Again, although not explicit in the manual, the use of the second person (*you*) in the Results section is not considered appropriate; preferred are expressions where *you* is understood (*Note the findings in Table 1...*) or the passive form (*It should be noted from Table 1...*). Logical sequencing of ideas fosters orderliness of presentation. Logical connection of ideas is reflected in the use of linking sentences and phrases at the beginning or ending of each paragraph. Avoid jargon, excessive detail, hyperbole, stereotypes in

order to facilitate clarity, brevity, and good taste. Words and phrases are not emphasized through the use of bold print, underlining, single/double quote marks, or all uppercase characters.

Instead, writers must construct sentences so that emphasis is understood. The exceptions to this rule are described and illustrated on pp. 119-120 Section 3.38) of the manual.

Consistency of verb tense facilitates the flow of thought and avoids distracting the reader. Past and present perfect tense (e.g., *have shown*) are suggested for the Introduction and *Procedure* sections. Although not explicitly stated, the *Participants* portion of the Method section is presented in past tense, as normally would be the case for *Apparatus*, *Materials*, and *Design* sections. If, for example, the materials consisted of a copyrighted test, use of the present tense to describe this instrument would be appropriate. Past tense alone and present tense, respectively, are recommended for the Results and Discussion sections. Finally, the Abstract should be presented in the same verb tense used in each respective section from which the content is drawn.

General Formatting

Margins should be uniform and a minimum of 1 inch on all sides. Content of typed and word-processed manuscripts should be left-justified and use a standard font such as Times New Roman with 12 point font. Do not hyphenate words at the end of a sentence; end each line of text with a complete word. Double-space all lines including references. Number all pages starting with the title page. Page numbers are located in the upper-right corner of each page, 1 inch in from the right margin and between the top of the page and its 1 inch margin. Consistently and uniformly indent (either 5, 6, or 7 spaces from the left margin) new paragraphs using the word processing program's default setting for the Tab key. APA-formatted manuscripts usually consist of distinct sections, some with subsections. The major sections normally use first-level headings

while subsections are third level. Headings are described in greater detail in the next section.

Headings

Most papers will require headings when switching topics. Headings should be as brief as possible. There are five levels of headings used in APA-style manuscripts. Many papers use only one or two levels of headings; most require no more than three levels of headings unless multiple studies are reported. If only one heading level is needed, it should be Level 1. Level 1 headings consist of centered words that are capitalized. Additional levels of headings are warranted if two or more subheadings are needed. Papers needing two levels of headings should use Levels 1 and 3; those requiring three levels should use 1, 3, and 4. Level 3 headings are italicized, and begin at the left margin. Text following level 1 and 3 headings begins on the next line. Level 4 headings are indented and italicized. Only the initial letter of the first word is capitalized and the heading ends with a period. Text following a level 4 heading begins on the same line as the heading. All headings should be brief (i.e., 2 or 3 words) and describe the section being introduced. Examples of levels 1, 3, and 4 are presented below:

Level One

Level Three

Level four. Refer to pp. 113-115 (sections 3.31-3.32) and pp. 289-290 (section 5.10) of the *Publication Manual* for more detailed directions on headings.

Paper Organization

All APA Style manuscripts have a title page containing the title of the paper, name(s) of the author(s), and their affiliation (centered left-to-right in the middle of the page, with each component on a separate line). The first line of the title page (left justified) is the optional *Running head*, which captures the essence of the title though in an abbreviated form. The title of

the paper should succinctly identify the nature of the investigation and variables/issues studied, and should not be more than 12 words. In the title, wording such as *investigation of...* or *study of...* is avoided because it is unnecessary. The name(s) of the author(s) is presented on the next line under the title. Author institutional affiliation(s) is on the line immediately under the name(s).

All papers must have a header. The header consists of the first two or three words of the title of the paper and a page number. The header is right justified with the page number appearing 5 spaces to the right of the last word. Manuscripts being submitted for possible publication should have a running head of up to 50 characters on the first line on the title page. The phrase *Running head* is typed flush with the left margin at the top of the title page; the running head will replace the manuscript's header if published in a journal, and is typed in all capital letters.

The second page consists of the Abstract. The Abstract is a 120 words or less statement that provides the reader with an overview of the paper. An introductory sentence specifies the significance or nature of the problem. How and with whom the investigation was conducted and what was found are essential elements of the Abstract. Results are reported in terms of the nature of the findings, statistical analyses, level of statistical significance, and their relation to the hypotheses. Conclusions are briefly stated along with implications. The actual body of the paper begins on page three.

The introductory section of all APA-style reports is headed by the title of the manuscript without the use of the term *Introduction*. The text begins immediately thereafter and provides a logical progression from the general to the specific and precise nature of the research problem. To develop a smooth introduction, a simple strategy is employed. First, studies are reviewed

which are increasingly relevant and exclusive to the matter under investigation or they may be reviewed in a chronological sequence or within a conceptually-organized format. This section concludes with a problem statement and hypotheses.

The Method section is comprised, normally, of three subsections: *Participants*, *Apparatus (or Materials)*, and *Procedure*. They are designated by Level 3 headings that are italicized and begin flush with the left margin. The *Participants* section describes the sample and how participants were selected. The term *participants* is recommended for use when referring to humans and the sample should be described in sufficient detail (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity) to enable replication by subsequent researchers. The *Apparatus (i.e., equipment) or Materials (i.e., assessment instruments such as tests, surveys, handouts)* section must provide a sufficient description to acquaint the reader with the measuring devices without presenting laborious detail. Place copies of materials used, if at all lengthy, in an appendix and cited in text as (e.g., *see Appendix*). Procedure refers to what was done in all conditions/phases of the study (e.g., how and when the independent variable was introduced in the study, instructions provided and nature and sequence of conditions). Data analyses are not reported until the Results section.

The Results section begins with a first-level heading and immediately follows the Method section. Here, the findings are objectively reported in relation to the hypotheses, without interpretation or explanation. As a general rule, the major findings are presented first; they consist of the tests or statistical comparisons that address the main hypotheses and problem statement. The reader's attention should be directed to significant findings that will be subsequently discussed in the last section of the report. Depiction of data and results in tables with appropriate labeling and figures (e.g., graphs) is often useful but redundancy with material already presented in text should be avoided. The reader is assumed to be knowledgeable

regarding statistics. Therefore, the type of statistic, degrees of freedom, value obtained in the comparison (magnitude), and the alpha or probability level (usually .05, .01, or .001) are all reported. For example, if a *t* test were used to analyze the mean difference between two groups with 38 degrees of freedom, the in-text report of the finding is stated as follows: $t(38) = 2.19, p < .05$. As previously noted, the Results section of the manuscript is not where the findings are discussed in terms of their implications or theoretical relevance. The information simply indicates that a particular analysis was employed to test a given hypothesis that resulted in confirmation or disconfirmation. The Results section of a report might have a statement similar to this: *Contrary to the hypothesis regarding gender, it was found that females produced significantly higher SAT Quantitative scores than did males.* The following is not, however, appropriate: *This finding casts doubt on results obtained by Chance and Guess (1993).* This statement is inappropriate because it is an interpretation of a result and, therefore, belongs in the Discussion section.

The Discussion portion of the paper begins with an interpretation of the most germane findings, relating them to existing research cited in the Introduction. Explanation is provided for differences in results between the present study and those previously reviewed. This section gradually broadens in its scope to include limitations of the present methodology, alternative explanations of the findings, suggestions for future research, theoretical implications and, if appropriate, recommendations for applied practice. One should strive to remain modest and conservative in the assessment of the relevance of the findings to theoretical or applied problems while being concise and direct. The recommended practice is to focus on the most important findings related to the problem statement or hypotheses, limit speculation, and avoid rationalization of statistical results that were not significant. All APA-style papers end with a

References section that lists the sources cited in the report.

Citations

Each quotation is accompanied by a parenthetical citation that includes the name(s) of the author(s), the publication date, and the page(s) where the quotation is located. Follow the *5-word* rule: If five or more words from the source are used and are in the same order in your paper, the rules for quoting need to be followed. Obtain permission to quote when necessary. Quotations from a single source should be limited to fewer than 500 words.

All paraphrased works must also be cited parenthetically within the body of the paper with one exception: If summarizing/critiquing a single article, paraphrasing does not have to be referenced. Always paraphrase accurately. Citations for paraphrased works require the surnames of the authors and the date (one may also cite the page(s) where the paraphrased content is located). Cite as early in a paragraph as you can. Once a source is cited, the reader understands that everything from that point on is from either that source or you, until another source is cited. Cite the appropriate source as you move from information in one to information from another source, then back to the original. When a work has multiple authors, the citation should link the last author's name with the others using the ampersand symbol (&) if the citation is in parenthesis; otherwise the word *and* is used (see examples A-D); the latter is a frequent source of confusion for the novice writer. The first time a work is cited, all authors (if five or less) are cited in order, by their surnames. If the work has one or two authors, cite all of them by their surnames each time the work is cited. If the work has three to five authors, cite all of them in the first parenthetical reference. Later references will parenthetically cite the first author's surname followed by the expression *et al.*, date, and specific page number(s) if the reference is a direct

quotation. If the work has more than five authors, all citations to that source consist of the primary author's surname followed by et al. (To reference a source with six or more authors, list the surnames and initials of the first 6 followed by *et al.*) When a point is made by multiple sources, alphabetize them using the primary authors' surnames in the parenthetical citation, and separate them with semicolons.

Example of Paraphrasing Using Multiple Sources. Psychologists have been slow to develop behavioral taxonomies that classify processes and operations or behavior (Catania, 1984). Those classification and notational systems that do exist (Grant, 1964; Hall, 1976; Mechner, 1959; Millenson, 1967; Schoenfeld et al., 1972; Woods, 1974) are infrequently used (Catania 1984), and appear to be too detailed and complex for undergraduates enrolled in introductory courses to readily comprehend and use.

A complete quotation of less than 40 words should be incorporated within the paper's text, begun and ended with quotation marks, and must be followed by a parenthetical reference citing the author(s), date of publication, and the page(s) where the quotation is printed.

Example A: Embedded Text Reference for Paraphrasing. Although many behavioral scientists feel that punishment should never be used, Deitz and Hummel (1978) offer two situations where it may be ethical to use the procedure.

Example B: Embedded Text Reference for Paraphrasing. There are two situations where punishment procedures may be warranted: When all other deceleration methods have failed or when the behavior is a clear and present danger to self or others (Deitz & Hummel, 1978).

Example C: Embedded Text Reference for Direct Quotations. Using punishment instead of other procedures to decelerate behavior is problematic. "Punishment should be reserved for only very serious misbehaviors and should be used only when other alternatives have been

exhausted" (Deitz & Hummel, 1978, p. 81).

Example D: Embedded Text Reference for Direct Quotations. Using punishment to decelerate behavior is problematic. According to Deitz and Hummel (1978), "Punishment should be reserved for only very serious misbehaviors and should be used only when other alternatives have been exhausted" (p. 81).

Constructing References

The list of references is always started on a new page and the word References should be centered at the top of the page. Only sources directly cited in the manuscript are referenced. Arrange, using author surnames, the references in alphabetical order. References are not bibliographies. Bibliographies refer the interested reader to additional sources for further reading that were not specifically cited in the manuscript, and are not used in APA-copyright manuscripts. Each reference is double-spaced with the first line of each reference flush with the left margin. All other lines in a single reference are indented (use the tab key).

The general format for a book reference includes the following components. First, all authors are listed (in the order in which the names appeared on the original manuscript) by their surname followed by the initials of their first and middle name. The date of publication is presented in parentheses after the listing of authors, and is followed by a period. The italicized title follows the publication date, and only the first word of the title is capitalized with two exceptions: Proper nouns, such as a person's name, are capitalized and when the complete title of the book has a colon, the first letter of the word following the colon is capitalized. If the book is a second or later edition, after the title, in parentheses without italicizing, the edition is indicated using the following type of abbreviations: (2nd ed.). The last component of a book reference is publication information including the city and state (abbreviate) where the book was published

and the name of the publisher (city and publisher are separated by a colon). If the name and location of the city are well known, the state's abbreviation can be omitted. Information about the publisher should be as brief as possible (e.g., do not use Co., Inc.). Section 4.16 (pp. 248-255) illustrates the many variations of book references (e.g., second and later editions, edited books, corporate authors).

Example of a Book Reference:

Fredrick, L.D., Deitz, S. M., Bryceland, J. A., & Hummel, J. H. (2000). *Behavior analysis, education, and effective schooling*. Reno, NV: Context Press.

Journal references include many of the same components used in book references, and begin with a listing of the surnames and initials for all authors (if the source has six or more authors, cite the names and initials of the first six followed by et al.), separating each surname with a comma. An ampersand (&) is used instead of the word "and" before the surname of the last author. The date of publication, in parentheses, comes after the authors' names, and is followed by a period. Only the first word in the article's title is capitalized (again, proper nouns such as a person's name or use of a colon in the article title require additional capitalization). The article title is followed by period. The next part of the journal reference is the name of the journal, italicized, with each word capitalized except for prepositions and conjunctions (e.g., of, and), followed by a comma, and the numeric volume number, also italicized. When needed, the issue number follows the volume number with no space, in regular type (rather than italicized), and in parentheses. Issue numbers are only used when each issue of the journal begins with page 1. A comma separates the journal's volume number/issue number and the inclusive range of pages where the article is published in the journal without the abbreviation pp. or the word pages. Pages 240-247 of section 4.16 in the *Manual* illustrate different types of journal

references.

Example of a Journal Reference

Garavalia, L. S., Hummel, J. H., Wiley, L. P., & Huitt, W. G. (1999). Constructing the course syllabus: Faculty and student perceptions of important syllabus components. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 10(3), 5-21.

The primary function of all references is to efficiently allow a reader to access the source. Not all electronic sources provide all of the desirable components associated with a complete reference. At present, the general format for referencing electronic media is: (a) author surnames and initials separated by commas in the order in which they appear on the paper, with the last author's surname connected to the others with an ampersand (&); (b) the date, in parentheses, of publication or copyright (if available) followed by a period; (c) the full title, italicized, ending with a period, and (d) a retrieved-and-availability statement that permits a reader to directly access the document. Do not end the reference with a period.

Example of an Electronic Media Reference

Hummel, J. H., Huitt, W. G., Michael, R., & Walters, L. (1994, April). *What you measure is what you get*. A data-based presentation made at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, New Orleans. Retrieved August 29, 1997 from <http://www.valdosta.edu/~jhummel/psy310/tchrass.htm>

Many journal articles are now available via the Internet. To reference such articles simply construct the reference as you would any journal reference and insert, using brackets, the phrase Electronic version after the article's title. If you believe that the original article has been altered

(e.g., figures removed, etc.), end the reference with the date you accessed the article and its URL.

Example of a Journal Reference from the Internet

Cameron, J. Banko, K. M., & Pierce, W. D. (2001). Pervasive negative effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation: The myth continues [Electronic version]. *The Behavior Analyst*, 24, 1-44. Retrieved May 19, 2003, from <http://www.abainternational.org/tbajournal/bhan-24-01-0001.pdf>

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An expanded version of this manuscript is available from the authors and may be used as a handout. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to John H. Hummel, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA, 31698-0100. Electronic mail may be sent to: jhummel@valdosta.edu