APA Formatting and Style Guide

Summary:
APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. This resource, revised according to the 6th edition, second printing of the APA manual, offers examples for the general format of APA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the reference page. For more information, please consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (6th ed., 2nd printing).

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To see a side-by-side comparison of the three most widely used citation styles, including a chart of all APA citation guidelines, see the Citation Style Chart. You can also watch our APA vidcast series on the Purdue OWL YouTube Channel.

General Format
Your essay should be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11") with 1" margins on all sides. You should use a clear font that is highly readable. APA recommends using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Include a page header (also known as the "running head") at the top of every page. To create a page header/running head, insert page numbers flush right. Then type "TITLE OF YOUR PAPER" in the header flush left using all capital letters. The running head is a shortened version of your paper's title and cannot exceed 50 characters including spacing and punctuation.
Major Paper Sections

Your essay should include four major sections: the Title Page, Abstract, Main Body, and References.

Title Page

The title page should contain the title of the paper, the author's name, and the institutional affiliation. Include the page header (described above) flush left with the page number flush right at the top of the page. Please note that on the title page, your page header/running head should look like this:

Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

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

TITLE OF YOUR PAPER

Type your title in upper and lowercase letters centered in the upper half of the page. APA recommends that your title be no more than 12 words in length and that it should not contain abbreviations or words that serve no purpose. Your title may take up one or two lines. All text on the title page, and throughout your paper, should be double-spaced.

Beneath the title, type the author's name: first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Do not use titles (Dr.) or degrees (PhD).

Beneath the author's name, type the institutional affiliation, which should indicate the location where the author(s) conducted the research.
The Purdue Online Writing Lab’s Sample Title Page:
Following the American Psychological Association’s Guidelines
Purdue Pete
Purdue University
Abstract

Begin a new page. Your abstract page should already include the page header (described above). On the first line of the abstract page, center the word “Abstract” (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks).

Beginning with the next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research. (Do not indent.) Your abstract should contain at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions. You may also include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings. Your abstract should be a single paragraph double-spaced. Your abstract should be between 150 and 250 words.

You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, indent as you would if you were starting a new paragraph, type Keywords: (italicized), and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.
Reference Citations in Text

In APA style, in-text citations are placed within sentences and paragraphs so that it is clear what information is being quoted or paraphrased and whose information is being cited.

Examples:

Works by a single author

The last name of the author and the year of publication are inserted in the text at the appropriate point.

from theory on bounded rationality (Simon, 1945)

If the name of the author or the date appear as part of the narrative, cite only missing information in parentheses.

Simon (1945) posited that

Works by multiple authors

When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in the text. In parenthetical material join the names with an ampersand ( & ).

as has been shown (Leiter & Maslach, 1998)

In the narrative text, join the names with the word "and."

as Leiter and Maslach (1998) demonstrated

Reference List

References cited in the text of a research paper must appear in a Reference List or bibliography. This list provides the information necessary to identify and retrieve each source.

- **Order**: Entries should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names. Sources without authors are arranged alphabetically by title within the same list.
- **Authors**: Write out the last name and initials for all authors of a particular work. Use an ampersand ( & ) instead of the word "and" when listing multiple authors of a single work. e.g. Smith, J. D., & Jones, M.
- **Titles**: Capitalize only the first word of a title or subtitle, and any proper names that are part of a title.
• **Pagination**: Use the abbreviation p. or pp. to designate page numbers of articles from periodicals that do not use volume numbers, especially newspapers. These abbreviations are also used to designate pages in encyclopedia articles and chapters from edited books.

• **Indentation***: The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and all subsequent lines are indented (5 to 7 spaces) to form a "hanging indent".

• **Underlining vs. Italics***: It is appropriate to use italics instead of underlining for titles of books and journals.

Two additional pieces of information should be included for works accessed online.

• **Internet Address****: A stable Internet address should be included and should direct the reader as close as possible to the actual work. If the work has a digital object identifier (DOI), use this. If there is no DOI or similar handle, use a stable URL. If the URL is not stable, as is often the case with online newspapers and some subscription-based databases, use the home page of the site you retrieved the work from.

• **Date**: If the work is a finalized version published and dated, as in the case of a journal article, the date within the main body of the citation is enough. However, if the work is not dated and/or is subject to change, as in the case of an online encyclopedia article, include the date that you retrieved the information.

* The APA has special formatting standards for the use of indentation and italics in manuscripts or papers that will be typeset or submitted for official publication. For more detailed information on these publication standards, refer to the [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association](https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/manualsAPA.cfm), or consult with your instructors or editors to determine their style preferences.

** See the [APA Style Guide to Electronic References](https://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa) for information on how to format URLs that take up more than one line.

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1 [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)
2 [https://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa](https://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa)