



## **The APA Formatting Style**

Writing in APA formatting style (American Psychological Association) is widely used nowadays for scientific writing. Term papers, empirical studies, literature reviews, theoretical or methodological articles, and research reports, are all usually edited in the APA format – therefore, we might say that this style has become a standard for scientific research papers.

Using the APA formatting style makes a good impression in the examiner's eyes - therefore, its use may improve the final mark; reading this article could help you on the long run, since it offers information about this particular format style, beginning from font and indent, to the manner of referencing.

### **Font, indent and spacing**

To begin writing in the APA formatting style, perform the following: select a serif typeface for your text, such as Times New Roman (which is the most frequently used), and a sans serif typeface for figure labels (like Arial, for example); double-space your entire manuscript, between the text's main body and the titles, headings, or quotations. Do not forget to treat the reference list or figure captions in the same way. Then, select a half-inch indent for the first line of every paragraph within the text. Select the left-hand alignment, so that you will have a jagged-looking right margin of your text.

The APA formatting style does permit various changes, in order for you to personalise your text. Font size should allow the reader to read the printed paper from a comfortable distance; the APA format therefore recommends using size 12 font, for a standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11") having 1" margins on every side. These settings should render the printed version of your text easily legible.



Another guideline of the APA formatting style is the use of a page header, or “running head” as it’s sometimes called. The page header appears on every page, at the top, by inserting page numbers flush right. Afterwards, type your paper’s title in your header, flush left, with capital letters. A running head has a character limit of 50, spacing and punctuation included.

## **Sections**

Your paper ought to contain four main sections, namely the Title page, the Abstract of the paper, its Main Body, and the Reference section. They are numbered as follows: page 1 is the Title page, page 2 the Abstract, and page 3 is the beginning of the main body. The Reference page is separate from the main body; the tables are included on a new page after the Reference page, and the figures are included in another section following the tables.

## **The title page**

The title page contains the paper’s full title, together with information regarding the author: his or her full name, institutional affiliation, and a running head containing the title. On the title page, the running head should write: “Running Head: ..... (insert title)”, while on the other pages it only contains the paper’s title. Type in your title using upper and lowercase letters in the upper half of the Title Page, and centre it. The APA formatting style recommends the use of titles that do not exceed 12 words; furthermore, the use of abbreviations is discouraged. It is best to eliminate from your title any word without a clear purpose. Beneath it, write your first name, followed by middle initials and last name. No titles or degrees should be mentioned, such as “Mr.”, “Ph. D” or “Prof.”. Be sure to insert the institutional affiliation beneath.

## **The abstract**

The abstract also includes the page header. Begin by writing the word “Abstract” and centring it, without using bold, italics, underline or quotation marks. Afterwards, devise a



concise summary of the paper, mentioning the key points of your research, the methods you have used, significant research questions, data analysis and conclusions. You might also include what implications your results might pose, or how they might trigger future researches. A proper abstract should have between 150 and 250 words. Do not forget to provide keywords: indent, type “Keywords” using italics, and insert the keywords most representative for your paper, in order to facilitate finding it in databases.

### **Main body**

The main body of your paper may be devised as you think is appropriate, but remember to respect the APA rules for indent, spacing and font. The APA formatting style recommends the use of footnotes, in order to eliminate long explanations that could negatively affect the flow of ideas. Use a simple and coherent language, avoid figures of speech and jargon, and try to be as politically correct as possible.

### **The reference section**

The reference section requires quite a bit of attention. Regardless if you cite directly the theories and ideas that have contributed to your study, or if you paraphrase sections of text belonging to other authors, the APA formatting style has a clear set of rules for referencing. The author-date citation system permits the readers and examiners to easily find the cited sources within your reference list. The references have to be easy to locate, therefore you ought to list your sources in alphabetical order.

Citing an author in the text is done by inserting the surname of the author followed by the year of the publication. Example: (Smith, 2002) When using direct quotations, include the page number and location of the piece of text in the original work, like (Andrews, 2010: 214-216) or (Andrews, 2010, in press-a). If you need to cite two or more works, arrange them in alphabetical order, as they appear in the reference list. Example: (Gordon & Brenn, 2003a, 2003b; Smith, 2006a, 2006b) or (Hoffman, 2005; Reed, 2006).

When citing three or more authors, mention all of them when referencing the book for the first time. In subsequent references, include the name of the first author together with “et al.” and the year of the publication. “Et al.” stands for “et alii”, which is Latin for “and others”. Example: (Jackson, Brown, & Cameron, 2003) or “Jackson, Brown and Cameron (2003), for the first citation in your text. The following citations will look like this: (Jackson et al., 2003). However, if a second citation is in the same paragraph as the first, you may omit the year.

The APA formatting style emphasises that direct quotes should be scarce, as paraphrasing is considered somewhat more professional; shorter quotes, of less than forty words, can be incorporated within the text, in quotation marks, and followed by their respective reference. Example: “insert quote here” (Gordon, 2009, p. 110) or Gordon (2009) discovered that “insert quote” (p. 110). Furthermore, if you have a larger text passage you need to quote directly, the rule is to write in a double-spaced block of text, with 5 spaces of left margin indent. Quotation marks are not required when citing longer passages. Moreover, offer detailed reference details, such as the page where each quote can be found.

There are other rules that the APA formatting style has when citing works that have as authors from various organisations, corporations or institutes. In such cases, the full name of the group that serves as author is written entirely each time you reference the source: (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2009).

There are instances where you might use books of unknown authorship. In such cases, the APA formatting style specifies that you cite them by using the first two or three words in their titles, omitting initial articles and capitalising each of them. If the authorless source is an article, website or a certain chapter of a book, use quotation marks when writing down the title: (“Politics of Chance”, 2006). If your source happens to be a book, brochure, report, or periodical, italicise its title: (*ABC for Surviving in the Wild*, 1994).

On the Reference Page, do not forget to list your sources in alphabetical order. The APA formatting style rules require the mentioning of the sources’ title, edition, the city of publication and, of course, the publisher. The edition appears abbreviated and in brackets, after the title of the source. Example:

Books: Berkow, R., & Fletcher, A. J. (Ed.). (1992). *The Merck manual of diagnosis and therapy*. (16th ed.). Rahway (NJ): Merck Research Laboratories.

Newspaper articles:



Lee, G. (1996, June 21). Hospitalizations tied to ozone pollution: Study estimates 50,000 admissions annually. *The Washington Post*; Sect. A:3 (col. 5).

For journal references, include the full title of the journal and the volume number, both items either underlined or in italics. After the title and volume number, mention the issue number in brackets and the page range, ending the row with a period.

Example: *Journal of Quantum Physics*, 34(6), 43-59.

As you can see, the APA Formatting Style is quite concerned with the quality of the referenced sources, given their importance in establishing the credibility of a paper.

### **Why use the APA format?**

The APA formatting style simplifies the editors' work and provides an easy-to-follow structure for a publication. Furthermore, readers find their answers more easily if they are provided with a familiar structure, and the risk for distraction is decreased. The use of a standard format reinforces your credibility by proving that you are aware of your audience and fellow researcher's need for accessible information. No matter if you are a student, professor or researcher, using a standard, an internationally-recognized formatting style will facilitate the readers' understanding of your work. For additional information regarding the rules of writing in the APA formatting style, visit specialised websites such as [the APA style official website](#) or [Purdue University](#).

