

APA format

APA format is a citation format most commonly used within the social sciences and many other scientific disciplines. This handout covers the basics of formatting your paper in APA style. For more information, refer to the APA Publication Manual, which is currently in its 6th edition.

General APA Guidelines (8.03)

Margins and Spacing

Double space your paper and set your margins to 1" on all sides.

Font

Use a clearly readable font, preferably 12 pt. Times New Roman.

Page Numbers

Insert your page numbers on the right side of your header. Do not manually type them on each page of your manuscript.

Running Head

Using capital letters, type the title of your paper flush left at the top of each page. This is called the "running head." If your title is longer than 50 characters, including spacing and punctuation, the running head should contain only a shortened version. Note that a different header should be used for your title page, as this will be formatted differently (see below).

Formatting Headers

To format your headers in Word, follow these steps:

On a PC

1. On the menu bar, select Insert and click Header.
2. On the Header menu, select the first option (Blank).
3. At the top of the page, Header & Footer Tools should now be automatically selected. Under Design, check the box for **Different First Page**.
4. Type "Running head:" and then your title in all caps.
5. Hit the Tab key to move the cursor to where your page number will be. If you have set your margins to 1",

this will be under the 6.5" mark on your ruler.

6. Click Page Number. This is under the Design menu, which should still be open.
7. Highlight **Current Position** with the mouse and select Plain Number 1. This will allow you to insert page numbers in the upper right corner without erasing your header.
8. Next, add your headers for the remaining pages. In the top left corner of your second page, you will see [Type here]. Double click there and type your title in capital letters.
9. To insert the rest of your page numbers, repeat steps 5-7.

On a MAC

1. On the menu bar, select Document Elements and click Header.
2. On the Header menu, select the first option (Basic).
3. Click the purple tab, Header and Footer. Check the box for **Different First Page**.
4. Reselect Header > Basic under the purple tab.
5. There are three brackets in which to type text.

Note: You will not use the second bracket at all. The words "Type text" will go away when you print your paper.

6. Double-click on the far left bracket and type "Running head:" and then your title in all caps.
7. Double-click on the far right bracket and click Page Number located under the purple tab.
8. Next, add your headers for the remaining pages. On the second page, the three sets of brackets will automatically show up. Double-click on the far left bracket and type your title in capital letters.
9. To insert the rest of your page numbers, double-click on the far right bracket, click the purple tab, and click Page Number.

Major Paper Elements

Generally, an APA paper includes four major sections: the title page, abstract, body, and reference list.

Title Page (2.01)

The title page will contain a header with a page number (flush right) and running head (flush left). Unlike the rest of the paper, the running head on the title page should include the words "Running head," which will look like this:

Running head: TITLE OF PAPER

Aside from the header, the content of your title page will appear centered and double-spaced, positioned in the upper half of the page. It will include the following elements, each on its own line: title, your name, and institutional affiliation. Note that your instructor may ask you to include other elements—such as the instructor's name, course number, and/or date—in your title page.

Note: See the example paper at the end of this handout.



Writing Center
SMC Campus Center
621 W. Lombard St. Room 307
www.umaryland.edu/writing
410-706-7725

Abstract (2.04)

An abstract presents a concise summary of the paper's contents and main points. Abstracts are important because they are used by researchers to find relevant work in a database. Place your abstract on a separate page after the title page. The word "Abstract" will appear (no bold or italics) centered at the top. If you are writing for publication, you may also want to include a list of keywords at the bottom so that your work will appear in keyword searches.

Note: See the example paper at the end of this handout.

Note: For more information on how to format an abstract and what to include in it, please see our "Abstracts" [handout](#).

Body (2.05-2.10)

The body of an APA paper is often broken down into sub-sections. These sections differ according to the type of paper you are writing but may include such elements as an introduction, methods section, results section, and discussion.

Introduction: In this section, present the specific problem and discuss your research strategy. You will want to familiarize the reader with the importance of the problem, existing scholarship on the subject, your hypothesis and research objectives, and the theoretical and practical implications of your findings. The heading of the introduction should consist of the paper's title, which should be centered and not bolded. **Do not label your introduction as "Introduction."**

Methods: The methods section contains information about the methodology, variables, sample size, and other details that will help the reader understand how the research was conducted.

Results: Here, you will provide a summary of the relevant findings of the research. Be sure to include all pertinent information, including those findings that run counter to your hypothesis.

Discussion: Use this section to wrap up your paper by evaluating and interpreting the research findings. The discussion section draws conclusions about the results and places them in context. What are the implications of this research for theory and/or practice? What further questions does the research inspire? You may also use this section to reiterate the importance of the problem addressed by the research.

Note: For more information on individual sections within the body of a paper, please see our "[Introductions](#)," "[Literature Review](#)," "[Materials & Methods](#)," "[Results](#)," and "[Discussion](#)" handouts.

Reference List (2.11)

The reference list goes on a separate page with the word "References" centered at the top. All entries on the reference page should appear double spaced, in alphabetical order, and in a hanging indent format. This means that the first line of each entry will be flush left, and all subsequent lines within that entry will be indented.

Example: Weir, K. (2012, February). The beginnings of mental illness. *Monitor on Psychology*, 43(2). Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/>

Note: See the example paper at the end of this handout.

Note: For more information on reference lists, please see our "APA Citations" [handout](#).

Footnotes (2.12)

Footnotes can be used to provide supplemental content or copyright permission status. Number them



Writing Center
SMC Campus Center
621 W. Lombard St. Room 307
www.umaryland.edu/writing
410-706-7725

consecutively in the order in which the corresponding material appears in the text.

Content: Since the intention of footnotes is to supplement the main text, they should be brief and used sparingly. Limit each content footnote to one idea; if you find it necessary to elaborate, the material may be better suited to the body of the document.

Copyright permission: When reproducing or adapting lengthy quotes, tables, and figures from another source, you must obtain copyright permission from the author. While source information for tables and figures is provided in a table note (see below), source information for long quotations is provided in a footnote.

Journal: From "Title of Article," by A.B. Author, year, Title of Journal, Volume, p. xx. Copyright [year] by the Name of Copyright Holder. Reprinted [or adapted] with permission.

Book: From Title of Book (p.xxx), by A.B. Author, year, Place of Publication: Publisher. Copyright [year] by the Name of Copyright Holder. Reprinted [or adapted] with permission.

Tables and Figures

Sometimes results can be presented most efficiently and understandably with tables and figures. In order to avoid overwhelming readers and losing track of your main point, use tables and charts selectively. They should present information that would be too wordy or repetitive in text form.

Table Layout (5.08)

Tables and figures should be numbered with Arabic numerals, such as Table 1, Figure 5, etc. The title goes on a separate line underneath the table number (double-spaced). Titles are italicized and written in uppercase and lowercase letters. All elements of the table should be clearly and consistently labeled.

When writing for publication, tables go at the very end, after your references. However, many instructors prefer that you incorporate tables into the text. Ask your instructor if you are unsure.

Table Notes (5.16)

The following three types of notes can appear below the table:

General notes appear directly below the table. They provide information about the table as a whole; they may also define abbreviations. General notes are preceded by the italicized word *Note*.

Example: *Note.* OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

Specific notes appear beneath any general notes. They contain information about a particular row, column, or other specific part of the table. Specific notes are preceded by a lowercase letter in superscript format (e.g. ^a).

Example: ^an = 25 for each group.

Probability notes appear beneath any specific notes. They indicate how asterisks and other symbols in the table indicate *p* values. Probability notes are preceded by whatever symbol is being defined.

Example: **p* <.05. ***p* <.01.

Table 1

Average GRE scores by Intended Graduate Program

Intended Program	Quantitative	Verbal
Business	152	149
Education ^a	147	150
Engineering	159	149
Humanities	149	157
Natural Sciences	153	151
Average	152	151.2

Note. The table presents the scores of applicants to the above programs, not accepted students.

^aThis category includes only applicants to elementary education programs.

Using Headings

Breaking down your text into sections and subsections with headings helps readers navigate your content.

Levels of Heading (3.03)

APA Style includes five different levels of heading. These headings indicate the hierarchy of information in a paper (i.e., sections and subsections). For example, you would use a level one heading to label your “Methods,” “Results,” and “Discussion” sections. If you included “Participants” as a subsection of your “Methods” section, it would have a level two heading. A subsection of “Participants” would then have a level three heading and so on.

Example:

- Level 1: Methods
 - Level 2: Participants
 - Level 3: Age
 - Level 3: Race
 - Level 2: Instruments
- Level 1: Results
- Level 1: Discussion

Sometimes students use a level one heading for their first section, a level two heading for their second section, and so on—regardless of the relationship between sections! Remember, the different levels of heading indicate **hierarchy** of sections, not necessarily order of sections.

Levels of Heading in APA	
Level	Format
1	Centered, Bolded, Major Words Capitalized
2	Flush Left, Bolded, Major Words Capitalized
3	Indented, bolded, first word capitalized, ends with period.
4	<i>Indented, bolded, italicized, first word capitalized, ends with a period.</i>
5	<i>Indented, italicized, first word capitalized, ends with a period.</i>

Note: See the example paper at the end of this handout.

Presenting Statistics

APA Style contains rules for presenting statistics clearly.

Statistics in Text (4.44)

If you are reporting inferential statistics, include enough information to place the statistics in context and allow your reader to understand the study. The amount of explanation needed can vary, but APA Style does provide some general guidelines:

- For common statistics (i.e., mean, *t* test), references are unnecessary.
- For common statistics, formulas are also unnecessary.
- If descriptive statistics are presented in a table or figure, there is no need to repeat them in text.
- In order to clarify the relationship of numbers in a series, use terms like *respectively*.

Statistical Symbols (4.45)

In your text, write out statistical terms instead of using the symbol. However, use the symbol in conjunction with mathematical operators (such as an equals sign).

In Text: The means were...

With Mathematical Operators: $M_s = 3.70$ and 4.22

Punctuating Statistics (4.46)

Statistical values are enclosed within parentheses.

Example: ($p = .42$)

However, when the statistic is part of a larger element enclosed in parenthesis, use brackets.

Example: (See Figure 2 for the results from the control group [$n = 5$].)

Degrees of freedom are also enclosed within parentheses.

Example: $t(45) = 4.35$

However, confidence intervals are enclosed within brackets.

Example: 95% CI [$5.62, 8.31$]

Writing in APA Style

APA Style contains rules not only for formatting and citation but also for various aspects of writing. For more detailed information on APA writing conventions, consult the APA *Publication Manual* and the Writing Center's handouts on these specific topics.

Conciseness and Clarity (3.05-3.11)

As a general rule, APA favors brevity. In other words, avoid meaningless words, redundancy, statements of the obvious, excessive jargon, and overuse of the passive voice.

Note: For more information on concision, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

Verb Tense (3.18)

Selecting the proper verb tense can be tricky, especially when you are reporting results or referring to others' research in a literature review. Use past tense to discuss an action that took place at a specific time in the past.

Past tense: Smith (2005) presented the following results:

When describing a past action that did not occur at a specific time, or to describe an action beginning in the past and continuing in the present, use the present perfect tense.

Present perfect tense: Over the years, additional studies have yielded the same results.

Note: For information on the different verb tenses and when to use them, please see our "Verb Tenses" [handout](#).

Active and Passive Voice (3.18)

As a general rule, APA Style recommends using the active voice when possible, since it tends to be stronger and more precise. Overuse of passive voice can lead to awkward sentences. However, passive voice is sometimes appropriate. When choosing between the two, ask yourself whether the intended focus is **on the actor or on the object of the action**. If the focus is on the object, then the passive voice may be useful. You can also use the passive voice when the actor is unknown.

Active (Emphasis on "We"): We mailed the letter.

Passive (Emphasis on "Letter"): The letter was mailed.

Note: For more information on active and passive voice, please see our "Voice" [handout](#).

Oxford Comma (4.03)

In APA, you must use a comma between items in a list, including the Oxford comma before "and" or "or."

Examples: She ate cake, cookies, and ice cream.

She had to decide whether she would eat a piece of fudge, a cannoli, or a s'more.

Note: For more information on the Oxford comma, please see our "Commas" [handout](#).

Capitalization (4.14 - 4.20)

In general, names of theories are not capitalized. However, when they contain the name of an individual, that person's name should be capitalized.



Writing Center
SMC Campus Center
621 W. Lombard St. Room 307
www.umaryland.edu/writing
410-706-7725

Examples: behaviorism, string theory, Freudian theory

Do not capitalize the names of generic drugs. However, do capitalize brand or trade names.

Generic: ibuprofen

Brand Name: Lipitor

Do not capitalize the names of diseases or disorders, except where the name contains a proper noun.

Examples: major depressive disorder, osteoporosis, Addison's disease

Do not capitalize academic subjects unless they are part of the official name of a course or program.

Examples: biology, Introduction to Sociology, Master of Fine Arts

Note: For more information on what to capitalize and when, please see our "Capitalization" [handout](#).

Numbers (4.31 - 4.38)

In APA Style, words are used to express numbers that are less than 10. Numbers are also spelled out if they begin a sentence, title, or text heading. However, it is best to avoid beginning with a number; therefore, try to revise such a sentence if possible. You should also write out numbers that are part of common fractions or universally accepted usage.

Beginning of Sentence: Twenty-five participants enrolled in the study.

Common Fraction: a two-thirds majority

Universally Accepted Usage: the Ten Commandments

In APA Style, digits are used to express numbers 10 and greater. Digits are also used if they precede a unit of measurement or are statistics, percentages, ratios, ages, points on a scale, or part of a series (e.g., stages, chapters, tables).

Note: For more information on how to use numbers in writing, please see our "Numbers" [handout](#).

Abbreviations (4.24 - 4.27)

For the sake of clarity, APA Style recommends using abbreviations sparingly. They are useful, however, for expressing long technical terms and names of organizations. While most abbreviations require explanations, some very common abbreviations are accepted as words. Below are some of these standard abbreviations.

Abbreviations Accepted as Words: IQ REM ESP AIDS HIV

Latin Abbreviations: e.g. (for example) i.e. (that is) etc. (and so forth) vs. (versus, against)

Units of Measurement: a.m. (ante meridiem) cm (centimeter) g (gram) Hz (hertz) km (kilometer)

Note: For more information on abbreviations, please see our [handout](#) on this topic.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.



Writing Center
SMC Campus Center
621 W. Lombard St. Room 307
www.umaryland.edu/writing
410-706-7725

Food Deserts and Diabetes in Baltimore City

Sarah A. Smith

University of Maryland, Baltimore

Sample

Abstract

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Keywords: lorem, ipsum

Sample

Food Deserts and Diabetes in Baltimore City

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

First-Level Headings

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

Second-Level Headings

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Third-level headings. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Fourth-level headings. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Fifth-level headings. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

References

Anderson, A.A. (2013). *Title of a book*. City Name, NY: Harper.

Baker, B.B., & Chandler, C.C. (2012). Title of a journal article: Subtitle of a journal article.

Name of a Journal, 7(5), 519-522. Retrieved from <http://www.umaryland.edu/writingcenter>

Dowler, D.D. (2002). *Title of a book*. City Name, NY: Vintage.

Ericson, E.E. (2005). Title of a journal article: Subtitle of a journal article. *Name of a Journal*, 7(5), 519-522. Retrieved from <http://www.umaryland.edu/writingcenter>