APA Style

Advice from UDM Writing Center Consultant Emilee Erdman, Nursing

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

An APA formatted paper includes TITLE PAGE, ABSTRACT, MAIN BODY, and REFERENCES (Specific assignments may not require an abstract.) Times New Roman font is used, typed in 12-point. Capitalization rules are upheld unless otherwise noted.

Header

All pages include a page number and a header. The header is left aligned and the page number is right aligned.

The header appears differently on the first (title) page. It must be less than 50 characters (including all letters, spaces, and punctuation.) On the first (title) page, it will look like this:

Running head: TITLE (SHORTENED VERSION IF NEEDED)   #

Whereas, the proceeding pages include a standard header:

TITLE (SAME VERSION AS ABOVE)   #

Title page

This is your first page, containing your title, name, and institution (University of Detroit Mercy.) These appear centered on the upper-half of the page. The header (see above) goes at the top.

- Titles are recommended to be less than 12 words, with no abbreviations.
- Author name(s) appear as First MI. Last, without title/degree (Dr. or Ph.D.)
- Institution identification assigns affiliation and where the research/writing took place.

Abstract

An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of an article. An abstract will help a reader decide whether or not to read the paper. It is page two of your paper and consists of only one paragraph. It is usually less than 250 words but includes all main points of the paper. These points are presented in the same order they appear in the paper. An easy way to check this is to compare the abstract to the headings of your paper.

- The word "Abstract" is centered as the first line of the abstract paragraph.
- The first line of the paragraph is not indented.
- Use digits for all number above 10, except when beginning a sentence with a number.
- Any abbreviation used (highly encouraged) needs to be first explained
  Example: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

Main Body

The main body is the largest portion of your paper. APA formatting for your main body includes headings (see below; headings are different from headers) and in-text citation. Starting your first page of the main body (page three with an abstract) you will repeat your full Title, centered. The beginning of your first paragraph will follow standard grammar and punctuation rules, indented.

Headings

Headings are used in APA to allow the author to separate and classify sections of the paper. There are five levels of headings. Papers may not require all levels of headings based on the topic or severity of research and analysis. Papers with only one level of headings are acceptable if content is appropriately presented and clear to the reader. Levels must proceed in numerical order. The first level is bolded, centered, and uses standard capitalization rules. Second level headings will be flush with left margins and bolded.

CITATION

Anytime outside information is included in your writing, citation is required. This not only includes facts, data, and objective material but ideas, thoughts, and subjective material of others. Citation is required for paraphrases/summaries, short direct quotations, and long direct quotations.

There are three components of APA citation, though not all types of citation require all three. When gathering information for an APA paper, it is important to keep record of:

1. the full name of the author(s)
2. year of publication
3. page number for any source used

The year of publication and page number will always occur within parentheses, while the last name of the author(s) can be included in the sentence itself or parentheses. If the author is included in the sentence, the year will immediately follow while the page number always comes after the direct quote. If the citation ends the sentence, the period will come after the citation.

When all three components are found together inside parentheses, the format should look like this:

(Last name, year, p. x).
(Smith, 2010, p. 123).

Citation with paraphrases and summaries

When paraphrasing or summarizing information, it is very important to make sure plagiarism does not occur. Writing clear and concise summaries takes practice to ensure accuracy in the delivery of the content while avoiding using the original author's words.

With longer research papers, the majority of the information presented should be in the form of paraphrases and/or summaries. This type of citation requires the author's last name and the year of publication. Page references are only needed with direct quotes, not paraphrases and summaries.

EXAMPLE

This is my sentence paraphrasing the author's content (Smith, 2010).

This is my sentence paraphrasing Smith's (2010) content.

Citation with short direct quotes

A short quote is less than 40 words in length. This is a quote taken word for word, punctuation by punctuation from the original source. Portions of the original content that are not relevant may be omitted and ellipses (…) are used to replace them. This type of citation requires the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number.

EXAMPLES

"This is the author's content which I found relevant to my topic" (Smith, 2010, p. 123).

"This is the author's content … relevant to my topic" (Smith, 2010, p. 123).

Smith (2010) states, "this content which I found relevant to my topic" (p. 123).

Notice the direct quote does not include ending punctuation.

Citation with long direct quotes
This is any direct quote that is 40 or more words in length. It will be off-set from the body paragraph it occurs in by using a block quote.

A block quote begins without quotation marks and is indented just as if it were the beginning of a new paragraph. This indented margin is maintained throughout all lines of the quote. It remains double spaced. The final period occurs before the citation in this type of quote. This type of citation requires the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number.

EXAMPLE

In Smith's (2010) study on diabetes control in adolescent populations, the following information was presented:

This would be the beginning of the quote. Insert direct quote from article that is 40 or more words in length. Continue indenting all lines of the quote in this fashion for as many lines long as the quoted material takes.

If the quote contains paragraph breaks, follow the original content by further indenting the block quote. (p. x)

Notice there is no period following the citation. As with any direct quote, you must present the author's last name, year of publication, and page number.

Citation with multiple authors
When using information from one source with multiple authors, the correct way to cite depends on the number of authors.

Two authors: write the names in the order they appear on the source

Smith and Johnson (2010) contend that…

… end of my sentence (Smith & Johnson, 2010).

Three to Five authors: the first citation will follow the first template while subsequent citations will include the first author and "et al."

Smith, Johnson, and Williams (2010) found…

… the end of a sentence in which the citation first appears in the paper (Smith, Johnson, & Williams, 2010).

Any future sentences in the paper will then look like this:

Smith et al. (2010) contend that…

…end of my sentence (Smith et al., 2010).

Six or more authors: the first author and et al. will be used for all citations

Smith et al. (2010) found…

…end of my sentence (Smith et al., 2010).

Reference Page

The last portion of your APA paper will be your references. Every source used in the paper's citations should be found in the references. This should begin on a new page with the label "References" centered at the top of the page (NOT bolded, underlined, or with quotation marks). All text should be double-spaced just like the rest of your essay.

- For each reference the line will begin on the left margin, all lines after list should be indented one-half inch from the left margin. This is called hanging indentation.
- Reference list entries are alphabetized by the last name of the first author.
- References are formatted based on the type of source the information came from.
- Purdue OWL is a user-friendly internet resource which details the different way to format references.

All information presented above is from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition, 2010. ☺