How to Format a Paper in APA Style: A Sample

Your Name

Course 123-AB, Ivy Tech Community College Fort Wayne

Day Month Year
Abstract

This paper discusses formatting a college paper in APA style. MS Word and Google Docs were tested. The Word APA template does not format references correctly. Further, student papers generally do not require all the sections of a published paper in APA style, which Word includes; they may include only the Discussion section. Google Docs does not include all the formats necessary for APA style. I concluded that using the blank document template in Word is easiest. The abstract states your research question(s), method(s), result(s), and conclusion(s), in 120 words or fewer. The title for this section of the paper is a separate paragraph, no special formatting, aligned center, plain font. The paragraph itself is aligned left with no indent.

Keywords: APA style, college writing
The problem of formatting

This paper explains how to format an APA style paper. In MS Word, using the blank template and adding necessary formatting manually is less trouble than using the APA paper template. If you format manually, you can control the appearance and placement of the references list, and can format correctly the headings and a wide range of source citations. (That was my thesis statement, which appears in the first or second paragraph.) Google Docs also requires manual formatting and includes only basic elements, enough for a student paper. (Following APA style, I simply state these facts to avoid bias.) Please see the set of screen shots for either word processor, which is a separate PDF.

General formatting

It is easiest to set up the document overall first. You can then change some details as required for the different sections. Set the margins of all pages to one inch on all sides. Align the paragraphs left, set the first line indented, and set line spacing to double. Make sure there is no space before or after paragraphs. Make sure to select the correct font for your paper. Times New Roman is usual. Whatever font you use, it should be 10- to 12-point throughout the paper – even headers and notes.

APA style requires a title page, but this does not count in the pagination. A title page for a college paper should contain the information given in this sample, in separate paragraphs on the top half of the page. These paragraphs should be aligned center and not have the first line indented. Do not use bold font. The title of the paper should be one line, rarely two. If there is a subtitle, capitalize its first word even if it is A, An, or The as in this sample paper.

Create a document header formatted with a different first page. Insert the page number automatically. You may need to do this before you add the running head. On the first page, type: Running head: YOUR TITLE. Make sure the font is the same as in the body of the paper. The second and subsequent page headers only have YOUR TITLE, as you can see by comparing the first two pages of this sample paper.

An abstract page is next, unless you are directed not to include it. This page also does not count in the total pagination, so if five pages of writing is required you will have at least seven total pages. The
abstract is a brief summary of your research, formatted exactly as shown, with the paragraph flush left and the keywords line indented. Title this page Abstract exactly as shown: aligned center and not bold.

Footnotes\footnote{The superscript number is a note reference.} The text of endnotes is on a separate page, before the references list. In Word 2016, this can only be done manually. The text of footnotes should be on the bottom of the same page where they appear in the text. Use either endnotes or foot-notes (not both) for tangential content, and not for citations. See the notes in this paper to see how to format them.

Headings APA style requires headings to mark different subsections of the discussion, as done here. Five heading levels are provided for, but students normally use only three. Heading 1 is a separate paragraph aligned center. Heading 2 is a paragraph aligned flush left. Headings 3-5 are not separate paragraphs, and end with a period. Use the same font type as in the body of the paper for headings, bold font for levels 1-4. All together, the headings look like this:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textbf{Heading 1}
\item \textbf{Heading 2}
\item \textbf{Heading 3.} Paragraph text follows.
\item \textbf{Heading 4.} Paragraph text follows.
\item \textbf{Heading 5.} Paragraph text follows.
\end{enumerate}

Quotations Direct quotations of fewer than 40 words should be placed within quotation marks, and followed by an in-text citation giving the page in the source before any punctuation. “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” (Author, 2017, p. 3).

If you quote more than 40 words from a source, the quotation should be a separate paragraph indented a half inch from the left margin. At the end of such a “block quotation,” after any closing punctuation, add the in-text citation in parentheses.
The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (Author, 2017, p.3)

**Charts, Tables, and Figures**

You may reproduce a chart, table, or picture (called a figure) from a source, if you place a full citation beneath it, using the style shown: Title, Author, date, and publication information. Charts, tables, and figures – in that order - should be numbered (do not use the original numbering) and placed in an Appendix section, following the references list. They do not count in the pagination. For examples, see table 1 and figure 1.

**Citations**

**In-text citations**

You must cite the source of all information you convey in your paper unless it is well known. Asserting that the sky is blue needs no citation. Elaborating that the sky appears blue because the specific gases and particulates in the earth’s atmosphere reflect light in the blue range of the spectrum ("Rayleigh scattering"), needs a citation just like that. This citation was for an encyclopedia article with no named author, so only a short title is given. It is an article title, so it goes in quotes; book titles are in *italics*. In-text citations to a book or article in print or online include only the author’s last name, the date, and – if you are directly quoting - the page number like this (Lastname, 2017, p. 10). If there are three to five authors, give all their last names the first time you cite it in text, and thereafter only the first author’s last name plus the two words “et al.” the date and page if quoting (Lastname, et al., 2017, p. 10). Cite a website or web page like a book or article (Agnelli, et al. 2017).

You may want to back up a statement with citations to two or more sources. Separate the citations with a semi-colon (Lastname, 2017; Surname, 2017). If you use more than one work by the same author published in the same year, add a lowercase letter to the year for each work, in both the in-text citations (Author, 2017a) and in the references list: Author, A. (2017a). *Title*.

**The References list**
All in-text citations must relate clearly to a full citation in the references list at the end of your paper. This is a section of the paper, so the title is not bold font. The title paragraph is aligned center. The citations are all individual paragraphs with the first line “hanging” out, and the rest of the text indented one half inch from the left margin. Do not use tabs to do this, but change the paragraph format. Arrange the citations in alphabetical order. The references list, like the title page, does not count as a page of your assignment.

When creating a full citation for the references list, it is helpful to think of containers. An article or chapter is contained in a journal/newspaper or a book. If you accessed it from a database such as EBSCO or ProQuest, that is the container of the journal or book and you need to include that information too. Using the NoodleTools application is very helpful in formatting citations; access it on the Library website.

The first part of the full citation is the author’s name in inverted form, using only the first initial. Then comes the date of publication in parentheses followed by a period. Next is the title of the article or book, capitalized like a sentence. For a book, set the title in italics and give the place of publication and the publisher, following the examples in the references list. For an article, leave the title in plain text, followed by the title of the journal in italics, with all significant words capitalized. Then give the volume number in italics and the page numbers in plain font. If the pages of issues all start with 1, give the issue number. An article or book that you accessed from a database -- EBSCO, ProQuest -- then needs the DOI:


If you do not have a DOI use the URL of the full text, following this format:


Notice the capitalization in the article title: Rayleigh is a proper name, and UV is an acronym, so they are capitalized. The URL includes the database; if it does not, add it, as here.

Cite web pages and websites like books and articles. Give the title of the specific page on the website where you got your information. Treat the title of a specific page like an article title, and the website title like the title of the journal. The author or editor’s name may be in the “About” section of the website. It may be a “group” (or “corporate”) author. Publication dates for websites should be specific as possible: (2017, Nov. 1). Use the revision date if a page has been revised. See the Agnelli, et. al. example in the references list.

**Conclusions and where to get help**

This paper has presented basic APA style formatting, giving examples of the problems our students most often encounter. Consult the separate PDF of screen shots for more assistance. The Purdue Online Writing Lab and the APA style center online explain how to cite other types of sources, and have more sample papers. For in-person help, ask a librarian or English tutor. Your ideas are most important, and they deserve proper formatting.
Notes

1 Normally, numbers from zero to ten are written as words in APA style. This kind of tangential information should be put into a note, as it is here, where it will not distract from the argument. The Notes section, like other sections, is not titled in boldface.

2 To format a note reference manually in Word 2016, use the Home tab, Font menu, and choose superscript. It must be the same number in the text and in the notes section. Using the References menu in Word 2013-2016 to automatically insert notes will force you to use both incorrect citation formatting and put the entire references list in the wrong place in your document. Therefore we recommend inserting endnotes manually and not using footnotes.
References


These are comments, which would not appear in a real paper, to point out citation elements.

The first entry has seven authors; the in-text citation form is always (Agnelli, et al., 2016). It is one webpage from a website. All the elements of the publication or revision date are given, if known, in the form shown.

The second entry is for a chapter written by one author, appearing on pages 20-30 in a book edited by another person. The in-text citation form is chapter author only (Author, 2017, 23); include page if you quoted.

The third entry is for a book you consulted most of, edited by two people. The in-text citation form is (Person and Fellow, 2017). The fourth entry shows how to capitalize a book title. The in-text citation form is (Lastname, 2017).

The fifth entry is for an encyclopedia article with no named author, found in an online database. The encyclopedia title is capitalized like a book title. In-text form gives a short article title like this (Rayleigh scattering).

The sixth entry is a newspaper article with a by-line, appearing on non-consecutive pages. In-text: (Reporter, 2017).

The seventh entry shows how to capitalize book titles that include proper names.

The eighth entry is for an article in a journal, appearing on pages 1-10 of volume 1 issue 2. Capitalize all significant words in a journal title. Because journals have volume and issue numbers given in *italics* (plain), only the year is given for the date. If the page numbers of issue 2 are sequential to issue 1, you can omit the issue number.
Appendix

Table 1

Response to stimulus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response level</th>
<th>Ages 18-24</th>
<th>Ages 24-29</th>
<th>Ages 30-39</th>
<th>Ages 40-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1. Need Help? Cartoon