

Guidelines for Using American Psychological Association Format for Psychology Essays

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The format presented here is for writing papers based on the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed., 2009). These requirements differ somewhat from those for research and laboratory reports. Requirements for laboratory reports are discussed in Guidelines for Laboratory Reports prepared by the Department of Psychology.

The APA style is used in many journals in psychology, mental health, family relations, social work, and education. Some of the guidelines have been adapted here to make them more suitable for student papers. Should you wish to know more about these guidelines, you may purchase a copy of the *Publication Manual* through the university bookstore. There is also a copy available at the reserve desk in the university library.

Please note that **some instructors may modify these instructions for particular courses.**

Format

Your paper must always be typed, and double-spaced. (Go to Format – Paragraph – and select Double from the Line Spacing pull-down menu). Although double-spacing is required for most of the paper, single-spacing is used for footnotes. (If footnotes are used – with the cursor at the place in the text where you want a footnote, go to Insert – Reference – Footnote, then select bottom of the page from the pull-down menu, then click Insert. A text box will appear at the bottom of the page where you can write your footnote and the numbering will be done for you).

All paragraphs should be indented ½ inch (1.27cm) (except the abstract). Don't leave more than one space between paragraphs. (Go to Format – Paragraph – and select First line from the Special pull-down menu. Make sure it says 0.5" (1.27 cm) in the *By* box. Make sure the *Before* and *After* boxes in the Spacing section both say 0 pt – not automatic or 6 or 12 pt).

The margins should be one inch (2.54 cm) all around. [Go to File – Page Setup (or Format – Document in MSWord for Mac) – Select the Margins tab – Change all margins to 1" (2.54 cm) but do not justify the margins. Select the *align left* button from the top menu bar (or the center button for titles and some headings)].

Print size should be 12-point size, in Courier or Times New Roman font. (Go to Format – Font – Choose the font type and size OR use pull down menus from the editing bar).

Pages are always numbered. The numbers appear at the top right-hand corner of each page and start with the title page. Use Arabic, not Roman, numerals. (Go to Insert – Page Numbers – Choose Top of Page and Right from the pull-down menus – Check the box that says Show number on first page).

All pages should have a header (short version of your paper's title which is the same as the running head) at ½ inch from the top left written all in capital letters. (Go to File – Page Setup (or Format – Document in MSWord for Mac) – Select the Layout tab – Change the Header position to 0.5" (1.27cm). Then go to View – Header and Footer – Choose the Align Left button (but this will automatically be on the left) from your editing bar at the top of the document (not from the header and footer menu bar) – Type your header all in capital letters. (Please note that

the header and page numbers appear grey in the page layout format of your working document in MSWord. It will appear in black ink in the printed format.)

All papers will have at least one level of headings (the abstract, title, references, etc.). Some papers may also have sub-headings. If you have only one level of heading, each heading (Abstract, Title, References, etc.) should be in Title Case. This means all main words are capitalized. They should also be centered on the page and in bold font. (Click on Align Center on the editing menu bar and click on the **B** button on your menu bar). If you also have sub-headings within your paper, they should be aligned left (not indented but flush to the left margin) and in bold font with all main words capitalized. If you have another level of heading (sub-sub-headings), see the below for instructions (Level 3 to 5). If you use sub-headings, do not leave a sub-heading at the bottom of the page where the text begins on the next page.

Level 1 – Centered, Bold and Title Case

Level 2 – Flush Left, Bold and Title Case

Level 3 – Indented, bold and sentence case ending in a period.

Level 4 – Indented, bold, italicized and sentence case ending in a period.

Level 5 – Indented, italicized, and sentence case ending in a period

Write in a clear and concise style. Avoid long, awkward sentences. Use the past tense (e.g., "Smith showed") or present perfect tense (e.g., researchers have shown") in your paper if you are referring to past events (studies published by other researchers are all past events). Do not use 1st person personal pronouns in your report (I, we). Also, try **not** to refer to your own paper (This paper will elaborate on...). Avoid sexist language, including generic male nouns and pronouns. For example, "human evolution" is preferable to "the evolution of man."

Organization

Your paper may consist of several major parts: title page, table of contents (for longer, complex papers only), abstract, the body of the paper, and references. All instructors will require a title page, the body of the paper, and references. Others may wish you to add a table of contents, or an abstract. **Be sure that you know what your professor requires.** The body of the paper may be further subdivided into sections but this is optional. See "The Body of Your Paper" below.

Title Page

The first page of your paper is the title page. It is a separate page and is numbered page 1 (see instruction for inserting page number above). The title page includes the title of your paper, the name of the author (you!), the professor, the course, and the due date of the paper. Each of these parts is centered and appropriately spaced one under the other. A sample is shown in the Appendix.

Table of Contents

This document shows a Table of Contents on page 2. Note the organization. A page number is provided for each of the major sections. Where a section has subdivisions these are indented so that it is clear that they are subdivisions of the major section. (Please note that the

grey highlighting is part of the table of contents formatting in MSWord and does not show up in the printed document. Do not use highlighting in your printed table of contents.)

Abstract

The abstract is a brief summary of the paper and should not be more than 120 words. The goal of the abstract is to provide enough information in order that a reader can decide whether to read the full paper. Although it appears at the beginning of your paper, one usually waits until the paper is complete to write the abstract. The topic of the paper should be clearly stated. An outline of the main argument and conclusions drawn by the author should be included as well.

Type your abstract on page 2. The word "Abstract" is centered and bold at the top of the page, and the abstract is a single paragraph with no paragraph indentation at the beginning. Type all numbers in numeral form except those that begin a sentence. An example of an Abstract page is included in the Appendix.

The Body of Your Paper

Introduction

It is always wise to introduce your paper with a paragraph or two explaining what the paper is about. Often it is easier to write this when you have completed most of the paper. The Introduction should give your reader a clear idea of where you are going. Writing it also helps to make sure that your goals are clear in your own mind. Your introduction will start on page 3 (unless the Abstract is omitted) and starts with the title of your paper (not the word Introduction) as the heading centered (see Levels of Headings above).

You should be able to sum up the main argument (the main point you are trying to make) in a single sentence. This is your thesis sentence. Your thesis sentence should be somewhere in your first paragraph or two. Your paper may involve the review of past research. You should have citations for the research that will be reviewed in your paper in the introduction to your paper. The research you will review is usually the evidence that you are presenting to back up your argument. The introduction should have a summary of your argument and a summary of the evidence that will be presented. (A slogan to remember what to include in the introduction of your paper is "Say what you are going to say!")

Main Material

Once you have introduced your topic, you should start to develop your ideas. The material that you have read in preparing for writing your paper will not only provide the substance for your report but will also guide your point of view. You will wish to make your point of view clear to your reader. To do this, you will discuss the research and views of the authors you have read, and show how their work has guided your thinking

Try to use a logical organization so that one paragraph flows smoothly into the next. It is important that you don't confuse or surprise your reader by sudden shifts of ideas. If the paper is long, it is helpful to divide it into sub-sections with headings. Be careful, however, that you do not create too many subdivisions, because this can make the paper seem choppy to the reader. Make sure that each paragraph deals with one topic only, has more than one or two sentences, and starts with some reference to the preceding paragraph in order to improve the flow. Each

paragraph should be more than one or two sentences and less than one page. This section follows immediately after the introductory paragraphs, with no blank lines between. (A slogan to remember what to include in the main body of your paper is “Say it!”)

Summary

A good paper will finish with a brief summary of what you have discussed at length in your paper. The summary does not have to be long. It serves to draw the ideas together and remind the reader of the important parts of the argument. If you used research to back up your argument, you should include citations of that research in your summary. There are no blank lines between the main material and the summary, nor is there a separate heading in a short paper. (A slogan to remember what to include in the summary of your paper is “Say what you said!”)

Acknowledging the Work of Others

It is extremely important that you do not present another's ideas as your own, even when you do not directly quote their material. This is considered plagiarism, which is a serious academic offense. Whenever you use ideas or information reported by other researchers, it is necessary to accurately identify the sources. If you use terms like ‘past research,’ ‘research has shown,’ ‘many studies,’ ‘a study,’ etc., then you need to have a citation or citations for that work. APA journals use the author-date citation method to do this. The procedure is described in the last section of this handout, headed *Author-Date Citation Style*.

Use of Quotations in Psychology Papers

Please note quotations **should be avoided unless absolutely appropriate and necessary**. Academic writing in psychology relies very little on the use of direct quotations. More often, we paraphrase the material, making sure that we cite the source, using the author-date citation style described below. If a quotation is appropriate, there are two forms it may take. Examples are taken from the *APA Publication Manual* (5th ed.), pp. 117-118.

A) A short quotation (less than 40 words) is included directly in the text, enclosed in double quotation marks. The author and date are cited and the page number(s) is given.

Quotation 1 (Note the use of single quotation marks to indicate material that was quoted in the original text. Note also the use of three ellipsis points (...) to indicate material that has been omitted from the original source.)

She stated, "The 'placebo effect,' ... disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner" (Miehle, 1993, p. 276).

Quotation 2 (Another way of dealing with the same material)

Miehle (1993) found that "the 'placebo effect,' which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner," (p. 276).

B) A quotation of more than 40 words should be placed in a separate block of text which is placed on a new line and indented 5 spaces or ½ inch from the normal left hand margin. (Go to Format – Paragraph – Change Left margin box to read 0.5” (1.27 cm).) The quotation marks are omitted, and the page numbers in parentheses follow the quote.

Quotation 3 (Note that double quotes are now used around the material which was quoted in the original text.)

Miehle (1993) found the following:

The "placebo effect," which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner. Furthermore, the behaviors were never exhibited again, even when real drugs were administered. Earlier studies were clearly premature in attributing the results to a placebo effect. (p. 276)

References

Always start the list of references on a new page with the word "References" centered at the top of the page. This list must contain complete information for all the primary citations that appear in your paper. In addition, you must not include any sources that are not mentioned in your paper or secondary sources. All of the following examples are from Cozby (1989).

The *APA Publication Manual* specifies several different formats depending on whether you are referring to a journal article, a book, an article in a book, a technical report, a conference presentation, and so on. Only a few of the most common formats are presented below. **Pay careful attention to the punctuation.** The Reference page for this handout is provided as an example of the how references are listed on a Reference page. Always follow the following general format for the Reference page:

1. Do not categorize the reference list by type of material (i.e., books, journal articles, etc.). Instead, list references in **alphabetical order** by the first author's last name. Be careful here. Do not change the order of the authors' names for a multi-author publication. It is the order of the publications that is alphabetized.
2. The published form of the Reference page for APA journals lines up the first line of each reference with the left margin. The following lines of a reference are indented ½ inch (1.27 cm). The Reference page for this handout follows that format. (Go to Format – Paragraph – and select Hanging from the Special pull-down menu. Make sure it says 0.5" (1.27 cm) in the By box.)
3. Each element of a reference (authors' names, date, article title, publication data) is separated from the next element by periods.
4. The spacing of the authors' names is important. Pay attention to the examples below. Note that the ampersand "&" replaces "and" between authors' names.
5. If you have more than one publication by the same author(s) in the same year arrange these alphabetically by the title (excluding A or The) that follows the date. Lowercase letters--a, b, c, and so on--are placed immediately after the year, within parentheses. Include the letter with the year in your citation, e.g., Kaufman (1990b).

Kaufman, J.R. (1990a). Control...

6. Multiple publications by the same author(s) that are not in the same year are ordered chronologically.
7. **Double space references** (Do not use a numbered list in presenting your references and do not single space, as shown in the following examples.)

References to Articles in Journals

Generally, journals are organized in volumes (one per year) and issues (from perhaps two to twelve per year) (e.g., Volume 37 of the Journal of Social Issues consists of journal issues published in 1981). The issue number is included in the reference only when the issues in a volume are not paginated consecutively, i.e., each new issue starts with page one rather than continuing from the previous issue. In the case of the Journal of Social Issues, the issue number would be included in parentheses after the volume number. Example 2 below, "Two authors, including issue number." It is more common to continue the pagination from one issue to the next within a volume. This is shown in Example 1. Therefore, in most cases you do **not** include the issue number in your reference.

It is important that you *italicize the name of the journal and the volume number* in the reference list. In addition, please note that only the first letter of the first word of the article title is capitalized (unless the title has a colon, then the first word after the colon is also capitalized). Authors are identified by their surnames and initials (in that order), not their first names.

Articles almost all have a DOI (digital object identifier) assigned. APA format requires that researchers (including students) will always locate the DOI, and use the reference format which includes the DOI. **This is not an "either-or" situation where the researcher may choose to ignore a DOI.** When there is no DOI assigned, provide the periodical home page web address (URL). There is no need to include database information such as ProQuest or PsycINFO. These databases change the coverage of particular journals over time. When an article is not assigned a DOI, is either published in a discontinued periodical or the periodical web page does not exist, and online content is ONLY available in an electronic database such as JSTOR, provide the entry page URL of the database which holds the article. Although this type of reference is rare for articles, it may occur especially when the journal is discontinued. **It is unacceptable to substitute an assigned DOI with the journal URL or database URL. There is no need to include retrieval dates.**

Please refer to the *Publication Manual of APA* (6th ed., 2009, pp. 198-224) for more types of reference examples.

1. Journal article with DOI:

Herbst-Damm, K. L., & Kulik, J. A. (2005). Volunteer support, marital status, and the survival times of terminally ill patients. *Health Psychology, 24*, 225-229. doi:10.1037/0278-6133.24.2.225

2. Journal article with DOI, more than seven authors:

Taylor, S., Zvolensky, M. J., Cox, B. J., Deacon, B., Heimberg, R. G., Ledley, D. R., ... Cardenas, S. J. (2007). Robust dimensions of anxiety sensitivity: Development and initial validation of the Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3. *Psychological Assessment, 19*, 176-188. doi:10.1037/1040-3590.19.2.176

3. Journal article without DOI (when DOI is not available):

Light, M. A., & Light, I. H. (2008). The geographic expansion of Mexican immigration in the United States and its implications for local law enforcement. *Law Enforcement Executive Forum Journal, 8*(1), 73-82.

References to Books

When a book is included in your reference list, the title of the book is underlined or italicized. Again, only the beginning words are capitalized unless they are proper nouns or follow a colon. The title of the book is followed by the city of publication, the state (or province) if the city is not well known, and the name of the publishing company. If there is a DOI available, include it. If the book was viewed from an on-line repository and a DOI is not available, include the URL.

1. One author, no DOI:

Chomsky, N. (1979). *Language and responsibility*. New York, NY: Pantheon.

2. Two or more authors, no DOI:

Alexander, F., & French, T. (1946). *Psychoanalytic theory*. New York, NY: Ronald Press

4. Book chapter:

Haybron, D. M. (2008). Philosophy and the science of subjective well-being. In M. Eid & R. J. Larson (Eds.), *The science of subjective well-being* (pp. 17-43). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

4. One author of a second or later edition, no DOI:

Aronson, E. (2008). *The social animal* (10th ed.). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

5. Electronic version of a print book:

Schiraldi, G. R. (2001). *The post-traumatic stress disorder sourcebook: A guide to healing, recovery, and growth* [Adobe Digital Editions version]. doi:10.1036/0071393722

6. Multi-volumed books, each volume of which you cite, no DOI:

Koch, S. (Ed.). (1959-1963). *Psychology: A study of science* (Vols. 1-6). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

7. Multi-volumed book, only one of which you cite, no DOI:

James, R., Smith, W., & MacDonald, R. (1994). *The auditory modality* (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Wiley.

8. Two authors of an edited book, no DOI:

Letheridge, S., & Cannon, C. R. (Eds.). (1980). *Bilingual education: Teaching English as a second language*. New York, NY: Praeger.

9. Corporate author, published by that author, no DOI:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

References to Articles (or Chapters) in Edited Books

An edited book is often a collection of articles with authors other than the editor(s), compiled by the editor(s). The reference always begins with the name of the author(s) of the article, not the book, followed by the title of the article. This is followed by the name of the book editor(s), preceded by "In," then the book title, the page numbers for the article, and finally the publication information for the book. The book title is italicized and, as before, only the first letters of the titles are capitalized. Note that the editors' initials precede their surnames. Authors' initials follow their names.

1. One editor:

Hartley, J. T., Harker, J. C., & Walsh, D. A. (1980). Contemporary issues and new directions in adult development of learning and memory. In L.W. Poon (Ed.), *Aging in the 1980s: Psychological issues* (pp. 239-252). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

2. Two editors:

Gurman, A. S., & Kniskern, D. P. (1981). Family therapy outcome research: Knowns and unknowns. In A. S. Gurman & D. P. Kniskern (Eds.), *Handbook of family therapy* (pp.741-775). New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.

References to Websites and E-Mail

You will find up-to-date information on how to cite various web materials and e-mail at the following web address: <http://www.apastyle.org/apa-style-help.aspx>

Internet references should include, at a minimum, a document title or description, date of publication or of retrieval, and an address. Whenever possible, the authors should be included. References should direct the reader as closely as possible to the information and provide URL addresses that work.

The URL is the most critical element of the reference, unless the information is an online publication that is an exact duplicate of a print version. Note: page numbers are not included. Use n.d. (no date) when a publication date is not available. Emails are referred to as personal communications, and because the data is non-recoverable, personal communications are not listed in the reference list, but only cited in text with the date received. The example below is taken from the *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.), p. 179.

1. Email:

T. K. Lutes (personal communication, April 18, 2001) stated that...

Author-Date Citation Style (in-text citations)

The author-date citation style requires that you provide the authors' names and date of publication for each reference that you cite in the body of the text. The author name(s) and year of publication are inserted into the text at appropriate points. The citation style depends on whether the author name(s) are part of the narrative or are shown in parentheses (see examples below).

Sources of information are considered either primary or secondary. Primary sources are those which describe directly the ideas or research of the author(s) who has written the material you are reading. For example, Gray (1994) discussed his views of the place of psychology in relation to other disciplines on pp. 22-23. If you were to use Gray's view that psychology is central within other scholarly fields in a paper you would consider Gray as a primary source, cite it as described below and list it on your reference page. Secondary sources are those which refer to the ideas or work of authors other than those who wrote the material you have read. Gray (1994) would be considered a secondary source when you wish to refer to the work of another person which Gray has cited. The following set of examples shows citations for both primary and secondary sources in two formats, within the narrative and parenthesized.

Primary Sources

One author. When you wish to cite only one author within the narrative, include the publication date, in parentheses, immediately after the author's name.

Dion (1972) found that adults judged the misbehaviour of unattractive children to be more socially undesirable than the misbehaviour of attractive children.

If you do not wish to include the author's name in the narrative, the name and date are cited in parentheses at the end of the opening phrase or at the end of the first sentence.

In one study (Dion, 1972) adults judged the misbehaviour . . .

It has been reported that adults judge the misbehaviour of unattractive children to be highly undesirable (Dion, 1972).

Two authors. When there are two authors, both names are included in the reference citation. The difference between the narrative and the parenthetical forms is only in the use of the conjunction "and" or the ampersand "&." When the authors' names are part of the sentence, use "and." When they are enclosed in parentheses, use "&."

Hunt and Uzgiris (1975) developed a set of scales to measure sensorimotor development.

A set of scales to measure sensorimotor development has been developed (Hunt & Uzgiris, 1975).

Three to five authors. When you wish to cite a paper authored by three to five authors, all authors names must be cited the first time the reference appears. For the second and subsequent citations, cite the first author's name followed by the abbreviation "et al." (This

means "and others" in Latin.) The abbreviation may be used in both forms of citation. Note the period which follows "al." since "al." is an abbreviation of the Latin word *alia*.

Six or more authors. Should you wish to cite a paper with *six or more authors*, use the abbreviation "et al." after the first author's name for **every** citation. However, be sure to include all authors' names in the reference list (if six or seven authors; for more than seven authors, see *Reference to Journal Articles* section above for Reference page).

First citation:

Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) reported evidence of a physical attractiveness stereotype.

Evidence of a physical attractiveness stereotype has been reported (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972).

Subsequent citations:

Dion et al. (1972) found that attractive individuals are believed to lead happier lives than average-looking or unattractive individuals.

In this study (Dion et al., 1972), attractive individuals were believed to lead happier lives than unattractive individuals.

Multiple works within same parentheses. When you wish to cite several studies on the same topic, or with similar findings, put them in the same parentheses.

When there are two or more works by the same author, order them chronologically, using commas to separate citations.

Hassam and Grammick (1981, 1982) found . . .

Past research (Hassam & Grammick, 1981, 1982) has indicated . . .

When two or more works by different authors are cited together, arrange them alphabetically and separate with semicolons within one set of parentheses.

Several studies (Doron & O'Neil, 1979; Mullaney, 1976; Talpers, 1981) have shown that...

Memory for large amounts of information can be improved by visual imagery techniques (Bower & Clark, 1969; Jonides, Kahn, & Rozin, 1975; Paivio, 1971).

Secondary Sources

On page 57, Carlson and Buskist refer to a study by Grant (1986). If you wish to describe Grant's study in your paper and have not read Grant's study, you would now consider Carlson and Buskist as a secondary source which has provided you with information about Scott's research. Because you have not read the actual Grant (1986) paper you must let your reader know where you read about it. Then, put **only** the Carlson and Buskist (1996) reference on the reference page.

This secondary citation is done by referring to the study in the narrative as follows:

Grant (1986, as cited in Carlson & Buskist, 1996) found that the mortality of finches during droughts related to the size of their beaks.

If the citation is within parentheses, it takes the following form:

The size of finches' beaks affects their mortality during times of drought (Grant, 1986 as cited in Carlson & Buskist, 1996).

References

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Carlson, N. R., & Buskist, W. (1997). *Psychology: The science of behavior* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Cozby, P. C. (1989). *Methods in behavioral research* (4th. ed.). Mountainview, CA: Mayfield Publishing.

Appendix

This Appendix contains a sample title page (p. 17) and a sample abstract (p. 18).

Gender, Age, and Individual Differences in Spatial Skills

by

Ronald B. MacDonald

200912345

Presented to Dr. E. Austen

in Psychology 225

Sensation and Perception

Department of Psychology

St. Francis Xavier University

December 3, 2010

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the influence of training on gender-related differences in mental rotation. There were 47 participants given the first part of the MRT (mental rotation test) and then divided into training and non-training groups. Training group participants completed the Space Relations subtest of the Primary Mental Abilities test battery and manipulated three-dimensional block constructions resembling the structures found in the MRT. They then completed the second part of the MRT. Non-training group participants rested during the time required for training. All participants also completed an activities questionnaire about spatial and non-spatial sports. The hypotheses were: participants who practised spatial activities would get better scores on the MRT than participants who practised non-spatial activities; both males and females would benefit from training; and, females would benefit from training more than males. Only the first 2 hypotheses were confirmed. Results are discussed in relation with their implications for the development of gender-related differences in spatial abilities.