

APA Format

A Writing Resource created by the James Madison University Writing Center

American Psychological Association (APA) formatting is commonly used in texts written in the behavioral and social sciences (e.g. history, sociology, anthropology, education, archaeology, communication, media studies, urban planning, economics, political science, psychology, linguistics....

General Format

- Double-space *everything* on all pages, within and between sections, before and after section headings (single-space within any tables you include)*
- Use a standard font (e.g., 12 pt. Times New Roman) *everywhere*, including in your headers, in your section headings, and on your title page
- Use one inch margins at the top, bottom, and on both sides of your text
- Include page numbers on every page, numbering your title page as 1, flush to the right in your header
- Include a **Running head**, a shortened version of your title, in capital letters flush to the left in your header on every page, including your title page (Ex: THE TITLE OF YOUR PAPER)
- APA papers generally include section headings, with the standard divisions as follows: **Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, and References**

Title Page

- If you are asked for a title page, number it 1 (see above)
- On your title page only, include the phrase “Running head:” before your **Running head** in your header (Ex: Running head: THE TITLE OF YOUR PAPER)
- Favor accuracy, clarity, and brevity over style in your title (although style is also good)
- In the top half of the page, center ↔↕ and double-space your title, your name, and your institutional affiliation

The Title of Your Paper

First name, Middle initial, and Last name

Institutional Affiliation (ex: James Madison University)

(The *APA Publication Manual* does not give title page formatting advice for school papers. You might choose to add the class below your name and the date below your institutional affiliation)

Abstract

- If you are asked for an abstract, it should be the only text on page 2 (unless you are instructed otherwise)
- Center the word Abstract (no bold) at the top of the page
- DO NOT indent the first line of your abstract
- Write a comprehensive, accurate, non-evaluative, third-person summation of your paper
- Be concise: journals often ask for 150-250 words; other audiences might ask that you be more brief
- You may opt to include a list of keywords from your paper in an indented paragraph at the end of your abstract beginning with the word *Keywords* in italics, ex:
Keywords: title page, abstract, format

Introduction

- Center your Full Title (no bold) as it appears on your title page at the top of the section (generally at the top of page 3). Do not include the word Introduction
- Introduce the specific problem you discuss in
- Clearly state the purpose and rationale for your paper. Consider the questions “Why is this problem important?” and “What variables did I expect, and why did I expect them?”
- If you’re writing an *Empirical Study* reporting

- your paper and your research strategy
- Include a summary of the published literature pertinent to your subject (some papers treat this Literature Review element as a separate section with its own heading)

Method

- Center the word **Method** (in bold) immediately after the end of your Introduction section
- Offer a description of how you carried out your study
- Discuss the methods you used in your study
- Describe the participants or subjects, the apparatus or materials, and the procedure used in your study
- Divide your **Method** section (and other sections) with subheadings if necessary, formatting subheadings as seen to the right:

your own original research, READ ON. If you're writing a *Literature Review*, SKIP AHEAD to the References section, and consult the [University Writing Center Link Library](#) for advice on writing lit reviews

Section Title (centered)

Level 2 Heading (flush left, and by itself on the line. Capitalize all major words)

Level 2 Heading

Level 3 heading. (Indented. Capitalize only

Level 3 heading. the first word, include

Level 4 heading. the period, and then

Level 5 heading. begin your paragraph on the line, immediately after the heading)

Results

- Center the word **Results** (in bold) immediately after the end of your Method section
- Include a detailed summary of the data collected in your study and how that data was measured (either statistically or analytically)

- Include the raw data collected from your study
- Include the statistical methods used to analyze your findings/data and the statistical significance of your findings

Discussion

- Center the word **Discussion** (in bold) immediately after the end of your Results section
- Interpret the results of your study
- Include a clear statement of the support or nonsupport of your original hypothesis

- Discuss similarities and differences from other studies and literature
- Include commentary on the importance of your findings. Consider the questions "Why is this problem important?" and "What are some possible applications of the knowledge gained from my results?"

References

- Center the word References (no bold) at the top of a new page at the end of your paper
- Remember to insert your **Running head** and the appropriate page number in your header
- Continue to double space *everything*, between "References" and your first entry, and then within and between each entry

- The first line of text in each entry goes flush to the left. All other lines are indented one tab
- Alphabetize by the first bit of available information in each entry
- Include an entry for every source you reference
- The first bit of information in each entry should correspond to its in-text citation(s) in the body of the paper

* This handout summarizes basic formatting advice available in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010). The APA manual offers more specific advice; it also notes that different audiences will have different guidelines.

