Writing in American Psychological Association Format:

An Informative Model for College Students

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Center the title of your paper (approximately 10-12 words and placed in the upper half of the page), your name, and the name of your institution. Use uppercase and lowercase letters, capitalizing all words of four letters or more, and double-space between lines (Sec. 1.06, 3.13, & 5.15).
Abstract

Writing college papers using the American Psychological Association (APA) format may produce anxiety for students unfamiliar with APA style requirements. Moreover, the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed., APA, 2001) may be too complex to be used as a valuable resource in some rhetorical contexts. Using the Publication Manual, the APA website (www.apastyle.org), and other sources on writing in APA style, the authors compiled this paper to explain APA style requirements for empirical research and review of literature college papers. Explanations are also included for the required style for headers, format, language, citations in text and on the reference page, and appendixes. This paper (revised July 2004) will provide college students with a clear, concise, and accurate model to follow when writing in APA style.

The abstract should summarize the purpose and content of your paper in 120 words or fewer.
Begin the abstract on a new page;
center Abstract at the top of the page;
use a single paragraph with no indentation (Sec. 1.07, 5.16).
Writing in American Psychological Association Format:

An Informative Model for College Students

Center the title at the top of the page. Use upper- and lowercase letters. Double space between lines of the title and text without page breaks for new sections (Sec. 5.17).

For a writer unaccustomed to the American Psychological Association (APA) format, writing a paper using APA format can be an anxiety-producing event. In addition, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed., APA, 2001) may be too complex and confusing for the average student to use as a valuable resource. This paper was designed to address these concerns by giving students a clear, concise, and accurate model to follow. Included in this model are the three most common types of papers used in APA style writing assignments—empirical research, review articles, and case studies—and various APA stylistic requirements and language preferences. This paper also provides models and descriptions of textual and reference page citations and appendixes.

**Recommendation**

The *Publication Manual* is intended to guide authors when preparing articles they plan to submit for publication. While many college professors may stipulate that assignments be written in APA style, they also may have requirements that differ from the APA (e.g., including personal communications on the reference page); therefore, we encourage students to ask their professors if they require any specific variations to APA 5th edition style of documentation. Additionally, student writers preparing theses and dissertations should consult section 6 of the *Publication Manual*, which addresses the special formatting considerations of “final manuscripts.”

**Empirical Research**

Empirical research papers include the introduction, method, results, and discussion (IMRAD) of an author’s original research (Sec. 1.04). For a sample paper model, see figures 5.1 & 5.2, pp. 308-316.
According to the APA (2001), empirical research papers are chronologically arranged into the following sections:

- **Introduction**—develops the problem and states the author’s purpose for research,
- **Method**—describes all components used to conduct the research and is written with sufficient detail so that others could replicate the research,
- **Results**—reports the research findings, and
- **Discussion**—analyzes findings, suggests the implications of the results for current theory, and may suggest directions for future research.

### Review Articles

A review article is a critical evaluation of previously published material (Sec. 1.04 & fig. 5.3, pp. 319-320).

The abstract for review articles should be 75-100 words and describe the topic, purpose of the paper, thesis, sources used, and the conclusion. Because a review article emphasizes clarifying elements of a problem not yet resolved, the article is organized not chronologically but rather by the relationships among elements of the problem. According to the APA (2001), the sections which review articles may include are:

- **Definition and clarification of the problem.**
- **Summary of previous research** to inform the reader of the state of current research.
- **Identification of the relationships, inconsistencies, contradictions, and gaps in the literature.**
- **Suggestions on the next step (or steps) to solve the problem.**

### Case Studies

A case study paper describes data collected from the author’s work with an individual or organization in response to a problem (Sec.1.04).
According to the APA (2001), authors must present important case material while, at the same time, maintaining confidentiality of the person or people under investigation. Scholars performing case studies are urged to maintain open and frequent dialogues with the Internal Review Board of their universities.

Headings

Headings establish a hierarchy and help readers grasp the paper’s outline and the relative importance of the various parts of the paper (APA, 2001) (Sections 1.05, 3.30-3.32, 5.10).

Headings are never used at the beginning of introductions. In most cases, a first-level heading can be used throughout your paper, and usually levels one, three, and four are sufficient. Use the levels as you would if you were writing an outline.

First Level is Centered with Uppercase and Lowercase Typing

Level one is a main point (p. 113).

Third Level is Flush Left, Italicized, with Upper and Lowercase Typing

Level three is a subpoint to level one (p. 113).

Fourth level is indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph-style heading ending with a period.

The above examples are to be used in the order listed if you use one, two, or three levels of headings in your paper. If you use four or more levels of headings (e.g., a book length manuscript), refer to pages 113-115 and pages 289-290 of the Publication Manual.
Basic Format

Follow these guidelines throughout your paper to meet APA requirements.

1. Margins are 1 inch for top, bottom, left, and right for every page. The margins for page number and header are set at .5 inch from the top and 1-inch from the right (Sec. 5.04 and 5.06).

2. Justify or align margins to the left only (Sec. 5.04).

3. Preferred typefaces are Courier or Times New Roman in 12-point size (Sec. 5.02).

4. Begin page numbering with title page and continue through the last page of the last section included (Sec. 5.05-06). However, when figures are included, page numbering continues only through the figure caption page that immediately precedes the figures. Figure pages are not numbered.

5. Always double-space (Sec. 5.03).

6. Using the tab key, indent paragraphs .5 inch (Sec. 5.08; Note: in MS Word, .5 inch equals 5 spaces).

7. Insert one space after all punctuation including periods except for periods used in abbreviations (for example, a.m., i.e., or U.S.) or colons in ratios (for example, 1:1) (Sec. 5.11).

8. Refer to the APA manual’s many specific punctuation rules. According to Cuddy (2002), a few rules to note regard:
   a. using a comma before and and or in a series of three or more items (Sec. 302);
   b. using hyphenation (e.g., many prefixes, including “re,” are not hyphenated, but others are)—rules and exceptions for clarity abound (Sec. 3.11); and
c. creating plural numbers without an apostrophe (e.g., the 1950s or in her 40s) (p. 130, Sec. 3.49).

Order of Sections of Paper

Each section should start on a new page and be organized as follows (Sec. 5.05):

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Text
4. References
5. Appendices
6. Author note
7. Footnotes
8. Tables
9. Figure captions
10. Figures

Language

Avoid terminology that implies bias based on gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, religion, disability, or age (pp. 61-76).

Bias in Language

According to the Publication Manual (APA, 2001), use language that reflects respect for your participants and your readers. Be as specific and precise as possible; for example, when referring to people in general say women and men, not just men. Call people what they prefer to be called; for example, instead of using handicapped, say people with disabilities. Use the term participants rather than subjects when referring to people involved in your research. In addition, choose words that specifically describe your participant’s gender. More questions? Refer to the
Be consistent: choose either past tense or present perfect tense (Sec. 2.02, 2.06).

Use *past tense* or *present perfect tense* to discuss variables manipulated or tests applied to your own already completed research and to discuss someone else’s already completed research. An example of *past tense* used appropriately is: *Madigan, Johnson, and Linton (1995) proposed that APA style reflects psychologists’ attitudes and values.* An example of *present perfect tense* used appropriately is: *Madigan, Johnson, and Linton (1995) have proposed that APA style reflects psychologists’ attitudes and values.*

Use *present tense* in the discussion of the results and conclusions of your research and to refer to established knowledge (APA, 2001).

In papers submitted to journals, **TABLES** should not be presented in the text, but rather on a separate page after the References (see Order of Sections of Paper, p. 7 of this paper and section 5.05 of the APA Manual). HOWEVER, the APA Manual in section 6.03, p. 325, specifically allows figures, tables, and footnotes to be placed within the text of student papers, theses, and dissertations, WITH INSTRUCTOR PERMISSION.

Table 1 below may help clarify when it is appropriate to use past, present perfect, and present tense when writing in APA style.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Tenses</th>
<th>Empirical Research Report</th>
<th>Review Article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tense</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>Introduction/Review</td>
<td>To define the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>To summarize previous research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>To identify the relationships, inconsistencies, contradictions and gaps in the literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion (to discuss someone else’s research)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present perfect tense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present tense</td>
<td>Discussion (to discuss your own conclusions)</td>
<td>To make suggestions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Publication Manual, pages 61-76, where numerous examples of problematic and preferred terms are discussed.

Tense
Mood

Active voice is preferred unless the focus is on an object or a recipient (Sec. 2.06).

According to the *Publication Manual* (APA, 2001), use passive voice only when the focus is on the research or participant; otherwise, use active voice. Here is an example of an appropriate use of the active voice: *We chose to work on this project because of our interest in APA documentation style.* The focus is on our interest. On the other hand, when the focus is on the work itself, then the passive voice is used: *An APA model paper was written by McLaughlin, and Reinking, and revised by Schwartz.*

Tone

Scientific writing does not have to be dull. Be direct, but interesting (Sections 1.05, 2.03-2.12).

The *Publication Manual* devotes the entire second chapter to language choices preferred by APA. Descriptors such as *concise, precise, economic,* and *clear* are used to identify APA-appropriate language, in keeping with science’s overall bias toward investigating that which can be measured. Thus, while you are urged to be interesting, you are to avoid flowery, imprecise language that may detract from the content of the research. For example, do not use language such as: *The results indicated that the medication induced a peaceful sensation of floating across the calm, blue sky while a gentle breeze softly caressed the skin.* In addition, writers are urged to present controversial research using a non-combative, professional tone to avoid alienating readers. According to Madigan et al. (1995), disagreements in scientific writing should focus on the empirical processes, not the researchers.
Quotations

Give author name, year, and page number for direct quotations (Sec. 1.05, 3.34-41).

Avoid using quotations when writing in APA style; however, if you must use quotations, use them only when the quotation is unique for what is said and how it is said, and when paraphrasing would change the meaning or lose the unique quality of the quotation. If a quotation is fewer than 40 words, cite it in-text using double quotation marks. However, if a quotation is more than 40 words, start it on a new line indented five spaces and do not use quotation marks. If page numbers are not available (e.g., electronic sources, brochures), cite the paragraph number of the quote preceded by the symbol or abbreviation for paragraph, ¶ or para.

**Example** of a quotation of fewer than 40 words:

In Section 3.94 of the *Publication Manual*, the authors stated, “Within a paragraph, you need not include the year in subsequent references to a study as long as the study cannot be confused with other studies cited in the article” (2001, p. 208).

**Example** of a quotation over 40 words:

By announcing the next major topic, subheadings reduce the need for authors to incorporate transitional passages to connect major sections. When subheadings are standardized, as in most psychology journals, the organizational structure they impose contributes to the communication between writer and reader by creating specific expectations about forthcoming information (Madigan et al., 1995, p. 428)

**Example** of a quotation from a source without page numbers:

In section 3.39 (p. 120) of the *Publication Manual*, the authors list two ways to indicate the location of quotations from documents without page numbers: a) by including reference to the paragraph number counting from the first paragraph after the title, if there are no paragraph
numbers or headings visible, As Myers (2000, ¶5) aptly phrased it. . . . and b) by including reference to the section heading and paragraph number if there are section headings, (Comstock, 2000, Conclusion section, para. 1).

For more information about direct quotation see Sections 3.34-3.41 about citations in text, pages 117-120; and for more information about special circumstances for uses of quotation marks (or not using them), see section 3.06, p. 82-83.

Citations in Text

There are two ways to cite references in your text. With both, insert the author’s name and publication year at appropriate points. Note: An author’s titles and degrees are never listed in citations in the text or reference list (p.11, Sec. 1.06).

Although frequent direct quotations from sources are discouraged in APA-style writing, in-text citations are required. When writing in APA style, instead of quoting, you should paraphrase sources and document all facts presented with in text citations, especially in the introduction and discussion sections (Madigan et al., 1995). These citations provide readers with background information related to your topic and establish your knowledge of the breadth of material already written on the subject. When citing your sources, follow the examples below.

Borst (1997) wrote an APA Style model paper.

An APA style model paper (Borst, 1997) gave concrete examples of writing.

If you cite the same source more than once in the same paragraph, do not include the year in subsequent references unless to prevent confusion for the reader. For more information about how to paraphrase your sources, you are invited to pick up handouts or visit with a consultant in the IPFW Writing Center.
There are numerous rules regarding appropriate in-text citation. For further information about citations in text, see Appendix A and the *Publication Manual*, Sections 3.39-3.41, pages 120-122, and Sections 3.94-3.103, pages 207-214.

How to Format the Reference Page


Only references that are cited in the text and can be reasonably accessed by readers are included on the reference page; therefore, personal communications such as letters, e-mails, or interviews are not included on the reference page. References are double spaced and typed in the hanging indent format. Appendix B contains more information on specific reference citations, including internet and on-line data bases retrieved from the APA website (“Electronic reference,” 2000).

Appendixes

Center the title and use uppercase and lowercase letters. Indent the first line of text five to seven spaces (Sections 3.90-3.93, 5.19).

According to the *Publication Manual* (2001), appendixes allow the author to include detailed information for the reader that may be distracting if included in the main text. Each appendix should start on a new page and be titled Appendix A, Appendix B, etc. in the order that they are mentioned in the text. If only one appendix is included in the paper, label it as Appendix.

Conclusion

The APA style differs from other styles of writing with which students may be more familiar. Some of the differences, such as the title page format and in-text and reference
citations, are more obvious. Other differences, however, are more subtle and can make mastering APA style a “challenging task” (Madigan et al., 1995, p. 428; Cuddy, 2002). This model paper, along with consultants at the Writing Center, can help students meet that challenge and help them successfully and efficiently write papers using the APA style of documentation.
References


References are started on a new page. The title—References—is centered at the top using uppercase and lowercase letters. Use a hanging indent format with the references alphabetized and double-spaced. The information includes author’s last name(s) followed by a comma, and initials; year of publication in parentheses; title of article with only the first word of the article, subtitle, and proper names capitalized; and publishing information. For additional graphic examples of how to construct the references, refer to the 2001 *Publication Manual’s* model papers in Figures 5.1-5.3, pp. 306-320. For detailed verbal instructions, refer to Chapter 4, pp. 215-281, in the *Publication Manual*.
Appendix A

Samples of Citations in Text

The following sample citations were taken from the *Publication Manual* (2001) to provide students with a quick reference for commonly used sources when writing in APA style. Page numbers for further reference are also listed.

One Author, One Work (p. 207)

The year of publication and author’s name are inserted at appropriate points. Use a comma to separate author’s name and date in parenthetical information.

**Examples:** Rogers (1994) compared reaction times and In a recent study (Rogers, 1994)

Authors with the Same Surname (p. 211)

When two or more primary authors share the same last name, avoid reader confusion by including the authors’ initials in all text citations, even if the year differs.


Multiple Authors, One Work (p. 208-209)

Join the names in a multiple-author citation in running text by the word “and.” In parenthetical material, join the names by an ampersand (&).

Two authors: always cite both names every time the reference occurs in text.

**Examples:** A study by Wesson and Rune (2004) or as earlier shown (Cooney & Cleary, 2003).

Three, four, and five authors: cite all authors the first time the reference occurs. In subsequent citations, include surname of the first author followed by et al. and year. The only exception is when two references with the same year shorten to the same form. In this case, cite
the surnames of the first authors and as many of the subsequent authors as necessary to distinguish the two references, followed by a comma and et al.

**Examples:** 1st citation: *Wasserstein, Zappulla, Rosen, Gerstman, and Rock (1994) found* and subsequent citations: *Wasserstein et al. (1994) found*

Six or more authors: cite only the name of the first author followed by et al. and publication year unless two references with six or more authors shorten to the same form. Cite the surnames of the first authors and of as many of the subsequent authors as are necessary to distinguish the two references, followed by et al.

**Examples:** *Kosslyn et al. (1992) or (Kosslyn et al., 1992)*

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Groups as Authors (p. 209)

Spell out the group name in the first citation and abbreviate it thereafter only if the abbreviation is clearly understood.

**Examples:** 1st citation: *(National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 1991) and* subsequent citations: *(NIMH, 1991)*

No Author (p. 210)

When a work has no author, cite in text the first few words of the title and the year.

**Examples:** (“Study Finds,” 1982) or the book, *College Bound Seniors* (1979)

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Works by the Same Author with the Same Publication Date (p. 212)

Use suffixes a, b, c, and so forth after the year; repeat the year. The suffixes are assigned in the reference list also.

**Examples:** Several studies *(Jones, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Sellers, 1992; Grumman, 2003, in press-a, in press-b)*

Two or More Works by the same Author within the Same Parentheses (p. 212)
Arrange two or more works by the same author by publication date.


**Two or More Works by Different Authors (p. 212)**

Cite within the same parentheses in alphabetical order by the first author’s surname and separate the citations by semicolons.

**Example:** Several studies *(Balda, 1980; Kamil, 1990; Pepperberg & Funk, 1988)*

**Classical Works (no publication date) (p. 213)**

When a work has no date of publication, cite in text the author’s name, followed by a comma and (n.d.) for “no date.” When a date of publication is inapplicable, cite the year of the translation you used, preceded by trans.

**Example:** *(Aristotle, trans. 1931)*

**Personal Communication (p. 214)**

Letters, memos, e-mail, and interviews are not included in the reference list. Cite personal communications in text only using the initials as well as the surname of the communicator, and provide as exact a date as possible.

**Example:** *K.W. Schaie (personal communication, April 18, 1993)*

**Citation of Secondary Source (p. 247)**

When citing textual material your source has cited, report the text you have (the secondary source) in the reference list; in your paper, name the original work and give a citation for the secondary source.

**Example:** *Seidenberg and McClelland’s study (as cited in Coltheart, Curtis, Atkins, & Haller, 1993).* [In other words, imagine that Seidenberg and McClelland’s study is the original
work referred to in Coltheart et al.’s journal article—the secondary source, which you found while doing research for your paper.]

Electronic and Hardcopy Sources without Pagination/page numbers (pp. 213-214)

If paragraph numbers are provided by the publisher, cite the paragraph number preceded by the ¶ symbol or para.

**Example:** *(Myers, 2000, ¶ 5)*

If paragraph numbers are not given by the publisher, cite the heading of the section and the paragraph number following it.

**Example:** *(Beutler, 2000, Conclusion section, para. 1) or (Mellon, 2002, Discussion section, ¶ 2)*
Appendix B

Types of References Used in APA Documentation Style (5th ed., 2001)

When writing a reference page, the following samples, taken from the Publication Manual (APA, 2001), may provide students with a quick reference for correct citation procedures. Page numbers are also included if more information is needed. Note: before using the following examples as models, review the general rules for creating references in text and on the reference pages (Sec. 4.01-416).

Printed Resources

Periodicals (p. 240). [Note: issue numbers are given “if, and only if, each issue of a journal begins on page 1” (p. 227, Sec. 411).]


Periodicals with three to six authors (p. 240).


Periodicals with more than six authors (p. 240).


Magazine (p. 241).


Daily newspaper article, no author (p. 242).

“Direct readers as closely as possible to the information being cited—whenever possible, reference specific documents rather than home or menu pages” (APA, 2001, p. 269). For more examples and discussion of documenting electronic sources, consult: www.apastyle.org/elecgneral.html
Scholarly journals retrieved from web sites. (Format does not differ from print version.)


Scholarly journals retrieved from electronic sources in which there appears to have been some change from the original (e.g., format [not content], such as page numbering or layout, differs from print version.) Provide the complete citation—including as much information about the hard copy version as is available—followed by your retrieval date and the URL. In the following example, even though page numbers on the electronic version did not match those on the hard copy version, page numbers for the hard copy original document were available with the other publication information.


Electronic Databases Accessed Via the Web

The majority of databases used at IPFW fall into this category. These databases are accessed through “Databases and Indexes” from Helmke Library’s Home Page. Students are encouraged to refer to “pdf” (photocopy digital format) versions of articles whenever possible.

Format references of documents accessed through databases available through the web by including two parts: a) the data you would cite had you photocopied the article from a hardcopy source [i.e., the journal itself] and b) the database retrieval information formatted as:

Retrieved [date: M/D/Y], from (name of database) database.

For updated information on references, visit the APA web site: [http://www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org)
Example reference of an html version document retrieved from a database:


*Other Sources Used in APA Style with Publication Manual Page Numbers*

Abstracts (p. 245)

Articles compiled in an anthology or conference report: see book chapters (pp. 248-255)

Audiovisual media, TV broadcasts (pp. 266-267)

Book, group author (pp. 248-249); Books & book chapters (pp. 248-255)

Brochures, (pp. 248-255)

Citation of work discussed in a secondary source (p. 247)

Doctoral dissertations and Master’s theses (pp. 260-262)

Journal—Entire issue (p. 243); Journal supplement (p. 246)

Monographs (p. 244)

Music recording, cassette recordings (pp. 267-268)

Newsletters (p. 242)

Newspapers—Daily/Monthly (p. 242)

Non-English journal article, English translation (pp. 246-247)

Periodical published annually (p. 246)

Proceedings of meetings and symposia (pp. 259-260)

Reviews of books, films, videos (p. 265)

Technical & research reports (pp. 255-259)