GUIDE TO WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS
IN THE APA STYLE

This style sheet is intended only as an overview and does not cover all aspects of the APA style. For more information, see the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association or a style guide to writing research papers. The Writing Center has these and other resources on hand, and Writing Center tutors can help you to use them.

Always ask your mentor which style to use before you begin to write your paper.

The APA style refers to the method of writing research papers recommended by the American Psychological Association. The APA style is used in the social sciences and is governed by two basic ideas. The first is that a scientific paper attempts to show something that has already been proven true, so it calls for the past or present perfect tense when you cite the work of others. Second, the year of publication is important, so you need to feature it immediately after any named source in the text.

Smyth (1972) found that children often studied while watching television.

Williams and Maier (1994) have defined a new theory of cognition.

Use the present tense for generalizations and personal comments. Use the past or present perfect tenses only to introduce the work of cited sources.

Evidence of the rise of the heroin use exists for every age group, even children. Burroughs and Bruce (1996) reported on five incidents of heroin overdose in the under 10 age group.

Basic APA Facts

- Always double space, including the text of your paper, quotations, notes, and the reference page.
- Leave margins of at least one-inch at the top, bottom, right, and left of every page.
- Use parenthetical citations to acknowledge direct quotations, indirect quotations, and/or any ideas you have borrowed from another person.
- Use a Reference page for reference to parenthetical citations.

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• Within the text of your paper, underline titles of books, plays, pamphlets, periodicals, films, television programs, and recordings; place in quotation marks titles of articles, essays in anthologies, book chapters, and lectures.

• Number pages in the upper right hand corner. Include a running head.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of the words and/or ideas of another person without acknowledging the source. Plagiarism is generally grounds for failure of a course and can lead to dismissal from college. To avoid plagiarism, acknowledge your sources with in-text citations and a reference page. Enclose direct quotations in quotation marks or otherwise indent them from the body of your text. If you use another person’s idea or paraphrase another person’s words, be sure to use your own language and style of writing—don’t simply rearrange the words. Use an in-text citation to acknowledge the source, then list on a reference page the publications or sources from which you obtained your citations. For more detailed information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the handout available at the GVC Writing Center.

In-text Citations

Cite the first appearance of another person’s words and/or ideas by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the author’s name. After the first appearance, cite the author’s name either within the text of your writing or within the parenthetical citation immediately following the cited passage. Always use the last name of the author/authors and the year of publication. The year of publication always follows the name of the cited/quoted authority. Note that commas separate items within parentheses. Following are some examples of in-text citation methods in the APA style.

In his study of the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive, Smith (1991) showed that the reaction times of participating drivers were adversely affected by as little as a twelve ounce can of beer.

If you don’t use the author’s name in the text, place it within the parenthetical citation with the date.

A recent study of the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive showed that as little as twelve ounces of beer adversely affected the reaction time of participating drivers (Smith, 1991).

Provide a page number when you use an exact quotation. Use quotation marks. Use the singular “p.” or the plural “pp.” to indicate page number(s).

In his study on the effects of alcohol on drivers, Smith (1991, p. 104) stated that “participants who drank twelve ounces of beer with a 3.5% alcohol content reacted, on average, 1.2 seconds more slowly to an
emergency braking situation than they did when they had not ingested alcohol."

As an alternative, place the page number within parentheses at the end of the quotation. If you do so, remember to place the date immediately after the author’s name.

In his study on the effects of alcohol on drivers, Smith (1991) stated that “participants who drank twelve ounces of beer with a 3.5% alcohol content reacted, on average, 1.2 seconds more slowly to an emergency braking situation than they did when they had not ingested alcohol” (p. 104).

Indent a direct quotation of 40 or more words five spaces from the left margin. If the quotation includes more than one paragraph, indent the first line of succeeding paragraphs five more spaces (ten spaces total). Don’t use quotation marks, and be sure to double space the quotation as well as your own writing.

In her study of adult patterns of television watching, Roberts (1996) reported the following behaviors:

Response behaviors exhibited by participants who watched television without any other persons present in the viewing room included imitating the facial expressions and hand movements of television characters as well as talking to individual characters. Affective behaviors included exhibitions of anger such as shouting and throwing magazines at the television.

Such behaviors were less evident behaviors in participants who watched television in groups of three. Instead, participants in group watching were more likely to interject critical or humorous comments regarding the content of particular television programs.

If you’re citing an author who’s been quoted in another book or article, use the original author’s name in the text, and cite in parentheses the source in which you found the quotation.

Behavior is affected by situation. As Wallace (1972) postulated in Individual and Group Behavior, a person who acts a certain way independently may act in an entirely different manner while the member of a group (cited in Barkin, 1992, p. 478).
When citing a work with two, three, four, or five authors within the text of the paper, name them all in the first entry, e.g., (Smith, Andrews, and Lawrence 1995). After the first entry, cite only the first author’s name followed by “et. al.,” e.g., (Smith, et. al. 1995).

When citing a work with six or more authors, name only the first author followed by et. al., e.g., (Fredericks, et. al., 1995). If the author is not given, use the first word or two of the title in the parenthetical citation.

Massachusetts state and municipal governments have initiated several programs to improve public safety, including community policing and after school activities (“Innovations,” 1997).

If "Anonymous" is specified as the author, treat it as if it were a real name: (Anonymous, 1996). In the bibliographic references, also use the name Anonymous as author.

The Reference Page

You must always have a reference page as well as in-text citations to avoid plagiarism. The reference page immediately follows the text of the paper. Items on the reference page are listed alphabetically. Begin the first line of a reference at the left margin (i.e., do not indent the first line as you did in the body text). All subsequent lines for a reference should be indented one-half inch (this is sometimes known as an “outdent” or “hanging indent”). APA has a second format that uses normal (one-half inch) indents on the first line of a reference, and then left justifies subsequent lines to the left margin. This format is only for documents being submitted for publishing. Student papers should always use the first (hanging indent) format. For the reference page, use the running head and page number, then center the title “References” two lines below.

Books

List the author’s last name first with initial of the first name; year of publication in parentheses; title of book underlined (capitalize only the first word of the title and of any subtitle, and all proper nouns); the edition (if any) in parentheses; place of publication; and publisher. Omit the words Publishing, Company and Inc. from the publisher’s name. Use one space after periods and other punctuation.

Book by one author


List more than one book by the same author chronologically, earliest edition or work first.
Book by two or more authors—List authors as they are listed in the book; use an ampersand to indicate “and.”


Textbook or anthology—List cited author, date of the cited author’s work, the chapter or section title, the editor’s name preceded by “In” and followed by (Ed.), the title of the textbook/anthology, edition number (if appropriate), page numbers on which the cited author’s work is found, place of publication, and publisher.


Book with a corporate author—List alphabetically with authors; if published by the author of the book, list the publisher as the author.


Book with no author or editor—Alphabetize by book title:


Periodicals

Journal Article—List the author(s), year of publication in parentheses, title of article without quotation marks and with only the first word, proper nouns, and words after colons capitalized, name of the journal underlined and with all major words capitalized, volume number underlined, and inclusive page numbers not preceded by “p.” or “pp.”


Magazine—List the author(s), year and month of publication (without abbreviations), title of the article without quotation marks and with only the first word and proper nouns capitalized, name of the magazine underlined and with all major words capitalized, volume number, and inclusive page numbers preceded by “p.” or “pp.”

Newspaper—List the author(s), year, month, and day of publication (without abbreviations), title of the article with only the first word and proper nouns capitalized, complete name of the newspaper underlined with all major words capitalized, and the section with discontinuous page numbers preceded by “p.” or “pp.”


Computer Sources


World Wide Web sites

To document a specific file, provide as much as possible of the following information:

• Author’s name
• Date of publication or last revision (if known), in parentheses
• Title of document
• Title of complete work (if relevant), in italics or underlined
• “Online” in square brackets
• Availability (indicated by the word “Available”)
• URL
• Retrieval Date (indicated in square brackets at end of citation)

Online document

Author’s name (last name, first and any middle initials). (Date of Internet publication). Document title. Where available: URL (or other retrieval information). Retrieval date.

http://www1.esc.edu/personalfac/hshapiro/professional_communications/default.htm [November 6, 2001].

Book

An online book may be the electronic text of part or all of a printed book, or a book-length document available only on the Internet (e.g. a work of hyperfiction).


Article in an electronic journal (ejournal)


Article in an electronic magazine (ezine)


Newspaper article


Government publication

E-mail. (Simply include a reference to the date sent and the subject heading):
Ward, Neil (nwar@asia.com). (2001, October 22). Tutoring Japanese students. E-mail to Shirley Jackson (sjacks55@lottery.com).

However, if the E-mail source is a consistently retrievable, subscriber-based journal or other text/document on E-mail, include it in the reference page as follows:

CD-ROM
Include the following information if your citation refers to an entire CD-ROM:

Include the following information for an abstract on a CD-ROM:

Software

Whereas you might not always be able to supply all the above information, follow the general APA format for the specific type of source you are citing (journal, article, chapter, book, etc.). Include all necessary information to allow the reader to access the source material.

Abstract
The APA style requires an abstract, an 80 to 120 word summary of the contents of the paper that immediately follows the title page. Be sure to ask your mentor whether or not s/he requires an abstract. The abstract should include the purpose, thesis, and conclusions of your paper and be accurate, self-contained, concise, coherent, and readable. Do not use a
Abstract

Nicotine has been identified as an addictive substance since the mid-nineteenth century, when it was the first substance used to explore and map the synaptic system of receptors. Moreover, the common perception of American society throughout the twentieth century regarded cigarette smoking as a bad “habit” akin to addiction. Yet, despite more than a century of scientific study into and acceptance of nicotine as an addictive substance, American political, medical, scientific, and common societies still carry on a dialogue regarding whether or not nicotine is addictive. This dialogue is the very foundation of the prevailing negative attitudes toward tobacco. The scientific and medical communities proclaim the costly outcomes of nicotine addiction while the tobacco industry claims that nicotine is a relatively innocuous product.
Addiction: Societal Denial of the Addictive Nature of Nicotine

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Running Head: Addiction

Each successive page will then have the running head “Addiction” followed by the page number in the upper right hand corner.

This style sheet was produced with the aid of the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (3rd ed.) and the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.)