Ultimate 6th Edition APA-Style Formatting Guide

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Jess’s Ultimate APA-Style Formatting Guide

General Information About Formatting

Page Formatting

The purpose of this document is to provide a short-hand APA style formatting guide for students in WJC courses. If you follow the formatting in this document EXACTLY, you will not get docked points for APA style on papers. Start by noting the way the cover page looks. The formatting for your papers should be exactly the same. This means that the entire thing is in Times New Roman (or equivalent) 12-point font. Your margins are 1” on all four sides. (Caution: The default in Microsoft Word is usually for the left and right margins to be 1.25”. Be sure to change them!) In the header, you write “Running head:” and after the colon you put the title of your paper IN ALL CAPS. The APA is actually picky enough that they specify that the “R” in “Running” should be capitalized and the “h” in “head” should be lower case. Your page # goes in the top right corner, and the title page is numbered 1. Note that the APA recommends that your title be no more than 12 words in length and that it should not contain abbreviations or words that serve no purpose (APA, 2009). As you can see in this document, (unless you have been specifically asked to also include an Abstract), your text starts on page 2, with your title repeated at the center/top of the page. In addition, starting on page 2 the words “Running head” no longer appear in the header. To make that happen in MSWord, go into the “Insert” tab and click on “Header.” At the bottom of the box that pops up, click on “Edit Header”; this should open up a new tab in the toolbar called “Design.” Check the box that says “Different first page.” Then you can go back and type “Running head: YOUR TITLE” in the header on the title page, and just type YOUR TITLE left-justified in the header on the second page.
The title of your paper should appear about 1/3 of the way down the title page, with the first letter of each word capitalized. The second line of your title page should be your name, and the third line should list your institutional affiliation (i.e., William James College). Another annoying default in Word that you need to change after finishing this part of your title page is related to extra spacing after paragraphs; APA style does *not* include having an extra space after paragraphs. To remove the extra space between paragraphs, highlight all your text, right-click, and select “Paragraph.” Then be sure that in the “Spacing” section, the value for both “before” and “after” are set to 0. The “Line Spacing” should be set to “Double.” A great YouTube video that walks you through doing all this formatting can be found here: 

Punctuation

APA style also has all sorts of rules about what to do after punctuation marks, and all the nitty-gritty details of that can be found in Ch. 4 of the manual. To really get all the details correct, you should have a copy of the manual for yourself to refer to as needed. Most important to know, however, is that you insert one space after commas, colons, and semicolon, periods that separate parts of a reference citation, and periods of the initials of personal names (e.g., J. V. Stahl). You do *not* insert a space after internal periods in an abbreviation (see no spaces in the e.g., above?). One question that comes up a lot is about having one vs. two spaces after the punctuation that ends a sentence. The 6th edition of the APA manual states that “spacing twice after punctuation marks at the end of a sentence aids readers of draft manuscripts” (APA, 2010, p.88). So, two spaces after punctuation at the end of a sentence is recommended (but, it seems, not a real hard-and-fast rule like other things).

Citations, References, and Quotations
Note APA Style parenthetical citations in the previous paragraphs. Please refer to Chapters 6 and 7 of the APA Publication Manual for instructions on how to cite things and format references in APA Style as this handy-dandy guide will not go into much detail about that. There are copies of the 6th Edition APA Publication Manual on reserve in the library and in the Academic Resource Center. (Actually, you should *really* have your own copy; it’s a recommended text in many courses for a reason. But if you don’t have a copy, a good online resource in a pinch is www.apastyle.org.) It can also be really useful to use a References Tool that is built into MS Word that actually formats the citations and references for you. This guide will not go into detail about that either, but you can watch a great YouTube video about it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRjKD2HQPGg.

Basically, for an in-text citation, the authors’ name(s) and the date of publication are in parenthesis at the end of the sentence. However, sometimes you might include the authors’ names in the sentence itself; for example in a paper on person centered therapy, you might say: Rogers (1957) founded the humanistic movement and person-centered therapy when he outlined what he called the necessary and sufficient conditions of client change. In this case, if the author’s name is part of the sentence, you just put the year of publication in parentheses right after the author’s name. There are lots more details to know (e.g., what to do when there are 3 or more authors) but you’ll have to consult the Manual to get more info on that.

Citing is a very important part of scholarly work. It is your way of: (a) documenting where you got the information that you are including in your paper and (b) giving people credit for their ideas. *If you do not include citations you are plagiarizing!* Note that using citations also does not give you permission to copy what someone has said word-for-word, as that is also plagiarism. So, if you are summarizing or paraphrasing what someone has said, then a citation at
the end of the sentence is appropriate (APA, 2009). You also need to include a parenthetical citation of your source anytime you discuss a fact, research finding, or piece of information that is not common knowledge. However, if you want to use what someone has said word-for-word, you must use quotation marks and indicate what page # in your source the quotation came from. That citation would look like this: (APA, 2009, p.95). Also note that your citations must match up with your references, so that everything you cite is in the references section and everything you reference is cited.

So what do the references look like? It is particularly important that you know how to properly format references for many different types of sources; for example, your references might come from books, edited book chapters, or journal articles (among others). Please see examples of how to write out the references for the three most commonly used types of sources on the last page of this document.

Abstracts

Another thing to note here is that there is no abstract in this paper. Even though we require APA style formatting for all the papers in our courses, most of the time an abstract is not required. The exceptions to this are often the final paper in the Research Methods courses and Capstone or Doctoral projects; often, these assignments must have an abstract. Always be sure to clarify with your faculty about whether or not they expect your papers to have an abstract.

What You Need To Know About Headings

We like headings. No—actually, we LOVE headings. They are very useful for us when we are grading your papers, as they can clearly indicate that you have addressed all the required sections of the assignment. They also provide you with structure. They are also an integral part
of formatting papers written in APA Style. (There’s a great YouTube video about them here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRjKD2HQPGg.) We strongly recommend that you use them. The first level of heading is centered and bold, and is the first heading you use after title of the paper is repeated at the top of the first page (see the top of p.2). The next level of heading (called a Level 2 heading) is left-justified and bold, as the words “Headings Go Here” are above. Note that the first letter of each word is capitalized and that there is no period at the end of the heading. The text is indented and starts on the following line.

Subheadings go here. Subheadings (a.k.a., Level 3 headings) are also great. If you are using them, they provide even more structure to you and prove to us that you are answering the sub-parts of whatever question you are addressing, if it applies. Of course, simply having the heading or sub-heading is not sufficient to get credit for addressing a particular section of a paper… the text of the section itself must actually be about what it’s supposed to be about. ☺

Note that only the first word of the sub heading is capitalized, that the whole thing is bold, that it is indented .5” and that it ends with a period and then a space. The text begins one space after the period.

Your references page goes at the end of your paper, after the last page of text. Regardless of where the text ends on the last page of text, the references start on a new page. When you look at the next page, note that the word “References” is in plain text at the top/center of the page (it is not a Level 1 heading!), the entire thing is double-spaced, the first reference starts on the next line, and the entire list is in alphabetical order. The website listed earlier for info about citing is also a great resource for how to format your references, but again you should really use the Manual itself. (Or you can use the very cool References tool in Word that was referenced earlier.) Pay close attention to details in those sources regarding references because the APA is
really, really picky about how you format references. Also, note that all the references are formatted with a hanging indent. The easiest way to do that is to type your references out, highlight all of them, right click on the text, and select “Paragraph” from the menu. Then under “Indentation” select “Hanging’ from the drop-box under “Special.”
References


