

Running head: APA FORMAT

## How to Do that Annoying APA Format Stuff

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### Abstract

The abstract provides a brief, comprehensive summary of the paper. Abstracts should not exceed 120 words, unless otherwise stated. Be sure and highlight the major ideas of the paper.

## How to Do that Annoying APA Format Stuff

This document is an overview on how to do an APA formatted paper as outlined in the Fifth Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The hope is that this document will help you in your academic and professional endeavors. I know learning APA styles seems like a hassle, but there are reasons the style was established. Following the style guidelines provides a consistent structure for papers from many different authors. This is especially important for editors and readers. Also, your grades may depend upon your ability to follow these guidelines.

### Overview of Headings

#### *Major Headings*

All major headings are centered. In addition, title case is used. What is title case? Well, it means that each of the main words are capitalized (e.g., “Each of the Main Words is Capitalized”).

#### *Subsection Headings*

*Subsection headings.* All subsection headings are left justified and italicized (e.g., “Subsection Headings” above). Title case is also used for subheadings. Notice that there are no extra lines between the headings and the preceding and following paragraphs. Everything in the document is double spaced.

I didn’t really have anything to say in this paragraph, but I wanted to show that the next paragraph would be indented as usual. So, with that in mind, blah blah blah.

*Sub-sub headings.* The sub-sub headings are indented and italicized followed by a period. In addition, the sub-sub headings use sentence case, which means that only the first letter of the sub-sub heading is capitalized. The text immediately follows the sub-sub heading on the same line. By the way, these headings are actually not called “sub-sub headings”, but I just like saying “sub-sub!”

#### *Other Notes About Headings*

You should try and avoid having only one subsection. It is best to have at least two subsections in any section; otherwise, don't use a subsection heading.

This document assumes that your paper will only use three levels of headings. If you are using more levels of headings then refer to the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

### General Formatting Guidelines

This section will give a couple of notes regarding some general formatting junk that you may want to know.

#### *Margins and Fonts*

*Margins.* The top, bottom, left, and right margins can be one inch or 1.25 inches. Just make the margins consistent throughout the paper. This paper uses one-inch margins. All computers and printers print slightly different. As long as you use the formatting function in your word processor to set all your margins at one inch or 1.25 inches, then you will have met the APA guidelines.

*Fonts.* Use 12 point font when typing papers. You should use a conservative, serif font type such as Times, Times New Roman, Palatino, or Courier New. By the way, serif font means that each of the letters has a little ledge for them to stand on. Sans (i.e., without) serif fonts (e.g., Helvetica, Geneva, and Arial) should not be used (except in figures) because they are more difficult to read and increase eye strain.

#### *Paragraphs and Spacing*

Paragraphs should be indented 5-7 spaces or  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Make sure your indent is consistent throughout the whole paper – the best way to do this is to use the tab key on your computer. All sub-sub (I got to say it again ☺) headings should be indented the same as other paragraphs.

### Citations and the Reference Section

If a reference has just one author or two authors, then you simply cite it like so (Plunkett, 1999; Knowitall & Allknowing, 2002). Notice that I used a semi-colon to separate the two different source cites. If there are three to five authors, then cite all the authors and date (Swayze,

Streep, Leno, & Plunkett, 1982). If you use the same source cite again that has multiple authors, just say the first author then “et al.” (Swayze et al., 1982). For six or more authors, use the last name of the first author followed by “et al.” the first time you use the citation (Lewis-Goldstein et al., 2002).

If you are citing a group or organization who authored a material, then spell out the group’s name each time. The only exception would be if (1) the group’s name is lengthy and unwieldy, or (2) the abbreviation is easily understandable. If citing one of these groups, then use the full name the first time followed by the abbreviation in brackets (e.g., Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2003). The subsequent source cites would just use the abbreviation (DHHS, 2003).

Here is how you cite an exact quote such as “Enjoy life!” (Plunk, 1997, p. 23). If the quote is more than 40 words, then you should (1) omit the quotation marks, (2) use a block quote on the next line, and (3) indent the block quote  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Here is a quote from my webpage:

The instructor has a responsibility to the students to provide an open, affirming, intellectually-invigorating environment which inspires and facilitates learning. Quality instruction combines a thorough knowledge of the content, a mature perspective, recitation, theatrics, humor, and teacher-student contact that is adapted to both the subject matter being presented and the unique personality of each class. (Plunk’s Teaching Philosophy, n.d., ¶ 1)

When citing the quote above, I used “n.d.” instead of the year since there was no publication date on the online article. I also indicated the paragraph number instead of page number since it was an online article. And finally, since the author was not stated, I just used the title of the page in place of the author.

The references section of the paper should only include full citations from references cited in the paper. Hence, everything cited in the paper should be in the references section (excluding the exceptions noted in the next two paragraphs).

If you do a personal interview or speak with someone to get your information for your paper, then you only need to cite the interview in the text and not in the reference section (I. B. Smart, personal communication, September 18, 2001). If you are citing an entire Web site, it is satisfactory to give the address of the site just in the text and not in the references. For example, Plunks Home Page is a wealth of information (<http://hhd.csun.edu/plunk>).

If you decide to cite a dictionary or book that has no author or editor, then you just put the name of the book followed by the date. For example, plagiarism is defined as copying somebody else's work or ideas but trying to pass it off as your own (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1993).

Here is a quirky situation. If you are citing two citations that have the same author and the same year, such as Gas (2001a) and Gas (2001b), then distinguish them by putting an "a" and "b" after the date. This way you will know which "Gas" I am citing (Gas, 2001b). If you want a quick source for citing stuff from the Internet, such as articles or web pages, then go to this web page <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html> (*Electronic references*, n.d.).

#### Overview of Other APA Junk

Commas should be used between words in a series of three or more items. For example, use commas to separate the following foods: apples, oranges, and mangos. Make sure to put a comma before "or" or "and."

In case you noticed, I used "e.g." and "i.e." in different contexts. If you use "e.g." then you are basically saying "for example" or "such as." If you use "i.e." then you mean "that is." So, let's say that I am speaking about fruits (e.g., apples, oranges, lemons), then I would want to use "e.g." (i.e., for example).

#### *Last Comments*

If you have any questions, just bring your stuff by on disk, and I can help you with the formatting (Plunkett, 1998). Remember, as Plunk (2001) says, "If you need help, stop by the office" (p. 45). If you find an error on this page, let me know because "all people make errors" (Plunkett, personal communication, September, 18, 2001).

## References

Note: Items appearing in red are just to help you figure out which type of citation is being demonstrated. The items in red should not be included in your reference sections

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