

Running head: RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: APA STYLE

APA Style: An Example Outline of a Research Proposal

Your Name

School of Health & Applied Human Sciences  
UNC Wilmington

(TITLE: Must be specific and concise [20 word limit]. Must include variables. Must include mention of population. Do not use jargon. )

## Research Paper Guidelines

Understanding the process that undergirds principles of research is a primary objective for this course. This project includes a thorough review of literature related to some aspect of exercise science, community health education, physical education and health, athletic training, or recreation, sport leadership & tourism management. This project should include (1) a title page; (2) an abstract; (3) an introduction to the paper; (4) the review of literature; (5) a methods section; (6) a complete list of references used (not a bibliography); and, (7) an appendix (IRB application and Informed Consent agreement). The format, which follows, is typical of most journals related to health and wellness / Kinesiology, and subscribes to APA style (American Psychological Association, 2009).

The paper that you will submit should be organized to carefully review research done on a particular topic of your choosing. In the review of literature, you will find it easier and more consistent to use the past tense when describing studies because they have already been completed. Therefore, you should write in the past tense for a scholarly audience, and should use clear and short sentences that generally avoid the use of personal pronouns (e.g., “I”). APA guidelines specify that your manuscript should be double spaced throughout, left justified (with regular “ragged right” margins), and margins should be set to 1 inch on all sides. Please check the Sixth Edition of the *Publication Manual of the APA* (APA, 2009). Please see the following link for an example paper: <http://my.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/APAsample.pdf>

### Structure of the Paper

#### *Title Page and Credits*

*Title.* The title should summarize the main idea of the paper and include the main topic and actual theoretical issue investigated. Good titles are short (< 20 words) and would serve as a type of index of the main issues covered, including the nature of the tasks, participants, or other important variables. Type the title centered, in upper and lower cases, double-spaced. For example:

The Effects of Peer vs Expert Models on Learning a Novel Throwing Skill

*Author's Name and Affiliation.* The author's name and affiliation appears on the title page. You should pick a “byline” that you plan to use for all future publications. That is, decide now if you will be known by your full name, initials only, or a mixture.

*Running head.* Each page of your manuscript has a brief “title” (running head) printed in the upper right hand corner of the manuscript. It should be a maximum of 50 characters, and be followed by the specific page number for that page. A notation as to the specific Running head should be located in all caps, flush left at the top of the title page. For example, on your title page you would show (in the upper left hand corner, on line two):

Running head: RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES: APA STYLE

On every subsequent page the running head would be right-justified with the page number.  
[Note: your running head would specify the content of your selected review] For example:

Research Proposal Guidelines: APA Style - 2

### Abstract

(This is your section header; centered on the page)

Page two is the Abstract for the paper. It is a brief (150-200 words) comprehensive summary of the research proposal. The Running head and the number 2 are typed in the upper right-hand corner of the page. The word “Abstract” is centered as the first line of type on this page. Type the abstract as a single paragraph in block format (i.e., without paragraph indentation). You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, center the text and type *Keywords:* (italicized) and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.

### Introduction (2-3 pages)

Page three should begin with your title, centered (and no indication of the author or affiliation so that it could be “blind reviewed”). The title should be self-explanatory.

You will need to bring all your written communication skills to this project. You will be very careful with proper citation. You will not use direct quotes. The whole of this paper is to be in your words. Ideas and information used from other authors are to be cited.

The introduction is the opening of the paper, and because of its unique location, does not require a heading or label. It provides an introduction and statement of the problem that will be studied (or reviewed). It sets the stage for the entire paper by establishing the nature of the question. It should demonstrate why this question was important to you by providing brief background information.

**First** address the **problem!** State the overall area of concern (populations-at-risk for injustice or discrimination; need for more functional affiliations for individuals and groups; unethical policies/practices; lack of knowledge in the field, etc.). Arouse the reader’s interest; tell the reader what to expect in the rest of your paper. Provide brief statistics to indicate the incidence of the problem. **Next**, discuss how this problem area affects individuals, communities, and society as a whole (what are issues of physical and economic health).

The potential utility of your study can be: 1) an addition to current knowledge of a problem or a vulnerable population; 2) to put theory to an empirical test; 3) to better understand the relationship between variables (e.g., adherence and technology); or 4) to determine the effectiveness of a treatment method, technology, or program.

### *Variables*

Conceptually define your major variables in a clear and concise manner, e.g. “wellness” or “compliance.”

*Summary*

In the closing two – three paragraph of the introduction, establish the need for future study related to this topic. That is, why did you decide to review this topic? What did your review of literature tell you (summary)? What do we need to study next to advance knowledge in this area?

Review of Literature (3-4 pages)

(This is your section header; centered on the page)

The review of literature should generally begin on a new page. Discuss the literature related to your proposed study. This section is designed to inform readers about past studies that have already been conducted, and provides perspectives on your area of interest. The review should include a brief discussion of any “classical studies” in this area, if appropriate, but the major portion of the content should focus on the past decade of research. It should close with a logical summary of past research and transition to a statement about what should be studied next. Use the skills and resources that were discussed in our library session with Lisa Williams.

As you begin, you need to share your **theory base** with the readers so they understand how what you are presenting is influenced by that theory base. As you read articles on your topic look for what other authors have to say about a theoretical framework for understand the problem and pointing a direction for solutions.

It is a good idea to organize your *Review of Literature* by topical clusters. For example, you might be studying the effect of email support, and believe that it is advantageous for quitting smoking. If you do, you could organize your report of past research based on the frequency of emails. Or you might believe that the critical difference is web-based vs. web 2.0-based technology; or children vs. adults; or ... In general, it is better to use a topical organization rather than merely reporting studies in chronological order.

All research cited must relate specifically to your topic (the question being studied) and should be properly referenced, using APA style. You will find it easiest to write the entire paper in the past tense, since everything you eventually report has already happened. Current research articles may serve as an excellent source to guide you to past research in the specific area. In addition, citation indices, reference books, Sports Discus, and other computer searches will also help.

After you present what is already known, make your case for your research either answering a new question, getting a new answer to an old question, answering a question about a new population, etc. After you have made your case that your research is going to give new information, you will summarize the major points. *Remember that the Introduction discusses the problem. The review of literature should concentrate on solutions (those that exist, those that are still required).* Finally, you will formulate (in the last sentence) your research question or your hypothesis.

When you cite studies in your review of literature, be sure to properly format the citations based on APA style. For example, within a sentence, you would cite Hunlew and Wang (2009) or within a parenthesis, it would be (Hunlew & Wang, 2009; Jackson, 2010) in alphabetical order. If there are more than three authors on a paper (and less than six) you would cite all three the first time, e.g., Bunker, Hunlew and Wang (2008), and Bunker et al. (2008) thereafter (see Publication Manual of the APA (2009)).

### Method (3-5 pages)

(This is your section header; centered on the page)

Do not introduce the topic again. Introduce the general methodology most authors have taken on this topic and the one you will be using and why (tie to the literature review). The purpose is a statement of what you intend to study not what you intend to find. There are typically three or four major subsections in the Methods section, although there can be more, which are separated by headings:

**Participants.** This brief section describes the people who participated in your study (they should be called “participants,” not “subjects”). Give as much information about the population that has been gathered from your review of the literature: age range, gender mix, education, etc. This will be used to compare to your sample’s demographics in the Results section.

**Research Design.** Are you doing qualitative or quantitative research; is it exploratory, descriptive or explanatory? Explain why you are using this type of study and what you plan to explore, describe, or explain (again tie it to the literature review). Do you plan to use interventions, interviews, behavior observation, questionnaires, etc.? What subtype of each do you plan to employ (e.g., structured vs. unstructured interviews or closed vs. open-ended questions)? State your rationale for your approach (lit. review). List all of your variables, which ones are independent or dependent? What level of measurement do you plan to use for each variable? This is not an exhaustive list, nor are these chronological questions to be answered.

**Instrumentation.** This section describes the tests or instruments used to collect data. Do you plan to use a standardized instrument or design your own? How does this instrument affect issues of reliability and validity (discuss)? Discuss instrument biases. Identify independent & dependent variables. Discuss how this instrument will be scored.

**Procedure.** This section describes in great detail the data-collection procedures. Describe how participants were recruited, whether they participated alone or in groups, how informed consent or assent was obtained, what they were asked to do, how they were compensated for their participation, etc. You should describe the procedure in a way that another researcher could conduct the same study (i.e., replicate it) just by reading about the procedure.

#### Data Analysis Plan

What statistics do you plan to collect: descriptive/univariate statistics (frequency, central tendency, etc.) Inferential statistics (Pearson’s r, ANOVA, etc.) Bivariate, multivariate statistics, and how do you plan to do your analysis?

Ethical Consideration (Human Participants Protections)

When and how will you submit for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval? What safeguards are in place in your study to protect human participants? Consider both emotional and / or physical harm. Consider who the participants are and if children or some other vulnerable population.

What is your basic ethical approach? What are the power differentials between you and your participants, and how will you protect them from any possible abuses? What steps are you taking to insure informed consent? Provide a copy of any introductory letter and consent forms in the appendix.

Bias

We all have biases; the most insidious are those of which we are unaware or unacknowledged. What makes you different from your participants? Is it race, ethnicity, social class, education, work experience, physical or mental ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc? How might these differences impede your investigation (invisibility, insensitivity, overgeneralization, double standards, dichotomization)?

Assumptions

What do you need to take for granted to answer your question or test your hypothesis? (e.g. honest responses from participants, typical population, heuristic value of a certain theory, normal distribution, etc.).

**Limitations.** Now that you have an idea (from your literature review) how broad your topic could be, tell the reader what it is that you are deliberately not going to study. What aspects of the problem are outside your interests at this point (or for this paper)? Then, if you had 3 years and \$1,000,000 what are some of the things you could or would improve about your design, sample, analysis, etc.

References (1-2 pages)

(This is your section header; centered on a new page)

Each citation mentioned in your paper must be presented in APA format in the list of references. The accuracy of the references must be double-checked by returning to the original source and confirming all information (authors, titles, pages, dates, etc.). It is your obligation to have actually read the original source or cite it as a “secondary source.” Only materials that were actually cited in the paper are presented in the reference list. This is not a bibliography, but a list of those papers “referenced” in the actual manuscript.

**You are required to use a minimum of 6 journal articles (from last 10 years).** *All reference material must be from “peer” reviewed scholarly journals. Newspapers, internet sites such as Wikipedia, and non “peer” reviewed reference material will not be accepted for assignments.*

References are listed by author, and the general format is in “hanging indent style” with the second or third lines indented, and the first line at the left margin. Everything is double spaced and should be in APA format. For example:

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Swinnen, S.P., Schmidt, R.A., Nicholson, D.E., & Shapiro, D.C. (1990). Information feedback for skill acquisition: Instantaneous knowledge of results degrades learning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*, 19, 1321-1344.

### Appendix

(This is your section header; centered on a new page)

Include a copy of your survey/questions/instrument, IRB application, informed consent agreement, etc. in the Appendix section

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Note: This project is ***on your honor*** and **all written work must be yours alone**. You may submit rough drafts for preliminary feedback from the instructor.

Adopted from: Kahn, J.H. (2010). *Sample APA paper for students interested in learning APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition*. Retrieved from <http://my.ilstu.edu/~jhkahn/APAsample.pdf>

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**Research Proposal Assessment Criteria**

***Title Page (5 points)***

- Descriptive Title \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Title entered in upper and lower cases \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Author's full name and byline \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Running head: ... All CAPS in upper left  
< 50 characters long \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Running head and Page number 1 in upper right \_\_\_\_\_/1

***Abstract (5 points)***

- Starts on pg. 2 with running head and pg. number \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Single paragraph with block format \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Between 100-250 words \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Comprehensive review of research proposal \_\_\_\_\_/2

***Introduction (12 points)***

- Starts on pg. 3 with running head and pg. number \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Title is centered (no Introduction heading) \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Begins with a statement of the problem ("This paper  
investigates past literature about . . . .") \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Provides evidences of incidence of problem \_\_\_\_\_/3
- Discusses how problem affects individuals, communities,  
and society as a while \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Conceptually defines your major variables (e.g., BMI) \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Closes with indication of the importance of this line of research \_\_\_\_\_/2

***Review of Literature (26 points)***

- Running head and pg. number in upper right \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Section header centered on page \_\_\_\_\_/1
- Introductory paragraph(s) to set the scene and  
provide historical perspective and background \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Thorough review of literature  
Reviews current research (<10 yrs) on your problem \_\_\_\_\_/8
- Provides rationale for important issues related to  
Methods (participants, tasks, etc) \_\_\_\_\_/4
- Clearly states the research question \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Organization: blended ideas rather than a string of abstracts \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Summary of review and transition to Methods \_\_\_\_\_/2
- References sources \_\_\_\_\_/2
- Appropriately uses APA formatting \_\_\_\_\_/2



**Methods (25 points)**

Running head and pg. number in upper right	_____ /1
Proper headings and APA formatting	_____ /1
Participants	
Mentions IRB approval & Informed Consent	_____ /1
Detailed explanation of participants	_____ /3
Research design	
IV and DV correctly identified and explained	_____ /2
Clear statement of research question	_____ /1
Measures/Instrumentation	
Questionnaires/Surveys provided/explained	_____ /3
Clear explanation of how data will be analyzed	_____ /2
Procedures	
Written in detail so that replication of study possible	_____ /5
Explanation of potential bias	_____ /2
Statement of assumption(s) made	_____ /2
Limitations to research design/question addressed	_____ /2

**References (9 Points)**

References (centered heading)	_____ /1
Complete list of everything mentioned	_____ /1
Original sources (6 journal articles)	_____ /5
APA format	_____ /2

**Appendices (5 points)**

IRB documents	
Informed consent agreement	_____ /1
IRB application (w/ required supportive documents)	_____ /2
Surveys, Instruments, Questionnaires, etc.	_____ /2

**General Writing Style (13 Points)**

Clarity of style and descriptions	_____ /3
Proper use of quotes and citations	_____ /2
Grammar, syntax, punctuation, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, past tense, singular/plural matches, etc.	_____ /4

**Submitted (4 Points)**

Electronically	_____ /2
Hard Copy	_____ /2

**Total Points** \_\_\_\_\_ **/100 points**

**Comments:**