

**APA Seventh Edition Sample Paper**

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This example presents guidelines for student papers following the 2020 *Publication Manual*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, of the American Psychological Association (APA). Lines are double-spaced and left-aligned. Margins are set at one inch. There are no extra spaces between paragraphs and none before or after any title or header. Each paragraph is indented half an inch. The font is 12-point Times New Roman, but APA also accepts 11-point Calibri, Arial, and Georgia as well as 10-point Lucida Sans Unicode and Computer Modern. One space follows a period at the end of each sentence. The title is repeated on this page, centered and bolded. APA assumes the paper begins with an introduction, so there is no introduction heading unless a teacher asks for one.

### **Title Page**

For students, the title page header includes only the page number in the upper right corner. The rest of the page is double-spaced, with an extra space between the title and the author's name. The title is bolded and centered and placed about four double-spaced lines down the page. Below it, unbolded, are the author's name, the department and university's names (on a single line), the course number and name, the teacher's name, and the date.

### **Section Headings**

APA (2020) style requires a specific heading format, and headings do not contain numbers. This paragraph begins a new major section of this paper with a Level 1 heading. This sample paper uses two levels of heading, as shown in the next section. Each Level 1 heading is centered and bolded, and each Level 2 subheading is flush left and bolded. All major words are capitalized. Section headings work like outlining, so writers should “avoid having only one subsection heading within a section” (APA, 2020, p. 47). See the Writing Center's “APA Headings” handout for papers with more than two levels of headings.

## Style Choices

### Pronouns

Academic papers avoid contractions and are normally written in the third person, avoiding “I” and “you.” APA (2020) discourages the vague, general use of “we,” as in “we typically study decision making in a laboratory setting” (p. 120). It does allow the first person (“I,” “me,” “we,” “our”) when referring specifically to a paper’s authors, but many teachers do not. Students may want to avoid first person unless they know their teacher’s preference.

APA (2020) now encourages the singular use of “they” in cases where an individual’s “gender is unknown or irrelevant” (Lee, 2020, “When Should,” para. 2). It allows “he or she,” but discourages writers from using that strategy often. Writers should avoid “him/her” or “s/he,” and they should not alternate between “he” or “she” when someone’s sex is unknown. They often can, however, rewrite a sentence to use plural pronouns or to avoid pronouns entirely. Acceptable wording includes “each participant turned in their questionnaire” and “a child should learn to play by themselves [or themselves] as well as with friends” (APA, 2020, p. 121).

### Verb Tense

Writers presenting other researchers’ work should use the past tense (“Camacho and Cox found”) or present perfect tense (“Connelly et al. have suggested”). Writers presenting their own methods and results should use past tense; writers discussing the implications of those results should use present tense.

### Numbers and Abbreviations

In general, APA style spells out the numbers one through nine but uses figures for larger numbers. All numbers beginning a sentence are spelled out, and a list of other exceptions is on p. 178 of the *Manual*. Almost all abbreviations are spelled out on first reference. When an

organization is first named in a paper's text, its full name is written out. If it will be named again at least twice, that name is followed by an abbreviation in parentheses. After that it is referred to by the abbreviation only.

### **Citations**

American academic writing requires a writer to show the sources of all ideas, facts, and words that come from somewhere else. Those sources are listed on a reference page at the end of the paper, and *citations* in the paper show which source each idea, fact, or quotation comes from. Every source on the reference list should be cited in the paper; every source cited in the paper should appear on the reference list. Citations can be *narrative* (the author is part of a sentence) or *parenthetical* (the author and date are given in parentheses at the end of a sentence). First names or initials are never included unless they are needed to distinguish between sources.

### **Direct Quotations**

The citation for a direct quotation always shows where the original words appeared in the source: a page number or, if there is no page number, a paragraph number, video timestamp, or equivalent. When a source has no page numbers, the writer should count down to the paragraph a quotation is from and use the abbreviation "para." instead of "p." If a longer source has section headings, the writer should count down to the relevant paragraph from the closest heading and include the heading in the citation. Standard headings are included without quotation marks (e.g. Hormel, 2007, Results section, para. 2). Nonstandard headings are put in quotation marks and can be shortened (e.g. Numeroff, 2002, "Pancakes Complicate," para. 3).

In a narrative citation, according to APA (2020), "the date appears in parentheses immediately after the author name" and the page or paragraph number follows the quotation (p. 263). The year goes with the author, not the page number. If the quotation was found on one

page, “p.” goes before the page number. If it was on two pages, a “pp.” is used instead. In a parenthetical citation, all this information comes “immediately after the quotation or at the end of the sentence” (APA, 2020, p. 271). If a quotation is 40 words or longer, the writer should

treat it as a block quotation. Do not use quotation marks to enclose a block quotation.

Start a block quotation on a new line and indent the whole block 0.5 in. from the left margin. Double-space the entire block quotation; do not add extra space before or after it.

(APA, 2020, p. 148)

Notice that with a block quotation the period comes before the parentheses, not after them.

### **Indirect Quotations**

Writers who put a source’s ideas or information in their own words must cite the author and year but not usually a page number. (APA allows page numbers with paraphrases, though it doesn’t require them. Most teachers do not allow them.) The rest of the rules for narrative and parenthetical citations still apply to these paraphrases. They include using the past tense to describe previous researchers’ work and putting a period only AFTER any parenthetical citation.

### **Multiauthor Citations**

When a source has two authors, both are included in every citation. In narrative citations the names are connected by “and,” but in parenthetical citations they are connected by “&.”

When a source has three or more authors, the “et al.” form is used even on first reference. “Et al.” means “and others,” so these authors should always take plural verbs and pronouns: *Ingalls et al. (2010) were the first researchers to... they argued...*

### **Complicated Authorship**

Some sources are authored by organizations rather than individuals. In general, an organization can be considered an “author” if its main function is something other than

publishing a website, newspaper, or magazine: the American Diabetes Association is considered the corporate author of an unsigned article on its website, but the *Idaho State Journal* is not.

Sources without human or corporate authors are alphabetized on the reference list by their titles, instead, and citations in the paper use the title's first words instead of an author's name. When a title is named in the body of the paper, all major words are capitalized. If the source is a webpage, an article, or a book chapter, the title goes inside quotation marks; if it is a book, report, or brochure, it is italicized. These rules do not apply to the reference list.

To cite a 2005 quotation, fact, or explanation by Lee that a writer actually found in a 2016 article by Ray, the writer uses the phrase "as cited in." The writer did not read Lee's article itself, so it is not on the reference list; only Ray's article is. The original source is identified narratively or parenthetically, but the citation ends with the source the writer consulted.

- Lee (1999) argued that "water is wet" (as cited in Ray, 2016, p. 34).
- It was argued in 1999 that "water is wet" (Lee, 1999, as cited in Ray, 2016, p. 34).

### **Personal Communications**

If a source is something like an interview, an email or a telephone conversation—that is, not one that a reader could refer back to—it is not put on the reference list. Instead, explained S. B. Barry (personal communication, May 31, 2018), it is cited in-text only as a dated "personal communication." As always, the source's name can be cited either narratively or parenthetically (S. B. Barry, personal communication, May 31, 2018).

### **Electronic Sources**

URLs are not included in citations within the body of a paper. Online sources are treated like any others: if the author and date are known, they are named narratively or parenthetically. If the author is unknown, the first words of the title are used instead (e.g. "Porcine Aerodynamics,

1998”). If the date is unavailable, the abbreviation “n.d.” is used (e.g. “Shoes and Ships,” n.d.). “Last reviewed” dates should not be used as publication dates, and “Last updated” dates should be used only when they clearly refer to the source’s content.

### **The Reference List**

The reference section begins at the top of a new page. The word “References” is centered and bolded. Reference entries are listed in “hanging indent” style (Ctrl-T on a PC) and are double-spaced. They are listed in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author (when the author’s name is available) or by title (when the author’s name is unavailable). All authors are presented last-name-first and only initials are used for their first and middle names.

Reference entries for electronic sources end with a URL or DOI, and no period follows them. If a source has a DOI, the entry must use it instead of the URL. Both URLs and DOIs are presented as web addresses, beginning with “http” or “https.” Hyperlinks can be left live or removed as a teacher prefers, but all the hyperlinks in a reference list should be formatted the same way. Neither “Retrieved from” nor a retrieval date is used unless the source is something like an unarchived social media entry which is likely to change. Writers should not divide long DOIs and URLs manually, but a computer may automatically add a break or move them to a separate line.

### **More Information**

For more information, consult the APA blog, the Purdue OWL, the APA *Publication Manual*, or the ISU Writing Center’s APA handout. All are cited on the reference list below.

## References

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.).

Idaho State University Writing Center. (2020). APA headings [Handout].

<http://www.isu.edu/success/writing/handouts/apa-headings.pdf>

Lee, C. (2019, October 31). Welcome, singular “they.” <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they>

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.) APA style workshop.

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_overview\\_and\\_workshop.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_overview_and_workshop.html)