

APA 7 Sample Student Paper: Commonly Asked Questions About APA Style

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Abstract

Many student papers do not need an abstract, so students may wish to confirm with their professors if any abstract is required. If it is, then note that the abstract will be on its own page and the length of the abstract will likely be between 150 and 250 words. The abstract title, which is just the word “Abstract,” will be centered and bolded, and the body of the abstract is typically one paragraph without an indentation. The abstract does not usually include citations, although it can refer to relevant research. The abstract is the place where the author of the paper tells the readers what they can expect from the main body of the paper, and this may include a high-level summary of the thesis, main research points, method of review and research, and actual or expected outcomes. The abstract may also include keywords, and these are meant to be a small number of words or phrases that other researchers would use to find the paper in a database. The formatting of the keyword section is displayed below. Note the indentation of the keywords sections and that the word “keywords” is italicized.

Keywords: APA 7 student papers, examples of APA formatting, abstracts, student versus professional papers

APA 7 Sample Student Paper: Commonly Asked Questions About APA Style

Although student and professional papers are separated in APA 7, this document will focus only on student papers. The primary differences between the two types of papers are that professional papers have different information on the title page, and professional papers also require running heads rather than just page numbers. Graduate students or individuals who are looking to publish their paper may wish to refer to professional paper examples available on Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) or the American Psychological Association (APA) style site. Also of note, though section headings may be used in either professional or student papers, the introduction section is only labeled with the title of the paper.

For APA papers, students should choose from a list of common fonts and sizes. Times New Roman 12 or Arial 11 are popular options. The paper should be double-spaced and aligned to the left with single indentations for new paragraphs. The sections for an average APA paper, depending on the assignment and purpose, are as follows: Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, and References. Longer papers may also have one or more Appendix sections.

While writing the APA paper, something critical to keep in mind is in-text citations that will direct the reader to the appropriate entry in the References section. Example citations for common sources, such as books, online articles, and scholarly journals, are located in the References section at the end of this paper. List the sources used in alphabetical order with a hanging indent. In the References, writers should only capitalize the first letter of the first word, the first word following a colon, and proper nouns for the titles of articles. This capitalization approach is called sentence case, as opposed to the capitalization of all major words for title case. There are online resources that can automatically generate citations; however, these are not always accurate, so it is usually best to do it manually for accuracy.

In-text citations are used throughout the text of the paper. They are used any time a source's information is applied, whether paraphrased or directly quoted. Conveniently, in-text citations tend to be simple, often located at the end of the sentence in parentheses (Author's last name, year). An example of this would be as follows: "Dogs that received the belly rub treatment three times daily were shown to have higher levels of contentment" (Bark, 2016, p. 43). Note that the period goes at the very end of it all, outside of the quote and parentheses. If the citation came from a book, add the page numbers (Author last name, year, pp.) If there are two authors, use the ampersand symbol (Bark & Woofers, 2015, p. 56). For three or more authors, use et al. (Woofers et al., 2016), even in the first citation. Alternatively, introduce the authors within the sentence and then cite the year. For example, Bark and Woofers (2016) conducted a study to investigate the effects of eating kibble versus eating grain-free dog food. If an organization is the author, use the name of the organization the same way a person's name would be used (American Kennel Club, 2020). In some instances, there may be no author. If this is the case, then just use the first few words of the reference entry, usually the title of the article ("Dog Treats," 2016). In the case of directly quoting material, be sure to include the specific page number within the citation, like when quoting "Even old dogs like peanut butter treats," (Biscuit & Flea, 2016, pp. 66-67).

If directly quoting material and the quoted word count exceeds 40, it will need to be placed in a block quotation. Begin the quote on a new line, still double spaced. For Word and Google Docs, hit Tab twice, then backspace the indent to set the blockquote. State the quote, then give the citation after the final punctuation mark. (Last name, year, pp.)

Another commonly encountered mechanics issue with APA is the dilemma of whether to use numerals to denote numbers. Generally, APA recommends using numerals (e.g., 23, 11, 487) when writing numbers that are more than 10, and writing numbers out (two, four, nine) for

numbers under 10, but there are lots of exceptions. Some of the exceptions included using numerals (a) in the abstract, tables, or figures, (b) in units of measurement, (c) in equations, percentages, ratios, or fractions/decimals, and (d) for ages, dates, scores, or specific monetary values. For example, readers can expect to see numerals in usages like 5 gm, 45%, 8:15 p.m., 6 years old, Figure 3, or 2 hours. If the number is at the beginning of the sentence, spell it out, e.g., “Fifteen dogs went outside, while 12 stayed in.”

At the end of this paper, a sample References section is provided to give a visual aid for structuring the citations. References should be listed in alphabetical order by author’s last name, or, if there is no author, by the title of the source. If there is more than one author with the same last name, order those sources chronologically by year. Use a hanging indent. This can be created in Word by highlighting the reference, going to Paragraph Settings, then changing the indent to hanging. In Google Docs, go to Format > Align and Indent > Indentation Options, then choose Hanging from the Special indent drop-down.

Please note that this sample paper, while addressing the main issues concerning APA style, is not an all-encompassing article. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to double-check formatting before submitting and to refer to any specific formatting guidelines your instructor has provided. For further, more specific APA help, consult the *APA Publication Manual*, visit the *Purdue OWL* website, or check out the *APA Style Blog*.

References

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