

**APA Sample Paper:
Professional Paper Sample Format**

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Author Note

Professional papers in APA often include an author note, however the details of what you might include here will vary depending on the rhetorical situation. When submitting a paper to an academic journal or a conference, it is common to include a note here directing readers where they can contact you to learn more about your research.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the proper formatting for writing professional papers following APA 7 style guidelines set by the American Psychological Association, most commonly used for the social sciences. This paper will focus on the professional paper format, mainly the title page, abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion. For questions regarding mechanics and citation, see our handout for APA Student Papers, which follow a slightly different format but include the same rules of APA citation and mechanics you would be expected to adhere to. This first section is the abstract of the paper, which serves as a brief introduction to the main ideas of the rest of the paper. Note that it is left-aligned with no initial paragraph indentation. It is typically used for research papers but is not always required by professors for certain assignments, so always check the assignment's rubric to know whether or not to include it. The recommended length of the abstract is generally between 150 to 200 words that provide an overview of the paper's main topic, so that the audience can glance and tell if the paper is relevant to their interests. The abstract should state the purposes of the paper and introduce some of the studies and concepts that will be further discussed.

Keywords: APA sample paper, APA professional paper, APA structure

APA Sample Paper: Commonly Addressed Questions on Structure of APA Style Papers

The sections of a traditional APA research paper are as follows: title page, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussions, and references. Some papers may also require one or appendices. Note that this paper also reflects heading and sub-heading styles as they are often seen in APA-style papers. For this paper we are using two levels of headings, but note that APA has specific guidance for formatting up to five levels of headings. This is the section where the introduction would typically be, though it is important to note that the introduction section does not have a heading that says "Introduction." Instead, the title of the paper is centered at the top of the body of the paper, as it is above.

Title Page

The APA paper begins with a title page. As the name would suggest, the title page is where the title of the paper, the authors' names, and any university or professional affiliations are located. The title should be concise. Twelve words is the average length of the title, and the title focuses on the main topic and purpose of the paper. The title should be centered on the page, with the author and affiliation centered beneath it. In the header, there should be a running head, which is a summary of the title that is located at the top of every page in the paper, along with the page number. In earlier versions of the APA Style Guide, the title in the running head was preceded by the words "RUNNING HEAD" on the title page, but that is no longer required in APA 7. Of note, the title in the header of the paper is not required for student papers, although some professors may prefer that students adhere to the professional style for certain kinds of projects. The same header should be left-aligned on each page of the paper. The page number should be in the header as well, aligned with the right side.

Abstract

After the title page comes the abstract, which is discussed in greater detail in the abstract section of this sample paper. Abstracts are a 150- to 200-word summary of the paper's topic. Introduce the purpose of the paper here, as well as start discussing some of the previous research related to the topic. Abstracts are intended to give potential readers a sense of why what the topic is, how it is relevant, and what they might expect if they read the whole paper. Abstracts are not always required, so always check with the professor or the assignment sheet to see whether or not to include it.

Introduction

The next section of the standard APA paper is the introduction. Begin the introduction on a new page after the abstract. Depending on how many information may be required to set context for the paper, the introduction may be quite long. In the introduction, discuss relevant background research that is relevant to the topic of the paper. A good source for finding research articles and studies relevant to social sciences, especially psychology, would be PsycInfo in the library's resources databases. Be sure to properly cite information used from outside sources. The Writing and Communication Center's (WCC) other Sample APA Student Paper handout, the *APA Style Manual*, the *APA Style Blog*, or *Purdue OWL* are all good sources for more info on citations.

After discussing the background of the topic, state the hypothesis of the paper and explain how it relates to the previous research. Present the hypothesis and discuss any secondary questions that may be addressed in the study or research that the paper covers.

Method

Next comes the Method section. Center and bold the title of this section, just as you would each major section. Here is where the mechanical details of the actual experiment will be located, or, in the case of a literature review, where the relevant search terms and databases

will be shared. Details are important here, as this is where other researchers will look to check the soundness of the research process and where they will look if they want to try to replicate any findings. For projects that include experiments or case studies, the Method will typically be divided into subsections describing each aspect of the experiment: Participants, Materials, and Procedure. Each heading of the subsection should be left-aligned and bolded since they are level two headings. Generally, there should be two or more sub-sections that belong under the main section topic (in this case, under Method) before using sub-headings.

Participants

Here, identify the demographic details of the participants in the study. Give age, sex, ethnic group, education and economic status, sexual orientation, gender identification, and other characteristics, especially ones that may apply to the study. Be as detailed and specific as possible. Also, describe the sampling procedure and how the participants were gathered, while noting relevant details, such as if the participants were compensated or if they all work in the same industry.

Materials

In the Materials section, list off the materials used. This may include measuring and recording equipment, tools, psychological inventories, surveys, interviews, and any other items used within the experiment.

Procedure

In the Procedure subsection, describe in detail the exact procedure of the experiment. Specify the research design, describe what the researchers and the participants did, and discuss how the materials were used. Walk the reader through the experiment step by step, being detailed and descriptive in what exactly is happening. Note that this section describes how the research or experiment was conducted, not the findings or implications.

Results

The Results section is where the statistical results of the study are found. Describe the statistical method used to analyze the results. Give all of the data acquired, regardless of whether or not it supports the hypothesis. Do not interpret the implications of the data yet, only state it. This section may be replaced or supplemented by a Literature Review section depending of the type of project.

Discussion

Finally, the Discussion section is where the results and implications of the study are discussed. Analyze the data given in the Results and explain its significance. Address how the findings did or not support the hypothesis. Discuss any limitations in the study or gaps in the literature that other researchers should be aware of when they read the paper. Suggest possible future avenues of research on the topic as well as possible implications. Conclude the paper with objectivity.

References

The final section of a standard APA paper is the reference section. This section includes any resources cited in the paper and each entry includes key information like author, title, and URL. Entries are listed in alphabetical order and have a hanging indent, as seen on the following page. Please see the APA Sample Student paper from the WCC, *Purdue OWL*, or the *APA Style Manual* for additional examples of citations and reference page entries. The References page that follows shows the layouts for scholarly articles and book chapters, respectively.

References

Author last name, initials. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, volume(issue), page range.

<https://doi.org/xx:xxxxxxxxxx>

Author last name, initials. (Year). Title of chapter or entry. In A.B. Editor (Ed.), *Title of work*.

(2nd ed., pp. x-xx). Publisher. <https://doi.org/xx:xxxxxxxxxx>