

THE BOISE STATE WRITING CENTER

Because Writers Need Readers

Basics of Formatting with APA Style

The American Psychological Association (APA) style is a system of documentation generally used in the social sciences. It is published in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020). Fields that use APA style regularly emphasise paraphrasing over direct quotes. Much of the research in these disciplines is supported by lengthy analysis and multiple studies: directly quoting every source can become tedious for authors and readers. Instead, it is common for writers to summarize an idea and then credit multiple sources.

Margins:

Margins are 1 inch on all sides of the page.

Font:

Common fonts used in APA are 11-point Calibri, 11-point Arial, 12-point Times New Roman, and 11-point Georgia. Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.

Paragraph and line spacing:

Indent the first line of each paragraph 0.5 in. Text is double-spaced. No blank space before or after headings or between paragraphs.

Title page:

Each paper begins with a title page. Student papers include page title, author name, affiliation, course name and number, professor's name, and the date formatted Month Day, Year. Bold title and add empty line between title and author. Start a new page following the title page; the start of page one will repeat the title in bold, centered. See page 2.

Heading:

List the page number in the top right corner of every page. Student papers no longer require a running head. Running heads for professional papers include a short version of the paper's title.

Citations:

In-text citations are used to credit any external sources. Parenthetical citations include author name, date of publication, and page numbers for direct quotes. Enclose citations in parentheses and follow by a period. See pages 3 and 4.

References:

Begin a new page. "References" header center aligned and bolded. List all sources used alphabetically.

Sample APA Student Title Page

APA has two types of title pages: student title pages and professional title pages. Student title pages are more commonly requested by instructors than professional title pages. The following example depicts a common APA title page and a description of the elements within.

Elements	Title Page Example
Header	1
Title	Call to Action: Cell Phone Use on the Road
Author	Angela Daly
Affiliation	Department of Sociology, Boise State University
Class	SOC 425: Urban Sociology
Instructor	Dr. George A. Evans
Due Date	May 27, 2020

- **Header:** The header lists the page number beginning on the title page. Align to the right.
- **Title:** Title is placed three to four lines down from the top of the page. Major words are capitalized. Title length may be one or two lines. Avoid abbreviations or non-essential words. A focused title is key!
- **Author:** Author name(s) includes the first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Two authors are joined with an "and." Three or more authors are formatted as a list, placing commas between author names, and an "and" before the final author's name.
- **Affiliation:** Author's affiliation lists where the student studies and what school their discipline is within.
- **Class:** List the course number as abbreviated on course materials, followed by a colon, and spell out the course's name.
- **Instructor:** Instructor name(s) include the first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Professional titles such as Dr. or degrees such as Ph.D. are appropriate here.
- **Date:** Format the date as Month Day, Year. List the assignment due date, not when it was originally created.

APA In-Text Citations

In APA, every time you use the work or thoughts of another, you must cite the original author. Use of others' ideas include summarizing, paraphrasing, and directly quoting. To cite the source, you will need an in-text citation to supplement your references page, typically consisting of the author's last name and the date when the material was published. Page numbers are added for direct quotes. All of this information is enclosed in parentheses, separated by commas, and followed by a period.

Single Author

List author's last name followed by date, adding page numbers for direct quotes. For example, this quotation from Jim Dougan is found on page twenty-nine of his 2017 article:

After the release of their first album, The Cows were “roundly derided as a talentless, tasteless joke” (Dougan, 2017, p. 29).

Two Authors

Two authors last names are joined by an ampersand as in:

Hansel said goodbye to the white cat, but it was only the morning sun shining upon the chimney (Grimm & Grimm, 1812).

Three or More Authors

List the first author's last name followed by the abbreviation "et al." (and others). In this example by John Ramage, John Bean, and June Johnson in their 2012 article, John Ramage is listed as the first author:

A key component of Aristotle's classical argument was the rhetorical triangle: the message, writer or speaker, and audience (Ramage et al., 2012).

Organization or Group Author

If no author is listed and or the source is published by an organization or group, list the group's full name in the text or citation, followed by the abbreviation if well known. Use the acronym for every subsequent citation.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), abbreviations are ok if the abbreviation is well known (2019). After introducing the abbreviation, they recommend using it for every other in-text citation (APA, 2019).

Narrative Citation

If the author's name, publication date, and or page numbers are given in the sentence, omit them from the following in-text citation. For example: if you introduce the author and date before quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing, then only the page numbers are included at the end of the sentence.

According to music critic Mark Prindle (2017), Minneapolis rock combo The Cows are an acquired taste (p. 29).

Unknown Author

If the author's name is unknown, include a shortened version of the publication title in quotations:

Minneapolis rock combo The Cows are widely considered to be an acquired taste ("All Music Guide," 2017).

Block Quotations

A direct quotation of 40 or more words is introduced by a colon, started on a new line, and indented a half-inch from the left margin. Do not indent the first line, add quotation marks, or adjust line spacing. Include the parenthetical citation after the final period or punctuation mark of the block quote.

Peterson and Poulsen's (1998) study found the following:

Mitochondria are known as the powerhouses of the cell. They are organelles that act like a digestive system which takes in nutrients, breaks them down, and creates energy rich molecules for the cell. The biochemical processes of the cell are known as cellular respiration. (p. 199)

APA Reference Entries

To credit sources, APA style requires a reference page that includes full citation information for each source. Begin by starting on another page titled “References,” centered and bolded. Reference list entries should be alphabetized by the last name of the first author listed. Additionally, each entry should be indented by a half inch after the first line, called a hanging indent. APA style customizes entries for each type of source, meaning that each citation will be unique.

Webpage from a Website

Website citations follow a basic format for all types of websites. For sources without authors, list the group or organization as author. If no group or organization is given, move the website name to the author position.

Last Name, F. M. (Year, Month Day). *Title of Page*. Website Name. URL.

Boise State University Writing Center. (n.d.). *Welcome to the Writing Center*. Boise State University. <https://www.boisestate.edu/writingcenter/>

Book

Books follow a standard format for print and electronic sources. For edited works add the editor's name following the book title. If no author is listed, substitute for the editor instead. Include DOI for print and electronic sources (if available).

Last Name, F. M. (Year). *Book Title*. Publisher. DOI (if available)

Jimenez, J. (2003). *Latin culture in the United States*. Harper Collins.

Work from a Collection

Chapters in a wider collection or anthology can be cited in two ways: citing the whole anthology as a book, or citing a single source in the anthology. An example of the latter is shown.

Last Name, F. M. (Year). Chapter Title. Editor. *Book Title* (pages). Publisher.

Shonagon, S. (1988). Hateful things. In P. Lopate (Ed.), *The art of the personal essay* (pp. 273- 278). Norton.

Journal Article

Journal articles, or periodicals, are print and electronic sources issued within larger journals.

Last Name, F. M. (Year). Article Title. *Journal Title*, *Volume Number*(Issue Number), pages. DOI (if available)

Lorca, R. & Rose, M. (1997). Best practices for scaling up a basic writing program. *Teaching English in a Two-Year College*, 33(2), 33-74. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.24.2.225

Newspaper Article

Newspaper and magazine articles are two other types of periodicals. Include volume, issue, and/or page number(s) if available. Unlike other citations, do not list the abbreviation "p." or "pp." before the page number(s).

Last Name, F. M. (Year, Month Day). Article Title. *Newspaper Title*, pages (if print). URL (if digital)

Brody, A. J. (2001, Dec. 18). The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. *The Washington Post*, A1, A5.

Government Report

Government reports and other legal documents fall under The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation style. List the agency as author and parent agencies as publisher for reports by government agencies.

Name of Government Agency. (Year). *Report Title* (Report No.). Publisher. URL (if available)

National Institute of Mental Health. (1990). *Clinical training in serious mental illness* (DHHS Publication No. ADM 90-1679). www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/asth_sch.pdf

YouTube Video

Videos from YouTube or other user-generated video websites list the person or group as author. If both the author and username are the same, list the username as author.

Last Name, F. M. [Username]. (Year, Month Day). *Video Title* [Video]. Streaming Service. URL

Scientific America. (2010, Oct. 4). *Powering the cell: Mitochondria* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrS2uROUjK4>

More Information for In-Text Citations

Primary and secondary sources:

To cite a primary source referenced in a secondary source, cite the primary source as cited in the secondary source (e.g. Gilman, 1898, as cited in Eddles & Appelrouth, 2015). Reference the primary source (e.g. Gilman, 1898) directly when possible.

Timed media:

For timed media such as videos or songs, cite the time in parentheses (e.g. Knowles, 2016, 56:37).

Multiple sources:

In-text citations with multiple sources are separated by a semicolon and listed alphabetically (e.g. Smith, 2012; Williams, 2003).

Multiple works by one author:

Multiple works by one author are listed chronologically, following the author's name, separated by commas. Works without dates are placed first (e.g., Smith, n.d., 2007, 2012).

Personal communication:

Interviews, letters, emails, and other forms of personal communication are cited in-text only. Cite the communicator's initials and last name and list the date (e.g. M. Keith, personal communication, August 5, 2022).

More Information for Reference Entries

Multiple authors:

With sources that have two to twenty authors, list the authors' last names and first initials, with each author's name separated by a comma. Separate the last author's name with an ampersand (&).

Authors with the same last name:

If a reference list includes authors with the same last name, arrange entries alphabetically by first initial. If both last name and initials are identical, organize chronologically.

Organization or group author:

In instances where an organization or group authored the work, spell out the full name of the group in place of the author's last name and initial. If the author is the publisher, omit restating the publisher.

No author:

In a reference entry for a work with no author, move the title of the work to the author position.

No date (n.d.):

If no date is available, insert n.d. in the date position.

Publishers:

Publishers' names are given in full; however, do not give words indicating business structure, like Ltd. or LLC. Terms like Press and Books should be included.

APA Level Headings

Headings visually delineate organizational structure and help highlight key ideas within sections. Topics of equal importance share the same level heading throughout the document. The heading style recommended by APA consists of five possible formatting arrangements, which are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1

American Psychological Association Level of Headings

Level	Formatting
1	Centered, Bold, and Title Case
2	Flush Left, Bold, and Title Case
3	<i>Flush Left, Bold Italic, and Title Case</i>
4	Indented, Bold, Title Case, and ending with a period.
5	<i>Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case, and ending with a period.</i>

More Information:

- **Ordering:** Begin with the first level of headings, using only the heading levels necessary to differentiate.
- **Subsections:** APA suggests avoiding having only one subsection within a larger section e.g. Section I can be divided into subsections A and B, but not A alone.
- **Numbering:** Numbering or lettering is not appropriate for headings.
- **Spacing:** Do not add an extra space before or after headings.

Sample APA Reference Page

APA references begin on a new page. References title is bolded and centered. Callouts on the left-hand margin denote the type of citation cited in the corresponding reference entry. All entries are alphabetized and formatted with a hanging indent.

Elements	References Page Example
	6
	References
Newspaper	Brody, A. J. (2001, Dec. 18). The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. <i>The Washington Post</i> , A1, A5.
Book	Jimenez, J. (2003). <i>Latin culture in the United States</i> . Harper Collins.
Journal Article	Lorca, R. & Rose, M. (1997). Best practices for scaling up with a basic writing program. <i>Teaching English in a Two-Year College</i> , 33(2), 33-74. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.24.2.225
Government Report	National Institute of Mental Health. (1990). <i>Clinical training in serious mental illness</i> (DHHS Publication No. ADM 90-1679). www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/asth_sch.pdf
YouTube Video	Scientific America. (2010, Oct. 4). Powering the cell: Mitochondria [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrS2uROUjK4
Work from a Collection	Shonagon, S. (1988). Hateful things. In P. Loate (Ed.), <i>The art of personal essay</i> (pp. 273-278). Norton.
Podcast Episode	Wallace, C. (Host). (2019, Oct. 22). <i>A Genius of Empathy</i> [Audio podcast episode]. In <i>Finding Fred</i> . iHeartRadio. https://www.iheart.com/podcast/1119-finding-fred-91432380/

Source Attribution

Information in this handout is adapted from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020).

Reference Entry

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