APA 7th Ed. Reference Guide

University of North Carolina
School of Social Work

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[*] This resource updates the contents of the APA Quick Reference Guide prepared by Diane Wyant in 2010.

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NB: these guidelines only address the most common APA-related formatting and style questions. Comprehensive guidelines are available online at:

https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/
or
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

1. Basic Structure of APA Papers

All papers in APA style will include these sections in the following order:
1. Cover or title page
2. Abstract (in journal articles this is sometimes followed by Keywords on the same page)
3. Body of the paper (often including Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion; APA papers **do not include an Introduction header** – they begin after the title with no header)
4. References

Each of these four sections begins on its own page. For example, don't begin the body of the paper on the same page as the Abstract; start a new page. However, the sections within the body of the paper should be continuous. For example, if your Discussion ends in the middle of a page, begin your Conclusion on that same page.

Depending on the requirements of the class paper or the journal article, **tables and figures** are included either (a) in the body of the paper where you'd like them to appear, or (b) after the References section. If they appear after the References, then each table/figure/appendix should appear on its own page. Also, indicate in the body of the paper where you'd like them to appear by writing
<center><Insert Table/Figure # about here></center>

2. APA Page Formatting and Style

Margins	1" margins on all sides; text is flush left (ragged right edge)
Font	12 pt. font max for main text/headings/tables/figures For main text/headings, you can choose among: • Calibri (11 or 12 pt. recommended) • Lucida Sans Unicode (10 pt. recommended) • Arial (11 pt. recommended) • Georgia (11 pt. recommended) • Times New Roman (12 pt. recommended) Use one font and font size consistently for your title page, abstract, main body text, and references Tables/figures require a sans serif font: Arial, Calibri, or Lucida Sans Unicode Font size for tables/figures can be from 8 pt. to 14 pt. For computer code, use a monospace font such as `Lucida Console (10 pt.)` or `Courier New (10 pt.)`
Spacing	Double-spaced throughout, including references One space following all punctuation and between sentences One space between author's initials: J. L. Borges **Exceptions:** No spaces between punctuation in abbreviations (i.e., e.g.)
Indentations	Indent 0.5" in each new paragraph, including the first paragraph Do not indent the first line of the Abstract; it should be flush left All lines of block quotations (> 40 words) are 0.5" indented from the left margin Reference entries have a 0.5" hanging indent

Page Header	Page numbers appear in the upper right-hand corner; title/cover page is page 1 For journal articles, include running header in all caps in upper left-hand corner

Numbers	Numbers less than 10 are written out as words (i.e., one, two, …nine)
	 Numbers 10 and greater use Arabic figures (10, 11, …)
	 Use % to report any percentages (4%, 87.2%)
	     Exceptions: When you begin a sentence with a number, write out the number
	     as a word. If it is a percentage, also write out "percent" (e.g., Twenty-six
	     percent of participants…)

Variables	Italicize English letters used as statistical symbols or algebraic variables (e.g., N, n, t, M, SD, Cohen's t)
	     Exception: When a variable that would normally be italicized appears in an
	     italicized title, you do not italicize the variable: *Demographic Characteristics of*
	     *Study Participants (*N = 150*)*
	 For equations, put one space before and after the =

Italics	Italicize the first use of key terms/phrases (e.g., *Self-care* is defined as…)
	 Italicize titles of books, reports, webpages (not URLs), and other standalone works
	 Italicize anchors of a scale, but not the associated numbers.
	     Example: …using a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*)
	 Italicize the first use of words/phrases from another language that your reader
	 may not know
	     Example: …the concept of *familidad* is…
	 You do not need to italicize Latin terms that have become accepted as English
	 words, such as et al., per se, a priori, ad hoc, vis-à-vis, et cetera

Hyphens	Words that are always hyphenated:
	   • Any compound words with self- as the prefix (self-reported, self-care)
	   • Two words acting as a compound adjective (**low-dosage** group, **12th-grade** students, a **two-thirds** majority)
	   • Any compound with a base that is capitalized, a number, or an abbreviation (non-Latinx, post-1990, anti-FBI rally)
	 Do not hyphenate:
	   • Racial and ethnic group names (e.g., Korean American)
	   • Compound adjectives that include an adverb ending in *-ly* (e.g., federal**ly** funded grant, random**ly** assigned groups, wide**ly** accepted terms)
	   • Compounds that include a comparative or superlative adjective (e.g., better written text, higher order analysis, worst case scenario)

Tense	Use **past tense** (e.g., studied) or **present perfect tense** (e.g., have studied) in your
	     literature review, methods, and results sections
	 Use **present tense** when discussing the implications of your results, presenting
	     your conclusions, describing limitations of your study, and making
	     recommendations for future studies

Abbreviations	When abbreviating a term, write out the full term and then follow it with the
	     abbreviation in parentheses the first time you use it. After that, just use the
	     abbreviation (e.g., The School of Social Work (SSW) had a record number of
	     applications this past year. SSW data shows that…)

	Exceptions: You do not need to write out the full term of any abbreviation that appears as a word in the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (e.g., IQ, HIV, RNA, UNESCO) Use periods when abbreviating "United States" as an adjective (U.S. government) Except for inch (in.), do not use periods when abbreviating measurements (mm, lb, min, kg). Measurements should only be abbreviated when attached to a numerical value (25 kg) Do not abbreviate "day," "week," "month," or "year"
Quotation Marks	Use quotation marks: - to refer to a letter, word, phrase, or sentence as a linguistic example (e.g., the letter "a," they answered "yes") - to quote material verbatim from a source (e.g., a scholarly article, a test item, instructions to participants) - around the title of a journal article or book chapter when it appears in the main text of your paper (no quotation marks in the references) Do not use quotation marks: - to highlight a key term or phrase (use italics – see above) - to downplay or attenuate meaning (e.g., participants received a "gift")
Pronouns	Use "I" if you are the sole author; do not refer to yourself as "the author" Use "we" if you are writing a paper with coauthors Do not use "we" to refer to people in general (e.g., "We often do not have enough time to do everything we want to do.") To refer to a singular person whose gender is unspecified or who is nonbinary, use "they"; do not use "he or she," "(s)he," or "s/he"

3. Headings

APA 7th Ed. has a revised the formatting of different levels of section headings for the main body text of papers.

Always begin with level-1 headings and proceed sequentially. When you begin a new main section of the paper (e.g., Methods), use a level-1 heading. When you create a subsection in the Methods section (e.g., Sample Characteristics), use a level-2 heading. And so on.

Level	Heading Format
1	**Centered, Bold, Title Case** The first paragraph begins on the next line.
2	**Left-Aligned, Bold, Title Case** The first paragraph begins on the next line.
3	***Left-Aligned, Bold, Italicized, Title Case*** The first paragraph begins on the next line.
4	**Indented, Bold, Title Case, Period.** The first paragraph begins on the same line.
5	***Indented, Bold, Italicized, Title Case, Period.*** The first paragraph begins on the same line.

Title pages, abstracts, references, tables, and figures aren't considered parts of the main body text of a paper, so they don't follow these heading formatting guidelines.

NB: In many cases, even when academic journals claim to follow APA formatting guidelines, they will have their own specific requirements for heading formats. Be sure to check the journal's "Guidelines for Authors" page to determine the proper format for your paper.

4. Formatting Tables and Figures

Tables will include:
- A number in bold (e.g., **Table 1**). Tables are numbered according to their first order of appearance in your paper/article.
- An italicized title in title case capitalization one double-spaced line below the table number
- Headings. All columns require a heading, including the leftmost column (this heading is often "Variable"). Center column headings and put them in title case capitalization.
- A body (i.e., all rows/columns). Body text may be single-spaced, 1.5-spaced, or double-spaced. Left-align the information in the leftmost column but center this column's heading. In all other cells, center information unless left-alignment would improve their readability. When possible, align columns of numbers on the decimal point.
- Notes. This section begins with "*Note.*" See sample table below for the order of appearance for different notes.

Other formatting information for tables:
- Eliminate all vertical lines from the table
- The table may have a top and bottom border, but no left or right border
- Tables must use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial or Calibri)
- Tables can be longer than one page, but they should not exceed the left/right margins of the page in Word. If a table is wide, switch the page orientation to "Landscape." If it's still too wide, try reducing the table font (8 pt. minimum) and tightening up the columns.

Table 1

Number of Squirrels Befriended During Quarantine, by 30-Day Interval

Day Interval	Gray Squirrels		Red Squirrels	
	# Befriended	# Not Befriended	# Befriended	# Not Befriended
1-30	0[a]	21	0	14
31-60	2	17	1	15
61-90	14	6	10	4
Total	16[*]	44	11	33

Note. If a squirrel looked at me, I decided it was my friend. Begin with general notes, including information needed to understand the table (e.g., abbreviations).
[a] Specific notes follow the general notes, indicated by a superscript letter.
[*] Probability notes (for p values) appear below the specific notes, indicated by a superscript asterisk.

Figures are any type of visual display other than tables. Figures will include:
- A number in bold (e.g., **Figure 1**). Figures are numbered according to their first order of appearance in your paper/article.
- An italicized title in title case capitalization one double-spaced line below the figure number
- An image. This is the graph, photograph, chart, or other visual illustration of information.
- A legend. The legend/key should appear within the image and explain any symbols included in the image. Words in the legend should be capitalized in title case.
- A note. Note formatting requirements are identical to those for tables (see p. 6).

Use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial or Calibri) for all text appearing in figures (e.g., axis labels, notes, legends) as well as for the figure's number and title.

APA has posted sample tables and figures online for a number of different types of data/studies:
- Tables: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables
- Figures: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures

5. In-text Citations

In-text citations (i.e., citations that occur in the body of the paper):
- Appear immediately after the referenced source or immediately after the quoted text
- Appear in parentheses
- Include the last name(s) of the author(s) and year of publication of the cited source

The author's last name can go inside or outside the parentheses:
- Earlier theorists (Lorde, 1979) have noted that…
- Lorde (1979) observed that…

If you are quoting text or citing something on a particular page (e.g., a diagram), you also include page number(s) in the parentheses after the source's publication year. Use "p." for one page or "pp." for a range of pages.
- The well-known observation that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1979, p. 112) means that…
- Lorde famously observed that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1979, p. 112), which means…

Other formatting rules for in-text citations:

One author	(Last name, publication year) (Clegane, 2019)
Two authors	(Author 1 last name & Author 2 last name, publication year) (Tarth & Tyrell, 2002) If you write the authors' names outside of the parentheses, use "and" instead of "&" According to Tarth **and** Tyrell (2002), the fact that…

Three or more authors	(Author 1's last name et al., publication year) (Stark et al., 2003) If you write the author's name outside of the parentheses, you can either write it as "Author 1's last name et al." or "Author 1's last name and colleagues" In their meta-analysis, Stark et al. (2003) found that… In their meta-analysis, Stark and colleagues (2003) found that…
Multiple citations	Combine multiple citations using a semicolon. The citations should be ordered alphabetically according to Author 1's last name. (Greyjoy & Lannister, 2007; Snow, 2005; Targaryen et al., 2011)
Multiple citations by the same author	Write the author's last name only once and follow it with the publication years of the different sources, from earliest to latest (King, 1999, 2014, 2015)
Multiple citations by the same author from the same year	Write the author's last name only once and attach a lowercase letter to each year. These letters should correspond to the sources' order of appearance in your References section. (Bolton, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c)
No date	Write "n.d." instead of the year (Drogo, n.d.)
No author	Use a shortened version of the title in place of the author's name. Use double quotation marks for titles of articles, webpages, or chapters. Use italics for titles of books, periodicals, brochures, or reports. …different treatments ("Modern Care," 1994), which showed… …produced mixed results (*The Hidden Costs of Inequity*, n.d.) on the…
Organization as author	If individual authors are not listed, use the name of the organization as the author (Planned Parenthood, 2020) For organizations you will cite several times, can abbreviate their names in brackets within the parentheses the first time you cite it. Afterward, use only the abbreviation with no brackets. …as seen in a recent federal report (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018). This report (CDC, 2018) also recommends…
Personal communication	(First Initial. Middle Initial. Last Name, personal communication, Month Date, Year) From a talk with the director (J. L. Borges, personal communication, May 10, 1962), I learned that… J. L. Borges (personal communication, May 10, 1962) notified me that the… Personal communications (e.g., letters, emails, phone calls, in-person conversations) have in-text citations but **are not included in the References**.

6. References

References begin on a new page after the end of the body text of the paper. They are ordered alphabetically and double-spaced. The "References" heading should be centered but not bold. Here are APA formats for and examples of the most common types of references:

Journal article, one author	Author, A. A. (Year). Title of article in sentence case. *Journal Title*, *Volume*(Number), first page-last page. Chapman, M. V. (2005). Neighborhood quality and somatic complaints among American youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 36*(3), 244-252.
Journal article, up to 20 authors	Author1, A. A., & Author2, B. B. (Year). Title of article in sentence case. *Journal Title*, *Volume*(Number), first page-last page. Bo, A., Mao, W., & Lindsey, M. A. (2017). Effects of mind-body interventions on depressive symptoms among older Chinese adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 32*(5), 509-521.
Journal article, more than 20 authors	Using the format above, include the first 19 authors' names, then add an ellipsis (…) but **no ampersand** (&) before the last author's name.
Advance online publication	Author, A. A. (Year). Title of article in sentence case. *Journal Title*. Advance online publication. DOI Kim, J., Hulett, J., & Heiney, S. P. (2020). Forgiveness and health outcomes in cancer survivorship: A scoping review. *Cancer Nursing*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1097/NCC.0000000000000809
*For all journal articles, **it is best practice to include the DOI** (digital object identifier) at the end of the reference entry whenever possible. You must provide a DOI for advance online publications. Crossref.org is an easy-to-use resource for looking up DOIs. In your References, write the DOI as a URL (i.e., beginning with "https://doi.org/..."), as shown above.
Book	Author, A. A. (Year). *Title of work: Capital letter for first word of subtitle*. Publisher name. Strom-Gottfried, K. (1999). *Social work practice: Cases, activities, and exercises*. Pine Forge Press.
Chapter in a book	Author, A. A. (Year). Title of chapter. In E. E. Editor & F. F. Editor (Eds.), *Title of work: Capital letter for first word of subtitle* (pp. pages of chapter). Publisher. Okumu, M., Kato, H., & Chalise, N. (2016). A system dynamics approach to process evaluation of pen-based digital media-making projects. In T. Hammond, S. Valentine, & A. Adler (Eds.), *Revolutionizing education with digital ink: The impact of pen and touch technology on education* (pp. 209-221). Springer.
Edited book with no author	Editor, E. E. (Ed.). (Year). *Title of work: Capital letter for first word of subtitle*. Publisher name. Turner, F. J. (Ed.). (2017). *Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches*. Oxford University Press. If there is more than one editor: Thompson, G. M., & Brand, A. Y. (Eds.). …

Organization or government report, online	Organization Name. (Year). *Title of report* (Number of report if available). URL United States Government Accountability Office. (2020). *Social Distancing During Pandemics* (GAO-20-545SP). https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/706916.pdf If the report has individual authors: Author1, A. A., & Author2, B. B. (Year). *Title of report*. Organization Name. URL Barrow, R. Y., Ahmed, F., Bolan, G. A., & Workowski, K. A. (2020). *Recommendations for Providing Quality Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinical Services, 2020*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/rr/rr6805a1.htm?s_cid=rr6805a1_w
Online article with an associated newspaper	Author, A. A. (Year, Month Date). Title of article. *Title of Publication*. URL Bhanoo, S. N. (2020, May 4). When parents have to be social workers and therapists, too: How coronavirus is affecting foster families. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/05/04/when-parents-have-be-social-workers-therapists-too-how-coronavirus-is-affecting-foster-families/
Online article with no associated newspaper	Author, A. A. (Year, Month Date). *Title of article*. Name of publishing website. URL Hegarty, S. (2020, May 14). *Why this ICU nurse treating COVID patients could be deported*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52632880
Webpages	Author, A. A. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. Site name. URL Keelor, J. (2018, March 3). *Federal budget targets SNAP, Medicaid, ACA, Housing*. National Association of Social Workers. https://www.socialworkers.org/News/NASW-News/ID/1673/Government-programs-stand-to-lose-millions If no publication date is provided, write "(n.d.)" If no month and date are provided, write only the year. If no individual author is listed, write the group/organization name instead of the author's name: Group/Organization Name. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. Site name. URL If the group/organization name is the same as the site name, you do not need to write the site name: Group/Organization Name. (Year, Month Date). *Title of page*. URL If the page has no identifiable individual/group author, then begin with the page title and include a retrieval date: *Title of page*. (Year, Month Date). Site name. Retrieved Month Date, Year from URL
Blog post	Author, A. A. (Year, Month Date). Title of post. *Publisher*. URL Durant, S. (2020, February 24). Understanding the First Year Field Placement. *WordPress*. https://uncssw.wordpress.com/2020/02/24/understanding-the-first-year-field-placement/

7. Bias-Free Language

Many of the recommendations in this section have long been common practice among social workers. This section is not comprehensive. APA's website more extensively describes its policies on bias-free language and explains the reasoning behind those policies: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language

Age
Be specific whenever possible about the age range of the population you're describing.

When applicable, use age-specific nouns such as "adult" (ages 18+), "youth" or "adolescent" (ages 13-17), "child" (ages 3-12), "toddler" (ages 1-3), or "infant" (ages 0-1).

Instead of value-loaded terms such as "seniors," "the elderly," or "aging dependents," use terms such as "older adults," "the older population," or "persons 65 years or older."

Disability
Typically, use person-first language (i.e., language that doesn't make a person's disability their defining characteristic). For example, use "people with epilepsy" instead of "epileptics."

Follow community preferences about whether or not to use person-first language. For example, many Deaf individuals prefer to be called "Deaf" (capital D) instead of "people with hearing loss" or "people who are deaf." If you're working directly with individuals with disabilities, ask about and use the language they use to describe themselves.

Only mention disabilities when this information is necessary to your discussion.

Gender
When necessary to your discussion (e.g., if your study involves data on gender), describe an individual's gender using the terms that they use to describe themselves. These include binary terms (i.e., female, male) and nonbinary terms (e.g., transgender, agender, genderqueer, gender-fluid, gender nonbinary, two-spirit).

Avoid using "males" and "females" as nouns, unless you're talking about a group of male or female individuals that includes a broad range of ages.

To refer to an individual whose gender is unspecified or who is gender nonbinary, use "they." Do not use "he or she," "(s)he," or "s/he."

Use gender-neutral terms (e.g., "postal worker" instead of "mailman"; "humanity" instead of "mankind"). Specify gender only when necessary to your discussion.

Race and Ethnicity
Because "race" and "ethnicity" are not equivalent or interchangeable terms, don't use the phrase "race/ethnicity." Instead, determine which term is appropriate for the population(s) you're discussing, or use "race **and** ethnicity" if your discussion involves identities in both categories. If

you're unsure if your categories of analysis are racial or ethnic categories, consult APA's page on race and ethnicity: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities

Be appropriately specific. For instance, do not write "Asian" if you mean "Asian American." If you know this Asian American population is Chinese American, then write "Chinese American."

Capitalize racial and ethnic terms at all levels of specificity (e.g., "Black," "White," "Native American," "Sioux," "Aboriginal," "Hispanic," "Latinx," "Iranian American").
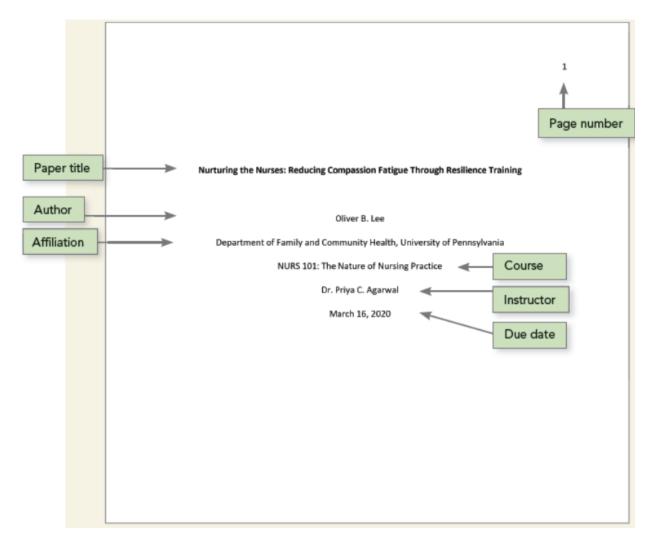
Don't hyphenate multiword names (e.g., "African American," **not** "African-American").

Outdated terminology:
- Afro-American
- American Indian
- Caucasian
- Negro
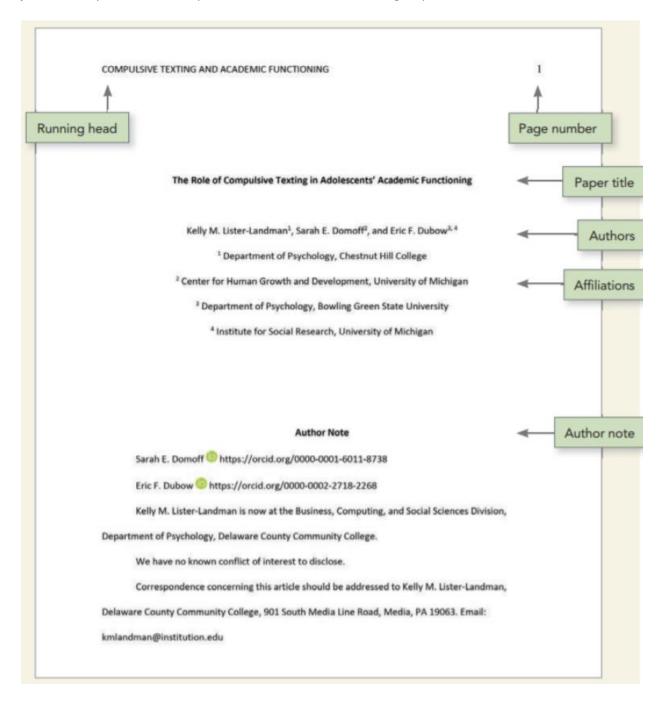- Oriental

8. Sample Student Paper Cover Page

Professors may have their own cover page formatting requirements for written assignments. In all cases, follow your professors' requirements if they conflict with APA guidelines.

Source: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Title page setup*. APA Style. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/title-page

9. Sample Journal Article Cover Page

Academic journals often have specific guidelines for formatting cover pages. In all cases, the journal's requirements take precedence over APA formatting requirements.

Source: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Title page setup*. APA Style. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/title-page