

THE APA WRITING STYLE AND GRAMMAR

The **APA (American Psychological Association)** writing style is required and used by the Pastoral Counselling program) at AOIC .

Please note that when researchers talk about APA style, they may be referring to APA's system of citations in text and reference format. If you are unsure, you should clarify with your instructor or editor how they define "APA style."

The above information is clear in the SPC Handbook. Students ignoring this warning have had papers returned ungraded and even had to delay a planned graduation.

Please note that the APA style manual does change about once a decade to reflect changes in editorial practices and technology. Also, note that different publishing companies and academic journals tend to have minor modifications in the style manual rules (these modifications are published in each issue of the journal).

When editors or teachers ask you to write in "APA style," they do not mean writing style. They are referring to the editorial style that many of the social and behavioral sciences have adopted to present written material in the field.

Editorial style consists of rules or guidelines that a publisher observes to ensure clear and consistent presentation of written material. Editorial style concerns uniform use of such elements as

- punctuation and abbreviations
- construction of tables
- selection of headings
- citation of references
- presentation of statistics
- as well as many other elements that are a part of every manuscript

The American Psychological Association has established a style that it uses in all of the books and journals that it publishes. Many others working in the social and behavioral sciences have adopted this style as their standard as well.

The APA style identifies more with the quantitative, social science side of the field, the area that most accommodates the measurable, objective and statistical paradigm in communication studies. Most of the rules in the APA manual are better understood when you realize the manual is primarily for submitting copy manuscripts (see section A.01 in the manual) for publication to a printer. AOIC does not currently have an internal APA style manual for final manuscripts.

The APA style form rules and guidelines are found in their entirety in the [*The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*](#), (5th Edition), a publication of the American Psychological association in Washington D.C. Learning to use the style form well demands having a copy of the manual. The manual serves as a principle reference guide, always at the researcher's and writer's elbow. The **first chapter of the APA style manual** provides worthwhile rules for the content of the sections of a paper.

This document will not be exhaustive and in no way replaces the manual. It is intended as **an introductory tutorial and basic review**. If you have not already gone to the Web

sites available in the syllabus for APA help, you are missing a lot. You can download crib sheets from www.docstyles.com when going to www.psywww.com. There are free student guides and toolbars you can download onto your computer that will always give you ready reference.

CONFIGURING YOUR WORD-PROCESSING SOFTWARE

Before actively beginning your use of the APA style form, several **configurations and settings** must be made on your word-processing software program, Microsoft Word bundled in Microsoft Office. Remember, SPC education programs **require the use of** Microsoft Office, either DOS or Apple version.

Check these settings out:

1. Set your page **margins** to 1 inch on all sides. (Only if you are preparing a document for binding, e.g., a thesis or dissertation, you should plan to leave a 1 1/4 inch margin on the left side of your page.) (5.04)
2. In choosing a **page text setting** for APA, do **not** choose right hand or full justification of text; only left hand justification is acceptable.
3. Select **Header and Footer** from your word-processing menu bar and create a defined header for your APA paper. You will have to select an abbreviated title to become part of the header; some students prefer their surname as part of their header. Also, use a properly formatted running head. (5.06).
4. Part of your Header selection is **page numbers**. APA requires pagination on every page including the title page. This goes with the header in the upper right hand corner of the page. Page numbers are carried but not printed on every page (see p. 326). Your word-processing software will print the header and consecutive pagination automatically for you. (6.03)
5. Not all **typefaces** are acceptable in APA. Choose either **Times New Roman** or **Courier New**. (5.02)
6. **Type sizes** too make a difference in APA. Choose 12 pt. (5.02)
7. Another word-processing configuration is to set **the indent** function to five or seven places. A five-place indent is the most common preference. (5.08)
8. APA requires **double spacing** for the entire paper - everything. One may choose to set the word-processing line choice to double-spacing when you begin the paper or one may choose to single space the entire document during writing and by then highlighting the entire text later, choose double spacing of lines. (5.03)
9. Spacing and Punctuation is found at (5.11). A tip is to use Edit – Find - Replace to find all double spaces and replace with single spaces.

Set your Microsoft Word spelling and grammar toolbar settings to improve your writing. Below are the ones I find most useful for the APA writing style. Hope you find this helpful too. Spelling errors will have faint red underlines; grammar errors will have faint green underlines.

[Blue text is for navigation](#). Black text is for the settings to check.

Microsoft Word **XP**

Tools - Options – Spelling & Grammar

Check spelling as you type
 Always suggest corrections
 Ignore words in UPPERCASE
 Ignore words with numbers
 Ignore Internet and file addresses
 Check grammar as you type
 Check grammar with spelling
 Show readability statistics
 Writing style: Grammar & Style

[Settings...]

Require:

Comma required before last item: **always**
 Punctuation required with quotes: **inside**
 Spaces required between sentences: **1**

Grammar:

Check all boxes - except those you wish Word not to engage

COMMON ERRORS MADE IN GRADUATE PAPERS

Over the years, your faculty has found what become some very common and general English language and grammar writing errors that appear all too frequently.

I present some of the errors here in an effort to help you avoid them.

Latin/Greek plurals

<i>one</i>	<i>two or more</i>
datum	data
medium	media
criterion	criteria
phenomenon	phenomena

Punctuation with abbreviations: (i.e., e.g., et al.): Latin abbreviations should appear only in parenthetical material.

The ampersand ("&") belongs only in parenthetical material (such as in-text citations) or in the references. In the text of the paper use "and."

Mistaken Usage

Due to, verb

This expression is a verb; as such, it requires the verb to be.
 For example: It **is due to** his ineptitude that he failed.

Because of, preposition

This is a preposition; this is usually what is generally meant when due to is misused.
 For example: **Because of** (not due to) the snow, school is closed.

Misused Possessives and Plurals

"it's" means "it is"

"its" is the correct form of the possessive

1990's or 90's indicates the possessive only;

For example: 90's fashions

1990s or 90s is correct when the possessive is not required;

For example: In the 90s . . .

Gender Neutral Writing Styles

Use "his or her", "he or she" (2.13).

Use "one," "a person," "people," or the roles a person plays, including you as the author, for example, "a researcher," "this author," "this writer" - never use first person unless specifically asked to do so.

Common Grammatical Mistakes

- The misuse of present tense (2.02) Use the past tense.
- Use **Active** rather than **Passive** voice (2.06)
Verbs are vigorous, direct communicators. Use the active rather than the passive voice, and select tense or mood carefully.
Poor: The survey was conducted in a controlled setting.
Better: We conducted the survey in a controlled setting.
Poor: The experiment was designed by Simpson (2001).
Better: Simpson (2001) designed the experiment.

Poor: The participants were seated in comfortable chairs equipped with speakers that delivered the tone stimuli.
Better: Participants sat in comfortable chairs equipped with speakers that delivered the tone stimuli.
- Pronoun Use (2.08), (2.10)
- Agreement of Subjects and Verbs (2.07):
Example 1:
The media are ... One criterion is .
plural noun + plural verb singular noun + singular verb
Example 2
A verb must agree in number (i.e., singular or plural) with its subject, regardless of intervening phrases that begin with such words as *together*, *with*, *including*, *plus*, and *as well as*.
Example 1:
Incorrect:
The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increase with practice.
Correct:
The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increases with practice.
Example 2: **Incorrect:** "...the student worked on their homework"
 Correct: "...the student ...his..."
- Dangling Modifiers (2.09)
Dangling modifiers have no referent in the sentence. Many of these result from the use of the passive voice. By writing in the active voice, you can avoid many dangling modifiers.
For example:
Incorrect: After separating the participants into groups, Group A was tested.
Correct: After separating the participants into groups, I tested Group A.
Comment: [I, not Group A, separated the participants into groups.]

Incorrect: The participants were tested using this procedure.

Correct: Using this procedure, I tested the participants.

Comment: [I, not the participants, used the procedure.]

Incorrect: To test this hypothesis, the participants were divided into two groups.

- Misplaced prepositions – never end a sentence with a preposition
For example: **Incorrect:** “this is a deadline I can work with”
Correct: “this is a deadline with which I can work”
- Split Infinitives are another pet peeve. An infinitive is the form of a verb that comes after *to*, as in *to support* or *to write*; it is the uninflected form of the verb. A split infinitive occurs when another word comes between the *to* and the verb. It is better to avoid split infinitives whenever possible. Instead of "Matt seems *to always do* it that way," try "Matt *always* seems *to do* it that way." Adverbs often insinuate themselves between the *to* and the verb, as in "*To boldly go* where no man has gone before," or "*To always keep* a watch on your bag."
- Avoid Contractions and Clichés
- Mistaken use of Commas. Often writers will insert a comma where they might take a breath if they were speaking that sentence. Do not use a comma:
 1. before an essential or restrictive clause, that is, a clause that limits or defines the material it modifies. Removal of such a clause from the sentence would alter the intended meaning.
Example: The switch that stops the recording device also controls the light.
 2. between two parts of a compound predicate
Example: The results contradicted Smith's hypothesis and indicated that the effect was insignificant.
 3. to separate parts of measurement
8 years 2 months - 3 min 40 s

For other grammar tips, surf good web sites such as Jack Lynch's Guide to Grammar and Style: <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/index.html>

THE APA WRITING STYLE

Similar to the English grammar errors frequently made by students, here are some very common APA style problems before you even begin using the style form.

1. APA does not allow any **bold** or bullets in papers. The only exception to this that bold may be used for an occasional emphasis.
2. Never begin a sentence with a number. Spell it out instead:
 - NO** 135 subjects participated in the study.
 - YES** One hundred thirty-five subjects participated in the study.
3. In APA uses only surnames of authors.
 - NO** John P. Jones (1999) said . . .
 - YES** Jones (1999) said . . .
4. In APA, titles of books and articles do not belong in the text. They belong in the

bibliography.

NO Smith (1999), author of *All Things Carnivorous*, wrote . . .

YES Smith (1999) wrote . . .

5. Reference in the past tense.

NO Smith (1999) writes . . . **YES** Smith (1999) wrote . . .

6. Write in the third person.

NO I decided to study . . . **YES** The author decided to study . . .

7. Citing a reference to a book that doesn't have an author or editor.

Example:

Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

- Place the title in the author position.
- Alphabetize books with no author or editor by the first significant word in the title (*Merriam* in this case).
- In text, use a few words of the title, or the whole title if it is short, in place of an author name in the citation: (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1993).

8. Citing e-mail communications from individuals.

E-mail communications from individuals should be cited as personal communications.

The format in text (personal communications are not cited in the reference list) is as follows:

(L. A. Chafez (personal communication, March 28, 1997)

(V.-G. Nguyen, personal communication, September 28, 1998)

It is possible to send an e-mail note disguised as someone else. Authors—not journal editors or copy editors—are responsible for the accuracy of all references, which includes verifying the source of e-mail communications before citing them as personal communications in manuscripts.

9. Avoid Redundancy

Writers often become redundant in an effort to be emphatic. Use no more words than are necessary to convey your meaning. In the following examples, the words in bold are redundant and should be omitted.

1. They were **both** alike
2. **a total of** 68 participants
3. instructions, which were **exactly** the same as those used
4. **absolutely** essential
5. has been **previously** found
6. small **in size**
7. **one and** the same
8. **completely** unanimous
9. **period of** time

ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS: DOING APA

There are some things very basic to good use of the form. While one should not overlook the remaining elements of APA style form as found in the manual, the following will allow you to get a good start in using the style form properly.

TITLE PAGE

The first indication to a faculty that a student is using APA is the title page. APA defines a separate page for the title page. The Professor may also require other identifying information. Be sure to check those requirements. I have listed mine earlier in this document.

An abstract may **not** be required for class research papers unless your professor requests it. It is normally only required by APA for the thesis, portfolio, or dissertation or paper for publication. Some faculty (e.g., Dr. Biles) expect it for class papers too.

IN TEXT REFERENCES

There are two categories of in-text references: short quotations and longer quotations (40 words or more). The parenthetical reference contains the "p." abbreviation for the page number: e.g., (p. 13) or (pp. 13-16)

The **short quotation**: these are direct quotes that appear within the text of the paper.

Short quotations are all placed in quotation marks. The quotation is closed with quotation marks, then a space, and then the reference is placed in parenthesis followed by a period. All references are placed within the period for the sentence that contains the quote. Note in this example the use of the authors' surnames, and their dates of publication immediately following their names.

Taggart (1987) claimed, "Tarkovsky's messages are so obscure and pessimistic it is really impossible to know what is on his mind" (p. 14). In addition, Blank (1987) summed up the ideas of many, "Hanging in there isn't quite the sacrifice Tarkovsky had in mind" (p. 6).

The **long quotation**: this is for the quotation of 40 words in length or longer.

These are NOT placed in quotation marks. These are indented one indent tab for all lines. The quotation is closed with a period (unlike the short in-text quotation.) The reference in parenthesis follows a space after the period. In summary: the indent for all lines, no quotation marks, quotation is closed with only a period, a space, and then the parenthesis with the page reference.

PUBLICATION DATES

For every entry in the text of a new author and publication, the date of the publication is inserted, in parentheses, immediately following the author's surname. There is no need to repeat the publication date for the same author unless another author and his/her publication are inserted in the text. Then the next time you refer to the previous author, you must give the publication date again. The question often is asked about **referencing without a direct quote**. If you have paraphrased an author's work and the idea is not your own, **reference!**

For example: Only an act of faith (self-sacrifice) in sacrifice, can save our world from the monster we have created (Vemiere, 1986, p. 13).

LINKS TO WEBSITES

Because there is so much interest in APA style form there are many good Internet Web sites with invaluable information for improving your use of APA as well as updating new electronic referencing in your research papers.

Check these out!

- **APA's home page** <http://www.apa.org>
- A site for **electronic citation examples** is <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>
- A site for more **documentation** stuff is <http://www.newark.ohio-state.edu/~osuwrite/apa.htm>
- And if you are interested in a **software template** for APA, check it out at <http://www.charm.net/~rps/index.html> ; www.styleease.com (use the code RegentU for a \$10 discount).
- AOIC offers a Writing course for students.

I usually include sites in each course syllabus. Please make use of them and use this document as a basis for building **your own** tips, notifications, and reminders manual.