The American Psychological Association (APA) formatting style is primarily used in the social sciences in fields like nursing, education, and leadership. This resource offers information and examples for general APA format, abstracts, headings, in-text parenthetical citations, and the reference page.

Please note that this guide is in accordance with the 7th edition of APA.

General Document Guidelines

- The page margins should be one inch on all sides.
- Font options:
  - 12-point: Times New Roman
  - 11-point: Georgia, Calibri, or Arial
  - 10-point: Lucida Sans Unicode
- All pages should be double spaced, including block quotes and reference pages.
- All pages should contain a page number in the upper right hand corner.

The Four Major Sections

1. The title page contains your identifying information towards the top of the page. The title page should have the following information centered on the page: the title, author’s name, affiliation, course number and name, instructor’s name, and the assignment due date centered.

   *Note: The information on the title page should be double spaced. Include an extra double space between the title and the author’s name.*

2. The abstract is a summary of your work with 3-5 keywords for searching. It should be no more than 250 words in length. Some instructors may not require an abstract.

3. The main body of the paper is where you develop your ideas using citations and data. It can be divided up by headings. The information presented should be clear, concise, and supported by evidence.

4. The references provide a comprehensive list of sources used. It should start on its own page and should be labeled “References” centered and bold. All references should use a hanging indent.

   Please note that some professors may not assign all of these sections.
Title Page

The title page is required when writing in APA style. There is a professional title page and a student title page. The student title page should include the:

- Title of the paper (centered and bold)
- Name of each author of the paper
- Affiliation for each author (the university)
- Course number and name
- Name of the instructor
- Assignment due date

Month Day, Year
Day Month Year

Abstract

An abstract is a summary of your paper that provides your reader with important elements of your paper. It typically includes the piece’s purpose, main points, methods of research, and findings. It should not analyze results.

Student papers do not usually require an abstract — check with your professor to see if one is needed. Consider writing the abstract after writing the paper as this will make it easier to summarize what you wrote, rather than what you think you will write about.

The abstract is on page two of your document and should be labeled “Abstract” centered and bolded on the first line of the page. This summary should:

- Be no more than 250 words in length and should be double-spaced.
- The abstract should be left-aligned with no indentation.
- Include information written in active voice, using clear, concise, and plain language.

You may also be required to include keywords directly underneath the abstract. This can be done by writing “Keywords:” in italics and indented on a new line after the abstract. After the colon, type 3-5 key terms that are relevant to your paper. These keywords should help readers locate your work in a database.
Heading Levels

Headings help organize your writing and give it a hierarchical organization. Works such as literature reviews and research proposals make extensive use of them as they provide quick access to salient points, like the Discussion or Methods sections. Shorter papers may not use all the heading levels (or any at all). Note that the higher the level of a heading, the more specific the information typically is. Unless your instructor or rubric specify otherwise, the title of your paper should appear centered and bolded at the top of the main body’s first page. Your introduction should not be labeled Introduction.

All subsequent headings follow the format below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>How it’s Formatted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1     | **Centered, Bold, Title Case Heading**  
Your text should begin on the next line of your document. Remember to indent each paragraph. |
| 2     | **Left-aligned, Bold, Title Case Heading**  
Your text should begin on the next line of your document. Remember to indent each paragraph. |
| 3     | **Left-aligned, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading**  
Your text should begin on the next line of your document. Remember to indent each paragraph. |
| 4     | **Indented, Bold, Title Case Heading, Ending with a period.** Your text should begin right after your heading. |
| 5     | **Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading, Ending with a period.** Your text should begin right after your heading. |

Writing with Numbers

Use numerals to express:
- Numbers 10 and above  
  Ex: 100 participants
- Numbers expressed in percentages  
  Ex: more than 10%
- Numbers used to describe measurements  
  Ex: 10-mg dose

Use words to express:
- Numbers zero through nine  
  Ex: two patients
- Numbers that begin a sentence  
  Ex: Forty participants...
- Numbers used in common fractions  
  Ex: two-thirds of the population

Examples of headings.

| Literature Review (Level 1)  
Method (Level 1)  
Procedures (Level 2)  
Sample (Level 2)  
Control Group (Level 3)  
Experimental Group (Level 3)  
Variables. (Level 4)  
Prior Variable in Studies. (Level 5)  
Results (Level 1)  
Discussion (Level 1)  
Findings (Level 2)  
Reliability (Level 3)  
Future Research (Level 2)  
Conclusion (Level 1) |
Writing Style

When writing in APA, it is important to keep in mind tone, point of view, and voice. Generally, you want to make sure the information you are providing is clear, concise, and in plain language, meaning that you do not use poetic language or abstract language or colloquial phrases. Conciseness makes for a more readable paper. An APA paper uses scholarly, academic level writing.

Point of View and Voice
It is recommended to use the first person point of view when discussing research you have conducted. Otherwise, the third person should be used. “We” should only be used to refer to coauthors. It should not be used to refer to people in general (Ex: We as a society...”).

Both active and passive voice are allowed in APA, but active voice should be used as often as possible. For more information about specific sections of a paper and which tense they should be written in, please see p. 118 in the 7th edition of the APA manual.

Continuity and Flow
The basis of APA requires a logical progression of thought in order for writing to be considered effective. Progression of thought throughout the paper with a clear flow in the ideas and words adds to the writer’s credibility. Using contradictory information, omitting valid information, or adding irrelevant information in your paper makes for an incomplete and confusing paper that is not reflective of scholarly writing.

Conciseness and Clarity
Word choice should be intentional when writing in APA. If you use a word or phrase multiple times in your paper, it is important that you consistently use that same word. Using synonyms to avoid repeating words can be confusing to readers. For example, if you are using the word participant or patient, you should be intentional about which word you use and be consistent throughout your paper.

Jargon and Terminology
Papers with a lot of jargon and terminology may be unclear to readers. Jargon and terminology should be easily understood to readers across disciplines or defined for readers who may not be familiar with the terms.

Avoiding Bias
Papers written in APA often include research-based information involving a variety of participants or discussing diverse populations. As such, it is important to ensure that these populations are not stereotyped by implied or irrelevant evaluations of the group. Bias comes from many topics including: age, disability, gender, racial and ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. It is important to write with respect to participants and readers.

Below are some quick tips for reducing bias.

Avoid:
- using nouns as adjectives: “the rich”
- equating people with their condition: “schizophrenics”
- Terms that can be viewed as slurs: “alcoholic”

For more specific information about bias, see Chapter 5 in the 7th edition of the APA manual.
In-Text Citations

All information that is not common knowledge and is gathered from outside sources should be cited within your text. All citations are required to have the **last name of author(s) and the year of publication**. Sources like websites often do not include a year of publication. **If no year of publication is available**, use “n.d.”, which stands for no date, in your citation.

Citing Direct Quotes

Direct quotes also require the page or paragraph numbers in which the information was found. You should use **p. # if citing a page number or para. # if citing a paragraph number**. As with other format styles, you should ensure page numbers that are cited appear within the document itself; if your source is not originally paginated, then you must use the paragraph number.

Information can be cited within your text in a couple different ways: in an in-text citation at the end of a sentence or in a signal phrase. When creating your in-text citations and signal phrases, it is important to keep in mind the number of authors the source has. Some examples of signal phrases include:

| According to Author and Author (year), ... | As Author et al. (year) state, ... |

**Note**: the author’s last name and the year of publication should always stay together, regardless if in an in-text citation or signal phrase. Both of the examples below follow APA 7 guidelines.

- According to Lonero (2020), “Beyoncé is a better performer than Nicki Minaj” (p. 54).
- “Beyoncé is a better performer than Nicki Minaj” (Lonero, 2020, p. 54).

This is **NOT** acceptable APA format: **According to Lonero, “Beyoncé is a better performer than Nicki Minaj” (2020, p. 54).**

How to Cite According to the Number of Authors

Here are rules to follow when citing sources according to the number of authors. Note that authors should be listed in the same order that they appear in the original source.

- **One or two authors**: mention both authors in every citation
  - (French, 2020)
  - (French & Castillo, 2020, p. 43)
- **Three or more authors**: use the first author’s last name followed by “et al.” in every citation
  - (French et al., 2020, para. 16)
- **Group author with abbreviation**: Spell out the name. Next, in brackets, include the abbreviation. The abbreviation should be used as the author’s name for all subsequent citations.
  - (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.)

Self-Plagiarism

Resubmitting your own previous work is unethical and violates the academic integrity policy. It may be acceptable though, to build on one’s own writing. If this is something you would like to do, be sure to discuss this with your instructor.
Citing Paraphrased Information
Paraphrasing means rephrasing someone else’s ideas into your own words. In order to paraphrase properly, you should change more than just a couple of words or rearranging the original wording or structure of a sentence. You are required to provide credit to the original author when you paraphrase information by including the author’s last name and year of publication in your citation. You can cite this information either by including a signal phrase or an in-text citation.

Note: You should limit the amount of direct quotes in your paper. Paraphrasing is the preferred method of integrating source material.

Here are a couple of tips to help you paraphrase:
- Take notes in a notebook or in the margins of your sources and write from those notes as you paraphrase instead of looking at the original sentence.
- Read the material you are trying to paraphrase out loud and summarize the information without looking at the original source.
Citing Block Quotes
If the quote is 40 words or longer, it should start on a new line and should be entirely indented half an inch from the left margin. Block quotes should not have quotation marks. You are still required to cite it by including the author(s), year of publication, and page or paragraph number.
Note: when citing a block quote, the period comes before the in-text citation.

Author (year) states that:
This is a quote that is forty words or longer, and it includes pertinent information to my research. When omitting information from the middle of a sentence ... these three dots called ellipses can be used to denote that information is missing. Information can be omitted so long as it does not change the meaning of the original quote. (p. #)

Capitalization Guidelines:
The 7th edition of APA Style has various capitalization guidelines depending on the source:
- Title of articles/chapters: Capitalize the first word of the title, proper nouns, and word after a colon.
- Title of books: Capitalize the first word of the title, proper nouns, and the first word after a colon. This title should be in italics.
- Title of Journals: Capitalize all words except for small words (i.e. the, an, for) unless they are at the beginning of the title or after a colon. This title should be in italics.

Reference Page Checklist: Review to avoid making common errors!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrange your entries in alphabetical order by author’s last name. If no author is provided, use the title of book or article to alphabetize it. Please note that you should not rearrange the order of a source’s authors; include the authors in the order in which they appear in the original source.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use initials only for first and middle names. Follow the initials by a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omit credentials such as Ph.D., MD, RN, etc. in your reference entries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place the year of publication in parenthesis after the author's last name or title of the book/article if there is no author provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use n.d. if no year of publication is available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omit the quotation marks around article and chapter titles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italicize volume numbers and include issue numbers within parenthesis. [ex. 20(19)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include URLs and DOIs as hyperlinks. They should begin with http:// or https://</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference Page: Formatting Authors

| One author:                       | Lastname, F. M. (year of publication). Title of article. |
| Two authors:                    | Lastname, F. M., & Lastname, F. M. (year of publication). *Title of book.* |
| Three to 20 authors:            | Lastname, F. M., Lastname, F M., Lastname, F M., & Lastname, F. (year of publication). Title of article. |

**List the first 19 authors, add ellipses (...) and include the last author of the source**

| No author:                      | *Title of book or Title of article. (year of publication).* |
|                                 | APA reference guide. (n.d.). |

| Organization as author:         | Name of organization. (year of publication). Title of article. **URL** |
|                                 | Lewis University. (n.d.) APA reference guide. https://lewisu.edu |

Reference Page Format and Examples

Below is information on how to cite the most common types of sources in APA Style. Please note that all entries in the references section should be alphabetized by last name and should include a hanging indent. A hanging indent has the first line of each entry flushed to the left margin while all subsequent lines are indented over half an inch from the left margin.

### Article from a periodical with an assigned doi


### Article from an online periodical with no doi (URL required)

| References Format: | Lastname, F. M., & Lastname, F. M. (year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal in Italics, volume number*(issue number), page-range. **URL** |
# Reference Page Format and Examples

## Webpage on a website with a group author

**References Format:**
Governmental department or entity. (year of publication). *Title of webpage*. URL

**Example:**
Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, February 1). *Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)*. [https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/)

## Government report from website

**References Format:**
Government author or entity. (year of publication). *Title of report* (Report No. ###). Publisher. URL

**Example:**

## Annual Reports by Government Agency

**References Format:**
Governmental department or entity. (year of publication). *Title of report* (Report No. ###). URL

**Example:**

## Statutes (Laws and Acts)

**References Format:**
Name of Act, Title Source § Section Number (Year). URL

**Example:**

## Court cases

**References Format:**
Party v. Party, Citation volume and page (Court Jurisdiction Date). URL

**Example (Federal Court):**

**Example (State Court):**

## Lecture notes and presentations

**References Format:**
Lastname, F. M. (year, month day). *[Lecture notes on topic]*. Where retrieved. URL

**Example (PowerPoint):**

**Example (In person):**
Lewis, C.B. (2019, May 22). *[Lecture notes on resource allocation]*. Department of Management Control, University of Delaware. [https://universityofdelaware.com](https://universityofdelaware.com)
# Reference Page Format and Examples

## Website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References Format:</th>
<th>Organization or Author name. (year of publication). <em>Title of standalone page in italics</em>. Title of page part of greater whole un-italicized. URL.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>⇒ Example:</td>
<td>Lewis University. (2015). <a href="https://www.lewisu.edu">https://www.lewisu.edu</a> [If the organization is the same as the title, do not repeat the name]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References Format:</th>
<th>Lastname, F. M. (year of publication). <em>Title of book in italics</em> (Edition number [if applicable]). Publisher. Doi or URL [If applicable].</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Edited Book

|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Article or chapter in an edited book

|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Newspaper article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References Format:</th>
<th>Lastname, F. M. (year of publication, month day). Title of article. <em>Title of Newspaper</em>. URL or page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Sources Consulted:** *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.), Purdue OWL, Purdue University Global, Baker College Writing Center, California State University.