

editage

APA style guide cheat sheet



About the APA manual of style

American Psychological Association (APA) style is one of the world's most popular and respected styles used in scholarly publications. Since its inception in 1929, it has grown to meet the needs of scholars and researchers, and it has found widespread adoption in many fields outside of psychology, including medicine, social and natural sciences, and the humanities. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition* (2020) is the current authoritative work on the APA style. It has expanded from seven pages in its original publication to 428 pages in its current edition, with in-depth guidance on how to prepare all aspects of academic publications.

What this cheat sheet covers

This cheat sheet covers some of the crucial guidelines of the APA style. This document serves as a quick checklist and it is by no means exhaustive. Furthermore, as the APA is used in many disciplines, this cheat sheet will not cover most research field-specific issues. Please refer to the manual if you have specific queries or problems relating to the formatting or technical details of the style.

Checklist

1



Titles

- Titles should be within 12 words.
- Titles should be written in sentence case—the first letter and proper nouns are capitalized, all other words are lower case.
- A running title of 50 or fewer characters, including spaces, should be provided. It should be written in upper case letters at the head of every page.

2



Author note

- After the list of authors, information on authors should be contained in the author note.
- The author note is divided into the following four paragraphs:
 - Complete departmental affiliation for each author
 - Changes of affiliation, if any
 - Any special circumstances, for example, if the article has been presented at a meeting, or whether there may be some conflict of interest
 - The corresponding author
- Do not include titles of the authors.

3



Page and text setup

- Include a 1-inch (2.54-cm) margin on all sides.
- Number all pages, except for figure pages.
- Put all sections on separate pages.
- Use US Letter size paper (8.5" x 11").
- Do not use justification. Keep text left-aligned. Turn off any hyphenation function from your word processor or typesetting software.
- Use double-spaced text throughout, except for footnotes.
- Apply a 0.5-inch (1.27-cm) indent at the first line of each paragraph
 - This does not apply for quotations, titles, headings, captions, or the abstract.
- Use a standard font and size. Times New Roman 12 pt is recommended.

4



Abbreviations

- Use abbreviations when they can aid understanding or cut down excessive length.
- Write out abbreviations in full, and then give the abbreviation itself in parentheses, i.e., "mass spectrometry (MS)."
- Do not use periods in abbreviations, e.g., "PhD" not "Ph.D."
- Explain abbreviations in figures and tables, even if they have already been explained in the text.

5



Text conventions

- Use double quotation marks to introduce slang or coined terminology. After that, do not use quotation marks.
- If a quote is longer than 40 words, it should be in a freestanding block of text, omitting the quotation marks. Indent 0.5 inches (1.27 cm). Start the block quotation on a new line without quotation marks. At the end, cite the quoted source and the page or paragraph number in parentheses after the final punctuation mark.
- Paragraphs should be more than one sentence and less than one page.
- Introduce key terms using italics.

6



Language conventions

- Use “they” instead of “he or she.”
- Use age ranges instead of broad categories, e.g., “People aged 18–30,” not “Adults under 30.”
- Use descriptive phrases rather than adjectives as nouns to describe people, e.g., “people with diabetes,” not “diabetics.”

7



Headings

- Section headings are not numbered.
- There are five levels of headings, formatted as follows:
 - Centered, Bold, Title Case Heading
 - Flush Left, Bold, Title Case Heading
 - Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading
 - Indented, Bold, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period.
Text begins on the same line.
 - Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading, Ending With a Period.
Text begins on the same line.
- Introductions do not take any headings.

8**Mathematical symbols and statistical presentations**

- Italicize any non-Greek letters used as variables. Abbreviations that are not variables can be in standard type.
- Greek letters can be written in standard typeface.
- Symbols for vectors and matrices, such as Σ , should be written in bold.
- If statistics are part of a table or figure, you do not need to repeat them in the text. Just mention where they can be found and emphasize any key points.

9**Equations**

- Number all equations and present them in the text, regardless of their complexity.
- Parentheses should be presented in this order $\{ [()] \}$.
- Fractions are presented with normal number characters separated with a virgule, i.e., 1/4.

10**Units**

- Use metric units. If units are not metric, include the metric conversion (except time).
- Abbreviate all units with numeric values attached, e.g., “10 L,” not “ten liters.”

11**In-text citations**

- In-text citations follow an author-date format.
- In-text citations can be formatted with the name in the text or within parentheses as necessary, i.e., “Smith (2020)” or “(Smith, 2020).”
- If the work is by one author, include the name and the year.
- If the work is by two authors, include both names separated by “and” or “&” and the year.
- If the work is by three or more authors, write the first author’s name and “et al.” before the year.
- If the work is by a group, include the group name, including the full version of the abbreviated name if necessary, e.g., “World Health Organization (WHO, 2020)” or “(World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).”

12**Reference list**

- The reference list is in alphabetical order according to the name of the first author.
- Each reference has a hanging indent.
- If there is more than one reference for a given author, provide the citations for that author oldest first.
- Give a letter after the year if there is more than one publication for the author for a given "year, e.g., 2020a, 2020b.
- This is an example of a reference:

Gould, S. J., & Lewontin, R. C. (1979). The spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian paradigm: a critique of the adaptationist programme. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences*, 205(1161), 581–598.
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.1979.0086>
- References should include the following:
 - All author names, surnames first, initials second, with periods and space between
 - Year in parentheses
 - Full title
 - Full publication name, not abbreviated
 - Information such as volume number
 - Full relevant page range
 - Relevant accession information

Various reference types have different formatting guidelines. Check the detailed APA style guidelines.

13**Figures and tables**

- All figures and tables need to be mentioned in the text, and all of them should be numbered in the order they are mentioned in the text.
- Put all figures and tables at the end, each on their own page.
- Figure lettering should be readable at the printed size on the page. It should be between 8 and 14 points.
- All table columns need a heading, including the stub column.
- All vertical table rules should be omitted.

For more resources on academic publication and writing, please visit [Editage Insights](#).

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