How to Format a Student Essay in APA Style 7th Edition

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Abstract
Student papers typically do not require an abstract. Unless an instructor specifically asks for an abstract, students should not include one in their APA assignment. If asked to include an abstract, it must be formatted according to APA Style. The abstract appears on its own page, as page two after the title page. The word “Abstract” should be the heading for this section and formatted in bold in the centre of the page. Do not indent the first line of the abstract paragraph. All other paragraphs in the paper should be indented. The abstract is a brief summary of the paper, allowing readers to quickly review the purpose and main points of the paper. The abstract should be between 150 and 250 words and should be written as a single paragraph. Abbreviations and acronyms used in the paper should be defined in the abstract, and keywords may be included at the end. The term “Keywords” is used in italicized font, indented from the left as a regular paragraph, one double-space below the abstract. Keywords appear after this label, separated by commas in a list, and do not need to be listed in any specific order. For example, a paper on “The Ethics of Law Enforcement” that discusses abuse of authority and police brutality would include keywords, such as “law enforcement,” “abuse of authority,” and “police brutality.” Do not use a period or punctuation after the last keyword. If the keywords run onto a second line, the second line is not indented.

Keywords: APA format, essay structure, headings, in-text citations, reference list

This APA Sample follows the guidance of the American Psychological Association’s 7th Edition APA manual.
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Students often find writing academic essays difficult. The writing process is slow, researching a topic can be strenuous, and formatting a paper for APA Style can be intimidating. However, APA Style is not as intimidating as it looks. Similar to other academic formats, APA Style has rules that outline how information should be presented and how citations should be formatted. Although difficult at first, APA is quite simple once its rules are broken down.

Student papers written in APA Style typically include a title page, page numbers, the body of the essay, and the references page. For APA Style, every page is written in the same font. Therefore, the title page, body pages, and references page should all be typed in one of five appropriate fonts for APA Style: 10-point Lucida, 11-point Arial, 11-point Calibri, 11-point Georgia, or 12 point Times New Roman. Additionally, text on every page of the paper should be double-spaced, including text on the title page and references page. If the essay is to be handed in as a physical copy, each page should be printed only on one side of the paper, so that the pages are not double-sided. Additionally, every page features a page number in the top right corner. In APA Style, the title page counts as the first page of the paper, and therefore requires a page number.

The title page includes the following key elements: the title of the paper, the author’s name and institution, the course number and name, the instructor of the course, and the date that the paper is due written in month, date, and year format. If your instructor requests for a word count to be displayed on the title page, include it under the date the paper is due. The title of the paper should be centred, bold, and three or four double-spaced lines down from the top margin of the page. All elements of the title page should be double-spaced. Always check with your
instructor to see if they have specific requirements, such as including the word count on the title page.

The body of the essay formatted in APA Style is similar to how the body of the essay would appear in most academic essays. The title of the essay should be centred and bold. The body of the paper starts one double-space below the title. The paragraphs that make up the body of the paper require the first line to be indented. Each paragraph should be between five to eight sentences and should only contain one idea per paragraph. In general, academic research papers should only be written in the third-person perspective. Students are encouraged to avoid the use of first-person pronouns, such as “I,” “we,” or “my” unless directed to do so by their instructors. Since academic writing is fact and evidence-based, students should focus their papers on the ideas their sources are sharing and not on their own opinions.

**APA Elements and Organization (Level-1 Heading)**

**Headings (Level-2 Heading)**

APA Style has five levels of headings to identify the topic or purpose of the content within each section. Level-1 headings are used as the main level to introduce a topic and the additional headings are used to identify subsequent sections. Some headings follow what is known as Title Case. Title Case is a style of capitalization in which words that are four or more letters, and the first word of the title, are capitalized. Level-1 headings are bold, centred, and in Title Case. Level-2 headings are bold, flush left to the margin, and follow Title Case. Level-3 headings are bold, flush left to the margin, follow Title Case, and are italicized. Most students do not require headings for subsections past a Level-3 heading.
There is no need for a heading titled “Introduction” since the paper’s title at the top of the first page of body text introduces the paper. Therefore, all further headings are considered subsections of the title. For subsections within the introduction, use Level-2 headings, and so on as required. After the introduction, use a Level-1 heading when advancing to the next main section of the paper. For example, the next main section of a research paper after the introduction may be “Method,” which can be given a Level-1 heading.

**In-Text Citations (Level-2 Heading)**

In APA Style, every time you present information that you have gathered from a source, you must credit this source by providing an in-text citation. Therefore, you are required to provide an in-text citation every time you paraphrase or directly quote information, or when you copy or adapt images or figures (even if they are freely available on the internet or licensed in the Creative Commons). If it is clear that the source has not changed, then you do not need to repeat the citation for that sentence, given that the source has previously been cited in connection to the idea. Since, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), overcitation should be avoided. “For example, it is considered overcitation to repeat the same citation in every sentence when the source and topic have not changed” (p. 254).

The style of the in-text citations will be affected by the number of authors that wrote the source. An in-text citation for a source with one or two authors appears the same each time, with both authors listed in the citation. For a source with three or more authors, include the last name of the first author followed by “et al.” The exception is if this would create ambiguity in multiple in-text citations. For example, if there are two different articles published in the same year that have first listed authors with the same last name, then the citations for the both articles would
need to be modified in order to differentiate the two articles. In this case, list as many names as needed to differentiate the papers.

For example, if Kapoor, Bloom, Montez, Warner, and Hill are authors of the first source, and Kapoor, Bloom, Zucker, Tang, Köroğlu, L’Enfant, Kim, and Daly are the authors of the second source, then the in-text citations for the two sources would be (Kapoor, Bloom, Montez, et al., 2017) and (Kapoor, Bloom, Zucker, et al., 2017). Because “et al.” literally means “and others,” it is already plural and cannot stand for only one name (APA, 2020, p. 267). Therefore, when only the last author is different, spell out all names in every citation.

For a group author or company, first cite the name of the group as well as the abbreviation, then use the abbreviation only for the subsequent citations. For example: (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2020) for the first citation, and (NIMH, 2020) for the rest. If a group author has several layers or departments, use the most specific department as the author in-text. It is best to consult the APA Publication Manual or a librarian to ensure sources are cited correctly.

**Formatting In-Text Citations** (This is a Level-3 heading)

In-text citations in APA Style are required when you provide information from a source in one of two ways: direct quotations and paraphrasing. In both formats, you must include at least two key pieces of information about your source: the author’s last name and the year that the source was published. In addition, direct quotations **require** “quotation marks around the quoted information” and an exact location for the source (this will be a page number, paragraph number, section heading, or time stamp for audiovisual works). Paraphrased information does **not** include quotation marks and, although not required, one may include a page number,
paragraph number, or section heading if it makes sense to do so or your instructor has requested you to.

Note that in some cases, it may not make sense to include a page number, paragraph number, or section heading for a paraphrase. For example, if you were to paraphrase a main idea from multiple pages of a source, it would not make sense to cite all the pages. However, if you were to paraphrase the main idea of a specific paragraph or page of a long work, you may include the specific page number for the in-text citation.

In-text citations in APA Style follow two simple formats: parenthetical and narrative. The first style of in-text citation is called a parenthetical reference, in which the information outlined above should be contained within parentheses at the end of the paraphrased or quoted source. As the citation is considered part of the sentence, it appears before the period. For example, if a source has two authors, the first in-text citation would appear as follows: EMS practitioners are at risk for depression (Sullivan & Sullivan, 2016). Note that the symbol “&” is used in parenthetical citations. If a source has three or more authors, the first in-text citation would appear as follows: Significant training for EMS providers is a key factor to improve suicide prevention (Lygnugaryte-Griksiene et al., 2017).

The second style of in-text citation is called a narrative citation, in which the author of the source information is referred to as part of the sentence. In this type of citation, when the author’s name is used in a sentence, the year follows the author in the sentence and the page number comes after the quotation. When required, narrative citations use the word “and” rather than using the symbol “&”. As mentioned earlier in this paper, when a work has three or more authors, it is most common to only cite the first author followed by “et al.”
For example, a direct quote would appear as follows: Lygnugaryte-Griksiene et al. (2017) state that “one key factor to improving suicide prevention lies in adequate training for EMS providers” (p. 1).

When writing narrative citations, the date must be included in the first reference in a paragraph. You do not need to repeat the date if you cite the same source in a narrative citation again in the same paragraph. The following example shows that the “they” in the second sentence in the same paragraph refers to the same source. Therefore, it is safe to remove the date in the second sentence. Lockie et al. (2019) found that a law enforcement career may cause physical and psychological stress. They claim that future law enforcement officers are prepared for the physical, mental, and psychological challenges of the job in the police academy.

It is important to remember that you must repeat the year if a parenthetical reference appears between the two narrative citations, or, if your two narrative citations appear in separate paragraphs. For example: Lockie et al. (2019) state that a career in law enforcement is a significant cause of physical and psychological stress. Many individuals that are hired and attend the academy do not graduate and pursue a career in law enforcement after being overwhelmed by the amount of pressure and stress of the job (Lockie et al., 2019). Lockie et al. (2019) claim that future law enforcement officers are prepared for the physical, mental, and psychological challenges of the job in the police academy. Because there was a parenthetical citation in the sentence after the first narrative citation, the date must be repeated in the second narrative citation.

**Using Quotation Marks in APA (Level-1 heading)**
When directly quoting from a source, the quote must be contained within quotation marks. The in-text citation should appear outside the quotation marks, before the period. For example: Law enforcement can be described as “a demanding profession that can place high levels of physical and psychological stress on those employed in this vocation” (Lockie et al., 2019, p. 1). The citation is a part of the sentence, so it should appear before the period.

When directly quoting a large amount of information, APA Style requires it to appear as a block quote. A large quote is defined as forty words, or three or more sentences. Block quotes do not require quotation marks and should not be bold or italicized. Every sentence of a block quote must be indented, so that the appearance of the quote resembles a block of text, as the name suggests. Block quotes also require an in-text citation, which is formatted no differently from other APA in-text citations. Introduce your block quote with a phrase followed by a colon. You can either cite the source in parentheses **after** the quotation’s final punctuation or cite the author and year in the narrative before the quotation and place the page number in parentheses **after** the quotation’s final punctuation. Do **not** add a period after the closing parenthesis. For example, you may choose to include the source information as a parenthetical citation:

Recruits may separate (i.e., they do not graduate) for a number of different reasons. These reasons may include personal reasons (e.g., they no longer want to work in law enforcement), physical training (PT) session failures (i.e., they do not complete the requisite number of sessions as mandated by the LEA or state), injury, failure in academics or scenario-based training. (Lockie et al., 2019, p. 1)

Or you may choose to introduce the author and year of the source before your quote. For example, Lockie et al. (2019) discovered that:
Recruits may separate (i.e., they do not graduate) for a number of different reasons. These reasons may include personal reasons (e.g., they no longer want to work in law enforcement), physical training (PT) session failures (i.e., they do not complete the requisite number of sessions as mandated by the LEA or state), injury, failure in academics or scenario-based training. (p. 1)

Whether a student uses a source to directly quote or to paraphrase information, they must give credit to their source by citing it. When a student does not cite their sources, they are guilty of plagiarism. When in doubt of whether to cite a source, it is always better to cite the source rather than risk committing plagiarism. You can ask your instructor, a librarian, or the writing centre staff if you are confused on whether or not to cite a source.

Conclusion (Level-1 heading)

An essay is complete when it has a formal conclusion. The conclusion should be one or two full paragraphs, not just one or two sentences. The conclusion should summarize all ideas presented in the body of the essay and emphasize the claim of the paper. No new information should be presented in the conclusion. Summarizing the main points of the essay and relating them back to the thesis creates a solid conclusion that readers will be able to follow.

The “References” page follows the conclusion and should be listed on its own page. It contains a list of all the sources used in the essay. The word “References” is centred at the top of the page in bold. As with all other pages, it is double-spaced. Do not add extra spaces between the references. Follow the “hanging indent” style, in which the first line of each reference is flush left and all subsequent lines of that reference are indented.
Apart from some exceptions, references cited in-text must appear in the reference list. The reference list should be arranged in alphabetical order by surname of the first author. Do not re-alphabetize authors’ names within each reference; the author names should be kept in the order in which they appear in the book, article, chapter, or website. When a work includes up to 20 authors, all authors will appear in the reference list entry. For works written by 21 or more authors, include the first 19 authors, then use an ellipsis … and list the final author (APA, 2020, p. 286). For example, Authors 1 – 19, . . . final author.

The attached References page provides examples. In addition, the JIBC Library’s APA Guide and the JIBC librarians are available to help with your in-text citation and reference list questions.
References


Kwantlen Polytechnic University. (2019). *APA citation style: How often do I need to cite?* https://libguides.kpu.ca/apa

