

Title of Your Paper

Your Name

Your Class

Your Instructor

August 2, 2009

Abstract

An abstract is a short summary of your paper. It is usually 3 to 5 sentences. This requirement is in place because APA style is primarily used by psychologists who are submitting articles for acceptance in professional journals. The abstracts in a professional journal typically contain the “research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions” from the study presented (Wagner, J. et al., 2010). It is meant to be a quick reference for researchers who want to know the main idea before they read the entire article. Always verify whether your instructor wants you to include an abstract.

Title of Your Paper

The format of your paper shows your instructor that you are intelligent, you are organized and that you care enough to make your work look good. All you have to do is follow the instructions in countless guides on how to format an APA paper. This guide gives written directions and shows how a well formatted paper with footnotes should look. Follow these guidelines for APA style papers unless your instructor tells you otherwise.

A basic APA style student paper includes a cover sheet, the body of the paper and a reference list. Although the APA manual does not specifically state the requirements for your cover sheet, the basic requirements may include: the title of your paper, your name, your instructor's name, the name of the class and the date. Ask your instructor to confirm the information that is needed on the cover sheet. The body of your paper should be double-spaced with one-inch margins on the top, bottom, left and right. Use 12-point font in Times New Roman or another standard, legible font. The first line of each paragraph should be indented five spaces with no extra spaces between paragraphs. There should be one space after every period. Every page of your paper should have a header on the top right-hand corner of the page. The header should appear half an inch from the top of the sheet and should include a shortened version of the title, five spaces and the page number. Center the complete title of the paper on the first line of page one. You should always double space between the title and the first line of your paper.

Ensure that all of the information you have cited from outside sources is properly documented. Take good notes that include the name and page number for the source you used. Remember, ideas can be plagiarized so even those things that you paraphrase from outside sources must be referenced in the text. According to Hacker (2002), APA recommends an author-date style for citations; "the source is introduced by a signal phrase that includes the last

name of the author followed by the date of publication in parentheses” (p. 681). As you see here, the page number is placed at the end of the sentence in parentheses. According to Dumbledore (2003), when using outside sources, whether you are paraphrasing or quoting, you should incorporate the author’s last name and the date into the text and add the page number of the reference in parentheses at the end of the sentence (p. 76). Another option is to add the complete reference (author, date, and page number) in parentheses at the end of the sentence (Dumbledore, 2003, p. 78). According to Whisp and Switch (2005), works with two authors require that both authors be named each time you cite the work (p. 352). Use an “&” symbol whenever you reference the authors in parentheses (Whisp & Switch, 2005, p. 353). Flitwick, Goshawk, Bagshot and Waffling (2005) discovered that, for sources with three to five authors, you should only identify all the authors in the first citation (p. 22). For subsequent citations, use only the first author’s name followed by “et al.” in either the signal phrase or parentheses (Flitwick et al., 2005, p. 24). For works with six or more authors, use only the first author’s name followed by “et al.” in either the signal phrase or parentheses (Bloxam et al., 2004, p.59). If you are referencing an unsigned article or book, use one or two words from the title of the article to identify it in the parenthetical reference; place the word or words in quotation marks for an article or italicize it for a book (“Magic,” 2005, p. 34). For websites with no author, mention the title in the signal phrase or give the first word or two of the title in parentheses; furthermore, if no date is given use the abbreviation “n.d.” for “no date” (“APA Citation,” n.d.). If you use a direct quote, make sure you put it in quotation marks. If you are simply quoting a few words from an outside source, just “work it into your sentence and add the parenthetical reference at the end” (“Magic,” 2005, p. 35). If your quotation is longer than 40 words, set it off from the text by indenting it five spaces from the left margin. See the example on the next page.

This is how a direct quote should look in the format of your paper. Notice how this quote is not enclosed in quotation marks. Use long quotes sparingly since your instructor does not want to read the words of another writer. He/she wants to know what you think. Too many quotes could indicate that you have not thought your topic through. (McGonagal, 2004, p. 45)

Your parenthetical references are directly tied to your reference list at the end of your paper. Make sure that all the references in your paper are listed and that you do not put anything in the reference list that does not have a parenthetical reference in the body of your paper. Begin your reference list on a new page (with the same header as the rest of the paper), center the title “References” on the first line of the page, and double-space the entire list (McGonagal, 2005, p. 155). Each citation begins at the left margin with subsequent lines indented five spaces. This is called a “hanging indent.” According to the American Psychological Association (2001), all citations should be arranged alphabetically by their first word, usually the first author’s last name (p. 219). For entries by the same author, organize the citations by year with the earliest first (McGonagal, 2005, p. 123). Citations should never be numbered.

The formats of the citations themselves are very important. In APA style, an author’s complete name is never listed. Always list the author’s last name followed by a comma and the author’s first initial followed by a period. Book and article titles in the reference list also have unique formats. First, a book is italicized, not underlined (McGonagal, 2004, p. 75). An article, on the other hand, is neither italicized nor underlined; it is also never enclosed in quotes (Flitwick et al., 2005, p. 29). Capitalization in titles is also unique. For books and articles, only the first word of the title, the first word of a subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized (Dumbledore, 2003, p. 87). For magazines, journals and newspapers, capitalize the first word

and every important word (Bloxam et al., 2004, p. 62). Never attempt to memorize the elements for a citation. Refer to library handouts, a grammar book or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* to ensure that your citation is complete.

When you are compiling your research paper, it is generally easier if you complete your reference list first. Then, you are able to use the list to complete your references in the body of the paper. Once you have perfected the format of your paper and your citations, be sure to verify your content. Read the directions for your assignment carefully and make sure you have met all the requirements. Check for grammar and spelling and make sure that you have complete sentences and no run-ons. After completing your work, have at least one other person proofread the paper.

Using these guidelines should produce a well-organized and well formatted APA style paper. Of course, always verify whether the instructor will accept this format. For detailed explanations on grammar, paraphrasing, and content consult with your instructor. Librarians at any of the campuses can help you with parenthetical references and with constructing specific citations. The APA Citation handout located at any of the campus libraries or on the website will give you specific examples for many of the different types of sources.

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