APA Writing Format

The American Psychological Association or APA Writing Format is one of the most widely used formats in writing academic papers, particularly in the field of science.

The APA writing style has evolved through time and several changes have been adapted in response to the electronic information age. What follows are some useful pointers for those of you who have been asked to write a paper using the APA format.

In general, your paper should follow these formatting guidelines:

- Formerly, the required measurement for margins was 1 ½ inch. Now, margins on all sides (top, bottom, left and right) should each measure just 1 inch.
- **Font Size and Type.** Font for text throughout the paper should be 12-pt., Times New Roman.
- Double-spacing for the whole document, including appendices, footnotes, tables and figures. For spacing after punctuation, space once after commas, colons and semicolons within sentences and space twice after punctuation marks that end sentences.
- **Text Alignment and Indentation.** Alignment should be flush left, or aligned to the left creating uneven right margin.
- **Running Head and Short Title.** Running heads are short titles located at the top of each of the pages of your article. Short Titles on the other hand are two to three-word derivation of the title of your paper. Running heads should not be confused with Short Titles. Running heads are typed flush left at the top of all pages while Short Titles are typed flush right. Running Heads are not necessary for high school and collegiate papers unless required by the instructor. These are instead mostly required for documents that are being prepared for publication. Running Heads should not exceed 50 characters including punctuation and spacing.

- **Active Voice.**Traditionally, the APA writing format requires writing in a grammatically passive form. That is, refraining from using pronouns such as 'I' or 'we' in your statements. Now, it has changed and most disciplines require the active voice. An example of this would be, instead of writing "according to the study," it should be "according to our study."
- **Order of Pages and Pagination.** The order of pages should follow this format:

Title Page > Abstract > Body > References > Appendices > Footnotes > Tables > Figures

The page number should appear one inch from the right corner of the paper on the first line of each page. The title page will serve as the Page 1 of your paper.

Title Page

The Title Page [1] should contain the title of your paper, your name as its author (including co-authors), your institutional affiliation/s and author note if applicable. In case there's no institutional affiliation, just indicate your city and state or your city and country instead.

As mentioned earlier, your title page will serve as your Page 1. It should be typed centered on the page. If it requires more than one line, please be reminded to double-space between all lines. Your name appears double-spaced as well, below the paper title.

The author note is where information about the author's departmental affiliation is stated, or acknowledgements [2] of assistance or financial support are made, as well as the mailing address for future correspondence.

Abstract

The Abstract [3] of your paper contains a brief summary of the entirety of your research paper. It usually consists of just 150-250 words, typed in block format. The Abstract begins on a new page, Page 2. All numbers in your Abstract should be typed as digits rather than words, except those that begin a sentence.

Body

The body of your research paper begins on a new page, Page 3. The whole text should be typed flush-left with each paragraph's first line indented 5-7 spaces from the left. Also, avoid hyphenating words at ends of line.

Text Citation and References

Text Citations [4] are important to avoid issues of plagiarism [5]. When documenting source materials, the author/s and date/s of the sources should be cited within the body of the paper. The main principle here is that, all ideas and words of others should be properly and formally acknowledged.

The Reference Section [6] lists all the sources you've previously cited in the body of your research paper. It states the author/s of the source, the material's year of publication, the name or title of the source material, as well as its electronic retrieval information, if these were gathered from the Internet.

Appendices

The Appendix [7] is where unpublished tests or other descriptions of complex equipment or stimulus materials are presented.

Footnotes

Footnotes [8] are occasionally used to back up substantial information in your text. They can be found centered on the first line below the Running Head, numbered as they are identified in the text.

Tables and Figures

What is the difference between Tables and Figures? Tables are used to present quantitative data or statistical results of analyses. Examples of quantitative data are population, age, frequency, etc.

Figures [9] on the other hand come in different forms. These could be graphs, images or illustrations other than tables. Figures are commonly used to show a particular trend, or to compare results of experiments with respect to constant and changing variables [10].

Understandably, it can be overwhelming to compile a paper that conforms to all these rules! But remember that when in doubt you can always consult your supervisor, who will have more insight about the writing conventions in your field. It's helpful to break down the paper into smaller sections and tackle each section in turn. Reading published papers that are similar to yours will likewise give you some insight into the correct layout.

Links
[1] https://explorable.com/apa-title-page
[2] https://explorable.com/writing-acknowledgements
[3] https://explorable.com/writing-an-abstract
[4] https://explorable.com/in-text-citation
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