APA FAQ’s

Formatting

Q: How do I format the cover page?
A: While teachers may have certain preferences on format, the APA standard guide includes the following elements: running head, page number, title, author(s), author affiliation, and author note. All parts of an APA report are double-spaced, beginning with the title page. The page header includes a running head, flush left, followed by the page number, flush right. The page header begins on the title page and appears on the top of every page of the report. The title will be centered with the author(s) name and author affiliation beneath the title. See page 229 of the APA handbook.

Q: How do I format the paper after the cover page?
A: APA papers follow the same basic formatting as other academic works: double spacing, one-inch margins, page numbers in the top right corner, etc. The inclusion of an abstract between the title and the body of the paper is at the professor's discretion. Headings organize and highlight the important items within the paper. Generally, in the shorter collegiate papers you will work with, restating the title after the title page is unnecessary. List your name only on the title page. Sources used for the paper should be listed on a References page after the body of the paper, on which the sources should be listed alphabetically. See pages 229-230 of the APA handbook.

Q: How do I format heading levels?
A: The organization of headings serves as an outline for an APA paper. A basic outline would look like this:

(Most general topic: Centered, Bold, Titlecase)

(Flush Left, Bold, Titlecase)

(Indented, bold, capitalize only the first word, ends with a period).

(Indented, bold, italicized, capitalize first word, ends with period).

(Indented, italicized, capitalize first word, ends with period).

**”Titlecase” means that all words will be capitalized except articles, like “a” or “the.”
Here is an example of the divisions of headings and how each should be formatted:

Amphibians

Tree Frogs

Tree frogs in the Americas.

Tree frogs in the Amazon.

Blue azureus dart frog.

Subjects of equal importance will be at the same level of heading. Do not number the headings. Note that if there is one subsection heading, there will be at least two subsections in that same level. See pages 62-63 in the APA book.

Q: What should my headings say?
A: Headings are designed to give succinct organization to a paper. They highlight specifically what is discussed in a section so that a reader may easily navigate to the information they are most concerned with. Headings replace transition words like “secondly” and “in conclusion” within the body of a paper. Headings should become more precise as a topic is divided into smaller subheadings.

Q: What is a running head?
A: A running head is different than the other headers. While the later is given for clarity within the paper, a running head is found as a header in the top left of every page of the paper, in line with the page number. It is written in all capital letters, and on the first page, the running head is preceded by the tag “Running head:” not in capital letters. For example, on the first page of a paper about gene therapy, the cover page would include “Running head: THE EVOLUTION OF GENE THERAPY,” and every other page would include just “THE EVOLUTION OF GENE THERAPY.”

Citations

Q: How do I cite online sources?
A: Online sources will generally be cited in the same way as a source of the same type that is not found on the internet, with the addition of online retrieval information to allow others to find the source. If no author of the website can be found, the title becomes the first thing noted in the citation. Some examples are included:

With an author:
Retrieved from http://writtenhistory.edu

Without an author:

If the article has no author, the in-text citation should list the first few words in the source’s title, e.g. (“Tsunami creates damage”). Online articles should not be italicized on the references page or in the text, but the titles of online reports will be italicized in both places. *See the APA website.*

Q: How do I cite an interview?
A: Interviews are considered a form of personal communication which are not usually recoverable. Since someone using your sources cannot retrieve the exact transcript of the interview, interviews are not included in the References page. It should be noted that they are included in an MLA Works Cited page. For both writing styles, interviews are cited within the text, using the interviewee’s initials and surname, the label “personal communication,” and the most exact date possible. For example, (J. N. Doe, personal communication, May 6, 2016).

Q: How do I cite my professor’s lectures?
A: If a professor’s notes or PowerPoint slides are available online, you will include the professor’s name, the publication year, the title of the lecture, the format of the lecture, and the URL it can be found at. Here are a few examples:

If the lecture materials cannot be found online, treat a lecture as a personal communication (see *How do I cite an interview?*).

**In-Text Citations**

*Q: What information do I include in my in-text citations?*

*A: In-text citations will include the author’s name and the year of publication (a page number is optional). Here is an example: (Smith, 2003 p.97).*

*Q: How are APA in-text citations different from MLA?*

*A: The scientific disciplines are more strictly concerned with the timeliness of the source than MLA is. Therefore, in APA, the date is included within an in-text citation, and in MLA, it is not.*

*Q: How do I format an in-text citation with multiple authors?*

*A: Formatting an in-text citation with multiple authors will depend on how many authors there are. All authors should be accounted for. If there are one to two authors, both will be mentioned every time. If the same work by three to five authors is cited more than once, list all of the authors’ names the first time, and in every use after, list the last name of the first author followed by *et al.* If there are six or more authors, the in-text citation will include the last name of the first author followed by *et al.* every time. The in-text author order should be alphabetical. *See page 175 of the APA handbook.**

*Q: If my entire paragraph is another person’s thoughts or ideas, how do I cite it?*

*A: The purpose of citations is to give credit where credit is due. The way you cite should make it clear where your thoughts end and someone else’s begin, and vice versa. If an entire paragraph is in or based on another author’s work, the citation will go at the end of the paragraph. It is also playing on the safe side to begin that paragraph with a citation as well, for example: “In his book, Douglass states…[Your summary or paraphrase] (Douglass, 1845).*
Q: Do I have to write differently than in other writing styles?
A: APA is generally the writing format of the sciences. This implies presentation of information that is concise, right to the point, and objective. Writing does not need to be dry or boring, but it should communicate a point without giving superfluous details. In the sciences, an unbiased presentation is crucial. Do not give opinions or favor one side of an issue over another. Like all academic writing, wording should be professional and avoid slang and redundancy. See pages 66-70 in the APA handbook.

Q: What is the purpose of an abstract? Where does it go in my paper?
A: The abstract in an APA paper gives specific information about the paper's content. The abstract defines terms particular to the paper and includes the paper's main concepts and/or conclusions. The abstract is typically 150-250 words long, but the length can vary. See pages 25-27 in the APA handbook.

Q: How do I represent numbers in my writing?
A: The general rule is to use numerals for numbers 10 and above and words for numbers below 10. Numbers will also be expressed in numerals when they immediately precede a unit of measurement (eg 13.5 cm). They will also be written in numeral form when they represent time, dates, ages, scores and points on a scale, and exact sums of money, unless it is an approximation of days, months, or years. See pages 111-112 in the APA handbook.

Q: How do I use DOIs in my references?
A: DOIs are digital object identifiers which makes finding electronic documents easier. The DOI will be the last piece of information included at the end of a citation. An example is included:

doi: 10.1037/4932-5849.34.2.445

See pages 189-191 in the APA handbook.

Q: Where is the DOI found in a reference?
A: DOIs are generally found on the first page of an online article, usually near the copyright information. See page 189 of the APA handbook.