A Very Correct APA Style Paper: Getting the Details Right

Jordan A. Student

Brenau University

Commented [MSOffice1]: The running head is a short title for the paper placed at the left margin. Each letter of the running head is capitalized. The number is on the same line at the right margin. The running head appears on every page. Use the header function in Word to create the running head.

Commented [MSOffice2]: The title is in the upper half of the page, centered, and includes only the author’s name and university affiliation, unless the professor requires something different.

Commented [MSOffice3]: Always type the paper, using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Commented [MSOffice4]: The margins for the entire paper are 1” top, bottom, left, and right.
The APA writing style is commonly used in the social sciences. It dictates specific guidelines to follow when citing the sources of information used in the paper. These guidelines apply to information written by single or multiple authors, group authors, and to situations when no author is credited in the source. With attention to detail, all college students can learn to correctly employ the APA style.
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Many students begin their college careers familiar with the writing style required for English literature papers, but having never written an APA style paper, and are flummoxed when they receive their first grades on papers. This style of writing and formatting is used in the social sciences, including education and business. It can be simple to learn following the guidelines in this paper, including formatting, in-text (parenthetical) citations, and references.

In-text Citations

The sources of the information used in the paper must be cited for two reasons. First, citing gives credit to the creator of the information. Second, by giving credit to the creator, plagiarism is avoided. Authors must cite their sources when information is quoted and when they put the information into their own words.

Single Author

APA style uses an author, date system to cite sources. There are two formats to correctly cite sources. The first places the citation in parentheses at the end of the information to be cited (Wilkerson, 2009). The second includes the author’s name in the sentence, with just the date in parentheses, as Kern (2008) stated. “Writing a very correct APA paper takes a little time and effort to get the details right” (Bromer, 2009, p. 112). When the author is quoted, meaning the author’s exact words are used in the paper, the page number is always included in the parentheses. If the author’s name is part of the sentence, as Kern (2008) noted, “the page number is placed at the end of the quotation” (p. 35).

Multiple Authors

The format changes when there is more than one author. Specific guidelines found on page 177 of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association explain how to
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cite a source in the text when it has more than one author. For example, Wilkerson and Bromer (2007) observed that the format is Author and Author when the authors named are in the sentence, but it is Author & Author when the names are in parentheses. Other experts on the topic concur (Kern & Morgan, 2008).

When an article has three to five authors, the format gets complicated (Bromer, Wilkerson, & Kern, 2010). Writers can still choose to use the authors’ names in parentheses or use them as part of the sentence, explained Giguere, Mize, and Hozey (2010). The difference occurs when the same source is cited again in the paper. After the first time, et al. is used in place of the second – fifth authors (Bromer et al., 2010). Giguere et al. (2010) continued to explain that et al. is an abbreviation of a Latin word which means “and others”. Since it is an abbreviation, it is always followed by a period. Refer to page 177 in the manual for information on in-text citations of more than five authors.

Other Author Variations

Sometimes a source will be authored by a group (National Education Association, 2008). The group can be treated just like any other single author. Occasionally there is not an author listed for a source. When this happens, include the first few words of the title, in quotation marks, as the citation (“Citing Sources”, 2009). It is also fine to include the title in the sentence, but it should be in italics rather than in quotation marks, and followed by the date in parentheses. The citation should always match the first words of the reference entry.

Conclusion

APA style in-text citations can be formatted in various ways as defined by the details of the style guide. With attention to detail, all college students can learn the basics of the APA style.
References


Appendix

☐ I checked the Page Layout /Margins, and I used 1” margins top, bottom and both sides.

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☐ I used Times New Roman 12 pt. font – just like this – throughout the paper.

☐ I double spaced between each line, using Word’s Paragraph /Line Spacing. This is double spacing.

This is not Double spacing

☐ My title page is formatted like the title page of this document.

☐ My running head is in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS and my pages are numbered.

☐ Each paragraph is indented using the Tab key.

☐ In the text of my paper I cited all of information that I did not create, unless it is common knowledge (What I learned about education in my last class is probably not common knowledge, and a source should be cited if I use it in my paper.)

☐ I cited others’ information when I quoted it directly and when I put it in my own words.

☐ The format of each of my in-text citations was checked against the examples in this paper.

☐ I wrote formally, using no contractions or slang expressions.

☐ I have a separate References page, which is titled References, not References, References, etc.

☐ My references are in alphabetical order by the first word of each source.

☐ The format of each of my reference entries was checked against the examples in this paper.

☐ Each reference entry has a hanging indent formatted using Word’s hanging indent function.

☐ I cross-checked the citations and reference entries. Each reference entry has at least one in-text citation and each in-text citation corresponds to a reference entry.