**Introduction to APA Style: A Descriptive Guide**

Student's First then Last Name

Department of Name (for example: Department of English), Warner Pacific University

Name of Course (for example: English 111: Introduction to Writing)

Instructor's Name

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NOTE: *This document was originally created by Joe Tinker and updated by Jonathan Manz*

# Abstract

This paper provides basic formatting information for students using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) at Warner Pacific University (WPU). Users of the 7th editions of the APA manual will find this paper useful as a template from which they can start their own papers and as a quick reference resource for formatting questions. A few commonly used reference list examples are included. The 7th edition of the APA manual, published in October 2019, does make a few changes to formatting requirements from the previous 6th edition. Students should work under the 7th edition guidelines unless faculty provide permission or request the use of the previous edition. This paper is in compliance with the 7th edition, but recognizes that there might sometimes be a difference between writing a paper for an APA publication and writing a paper for a specific class assignment, and that this difference might lead to instructor preferences that deviate from the examples used here. This paper is not meant to be a substitute for the APA manual, nor will it supersede individual instructor preferences necessitated by specific assignments. Students are encouraged to use their manuals and to check with their instructors for individual preferences. The Otto F. Linn Library has multiple copies of the APA manual 7th ed. (APA papers usually contain an abstract page. The abstract is a short description of the paper. The abstract is limited to one paragraph, and is not indented. Some instructors may not require an abstract, particularly when the assignment calls for a shorter paper).

*Keywords*: APA Style, Parenthetical Citations, Reference List

## Introduction to APA Style: A Descriptive Guide

Page one of this guide, the title page, shows the setup requirements for title, author, course, instructor, institution affiliation, and date. Page two contains an example of an abstract. Basic manuscript requirements for the APA-formatted paper include the following: the paper begins on page three (on page two, if there is no abstract), with the title repeated at the top, as shown above; the entire paper is double spaced, including the reference list, and the font used is Times Roman 12 point throughout the paper; margins are set at 1 inch all around, with no extra space between paragraphs or references. A title page and a reference list are generally required for all papers. The 7th edition users will note that the manuscript header no longer includes the words "Running head" on the title page. The header is a shortened version of the title of the paper unless the title is already short. The header is also aligned left, with the page number aligned right (the page number is now on the title page in addition to all subsequent pages). This guide may be printed double-sided in the interest of saving paper, but all papers submitted for assignments are single-sided if printed and submitted as a hard copy (some instructors may require only electronic submissions).

All references are cited in the APA-formatted paper. The citations allow readers to follow the research as they read. Accurate citations also ensure that writers avoid plagiarism. The $7^{th}$ edition of the APA manual (2019) states that you should "Cite the work of those individuals whose ideas, theories, or research have directly influenced your work" (p. 253). The $7^{th}$ edition also points out that "*self-plagiarism* is the presentation of your own previously published work as original" (p. 256). This means that students should not submit a paper for a current assignment that was used for a past assignment. Sources are identified in text using the APA author and date system, with complete reference information listed alphabetically on author's last name in the

reference list. Typically, there is a reference for each citation in the paper, and there is no reference to a source researched, but not actually used in the paper (this is a basic difference between a bibliography and a reference list). The reference list is placed at the end of the paper, on a separate page, but with continuous pagination, and is double spaced, using the hanging indent for each reference. The reference list to this paper illustrates this point. (The reference list does include references not used in this paper, for illustrative purposes.) For in-text references, usually the author's name is given in a single phrase, followed by the year of the publication, in parentheses. The APA manual provides examples and options (basically, the information is put either in parentheses or worked into the discussion); examples can be found in the 7th edition on pages 261-269. The APA manual discuss how to format references that have no author or no page number. For direct quotes exceeding 39 words, block style is used. In a block-formatted quote, quotation marks are omitted, and the end punctuation is placed at the end of the quote, followed by the parenthetical citation information. The example below illustrates:

> This is an example of how to format a block quote. The block quote format is used when a direct quote exceeds 39 words. Quotation marks are omitted. Each line is indented the same distance as a paragraph indentation. The end punctuation in a block quote comes before the citation. (The end punctuation in a short quote comes after the closing parenthesis.) (Author, Year, p. Page Number)

The most successful papers blend references smoothly and purposefully into the author's discussion. Standalone quotes or references that seem to have little relevance to the discussion are awkward and often fail to support the claims the writer is attempting. Students sometimes clutter their paper by repeating citations unnecessarily. If the author and date have already been mentioned, there is no reason to repeat the information as long as it's clear the same material is

still being referenced – and there is no intervening reference. Generally, this is particularly true within the same paragraph, but if the source is used again some distance from the original citation, then repeating the citation is probably warranted.

The next section of this guide illustrates and discusses the formatting of titles of short and long works and provides a few other notes and examples, concluding with recommended on-line resources and reference list examples.

**Table 1**

*When to Use Quote Marks, Italics, and Capital Letters for Titles of Periodicals, Books, and*

*Articles*

| Title of | When in text | | | When in reference list | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Quotes | Italics | Cap. Rule | Quote | Italics | Cap. Rule |
| Periodical | No | Yes | Standard | No | Yes | Standard |
| Books | No | Yes | Standard | No | Yes | APA |
| Articles | Yes | No | Standard | No | No | APA |

Standard capitalization rule for titles:

Capitalization follows the source. Small words are capitalized only when the source capitalizes them. Proper nouns are capitalized – unless the source does not.

APA capitalization rule for titles in the reference list:

Only the first word of the title is capitalized, the first word following a colon (subtitle), and all proper nouns. This rule is followed even if it means changing the capitalization used in the source.

Standard rule for choosing between italics and quotation marks:

Italics are used for titles of longer works or for works that contain subsections. Quotation marks are used for titles of shorter works and for titles of subsections within longer works. APA makes only one exception to this standard rule (shorter works on the reference list are not placed in quote marks).

Some brief, in-text reference examples:

Direct Quote: According to Smith (2009), "there is still much about the universe we don't understand" (p. 23).

Paraphrase: Smith (2009) believes that the universe is still largely unexplored (p. 23). Summary: A long study by Smith (2009) illustrates what physicists have learned about the universe, concluding that for all we have learned, there is still much more that we don't know.

For every source used in an APA paper, there is a reference on the reference list (the APA manual discusses exceptions to this: classical works, the Bible, and personal communication), and for every reference on the reference list, there is an in-text use of the source. Reference list examples can be found in the APA manual for various types of sources. The APA site is a useful resource: https://www.apastyle.org/, particularly the APA style blog https://blog.apastyle.org/blog, and some students have found the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue useful, http://owl.purdue.edu/ . The reference list includes information that allows the reader to find the author's sources. Usually, this means showing the author's name, the date of publication, the title of the article or book, and the periodical information if an article or the publication information if a book.

A typical reference template for a periodical article would look something like this (the following examples were adapted from the 7th edition, pages 316-329):

Author, A. (year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, *xx*, pp-pp. doi:xx.xxxxxxxx.

And an entire book would look like this:

Author, A. (year). *Title of work*. Location: Publisher.

A chapter or essay in a book or textbook would look like this:

Author, A. (year). Title of essay or article or chapter. In A. Jones, *Title of book* (pp. 133-140). Location: Publisher.

Whether citing a traditional print source or an electronic source, writers are still responsible for providing the answers to what the APA blog calls the "Who, What, When, and Where" of your source (Lee, 2010).

This paper has discussed, for new and experienced APA writers and readers, the basics of APA style. The introduction of the APA 7th edition gives veteran users the opportunity to refresh their understanding of APA style. The manual contain tools for new and seasoned users that go beyond the scope of this paper. The APA manual remains a handy reference book for formatting and other resources: how to organize a manuscript with headings, for example, and levels of heading (found in the inside cover of the manual); usage and punctuation guidelines; displaying information in tables and figures; and references to legal materials.

The reference list to this paper provides an eclectic mix of sources, but purposefully focuses on electronic sources. Readers should refer to the source, the manual, or to the APA style blog for further discussion.

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