

American Psychological Association Formatting

Student Name

Mount Mercy University

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) was first published in 1929 as a seven page “standard of procedure, to which expectations would doubtless be necessary, but to which reference might be made in cases of doubt” (Bentley et al., 1929, p. 57). The rules of APA Style are developed by editors and authors experienced in scholarly writing. In the sixth edition, electronic reference formats and the construction of tables and figures have been added (American Psychological Association, 2010).

APA Style incorporates both documenting sources and paper formatting guidelines. Smith (1992) describes the challenges students face to master both tasks. There are several resources available to assist students in using APA Style (Degelman, 2011; Vidaurri, Martinez, & Easton, 1999). While the APA manual provides a wealth of information on APA formatting, it is also acceptable for students to access information regarding APA documentation via the Internet and other sources. If students choose to use a documentation guide other than the official APA manual, however, it is important they ensure the accuracy of that information (Smith).

Many students ask why it is necessary to use documentation in their writing. There are two especially important reasons for using documentation in academic writing. First, it is essential to credit the work of others, and secondly it provides an easy way for readers to understand writing by providing a common style of documentation that is easy to follow (Vidaurri et al., 1999). Moreover, as Potter (1977) notes, “academic documentation is important in preventing plagiarism” (p. 232). Lastly, the use of documentation also gets students accustomed to formal academic writing, which is especially important for people considering attending graduate school or working in academia (Vidaurri et al., 1999).

Instructor Preferences

As student papers are not being prepared for publication, the APA Manual states that instructor preference always takes precedence over the Manual. Student instructions for using the APA Publication Manual should always be accompanied by specific teacher instructions. Ask your instructors for their preferences in such things as the types of headings and other particulars.

Plagiarism

Writers have to give credit to the words and ideas of others. Quotation marks should be used when you quote the exact words of another. APA requires that an in-text citation include the author's last name, the year of publication, and page number for the original phrasing. Each time you paraphrase another author, you need to credit the source in the text. "The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own work" (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 15).

Electronic Research Databases

Articles retrieved from electronic research databases (e.g., EBSCO) require new citation formats. The Digital Object Identifier (DOI) must be included at the end of the citation. The DOI is a list of alphanumeric characters and is wholly unique to a single source. Within a database citation, the DOI appears as the last element in the search result's entry. Supplying a DOI to a web search engine (Google or Bing) should then produce a reference to the article, the article's abstract, or further details. DOI information is associated primarily with scholarly literature. Popular magazines and newspapers will not have DOI data.

Locating Materials of Interest

Visitors to periodical databases will find that precisely phrasing a search will make their research time more valuable. Proper names can be placed in quotation marks as a unique phrase;

consider using geographic place names when needing to isolate a country of interest. The advanced features of EBSCO enable users to expressly demand full-text retrieval, and texts published within a particular timeframe. Additional limiters allow for flexibility with document formats, specifying languages, and isolating scholarly literature as the primary source type.

Defining scholarly literature.

The academic arena frequently refers to scholarly literature as being peer reviewed and “...contribut[ing] to the archive of scientific knowledge...” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p.225). Manuscripts are thoroughly vetted; an author inherently agrees to the article’s consideration by a panel of his peers. The journal’s editor seeks research that will make new and lasting contributions to the field; all solicited materials must meet the journal’s style guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2010).

Interpreting citations for scholarly literature.

Upon locating an article of interest from a periodical database, study its search results record. Scholarly literature will incorporate an abstract, a paragraph offering a summary of the article’s contents, the scope of its study, and findings, if applicable. Required as part of the peer review publishing process, the abstract also reflects the author’s purpose and goals for the research. Following the abstract, the search record will provide the article’s citation. Here, author names, title of the article, and title of the publication (journal) are shown. In APA style, articles are reflected in standard case; journal and magazine titles are shown in italics. The publication title is followed by the volume number in italics, the issue number, and page numbers. If examining a record from a peer reviewed journal, the citation will close with a DOI.

How to optimize your time with periodical databases.

Databases vary in their search features and capabilities. Visitors to the EBSCO collection will find access to a journal's table of contents while viewing a live PDF. Selecting a title of interest from the roster produces another article for consideration. EBSCO allows users to assemble a folder of search records; data may be stored in a personal account that is accessible anywhere with an Internet connection. The Wiley Online Library and ScienceDirect from Elsevier offer peer reviewed literature, dating from 1995 forward, in full-text format. Elsevier's full records allow users to see related articles and to interact with an article's references list.

Assembling the References List

After assembling sources for the project, create an appropriate citation for the item. The elements should include author(s) names, publication year, title of the work, and publisher information for books. Reference list entries for websites should include the author, publication date, title of the work, and a retrieval date if the content is transient (not fixed). The website's full URL (as shown in the browser) is the last element of the entry. All entries should be alphabetized by the author's last name or title of the work. Double space all entries; remove underlining from all web addresses. The word "References" should appear at the top of the page, as well as the running head and page number.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Bentley, M., Peerenboom, C.A., Hodge, F.W., Passano, E.B., Warren, H.C., & Washburn, M.F. (1929). Instructions in regard to preparation of manuscript. *Psychological Bulletin*, 26, 57-63. doi: 10.1037/h0071487
- Degelman, D. (2011, March 15). *APA Style Essentials*. Retrieved from <http://psychology.vanguard.edu/faculty/douglas-degelman/apa-style/>
- Potter, S.T. (1977). *The complexities of APA formatting*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Smith, T. S. (1992). Formatting APA pages. *Journal of Psychology*, 13(1), 10-19.
- Vidaurri, E.T., Martinez, C.N., & Easton, P. (1999). APA formatting: Understanding the proper way to format. *Journal of Social Science Formatting*, 22(3), 89-99.

NOTE: This sample references list features a number of fictitious entries. They are offered solely for modeling purposes.