

APA Formatting & Citing: The Basics

What is APA style?

APA is an editorial style recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA) for preparing scholarly manuscripts and student research papers. It is the standard format for papers, articles, and books in the social sciences. It provides rules for **formatting papers** (margins, line spacing, etc.) and **citing ideas** (quotations, facts, and paraphrases).

APA Formatting – General Guidelines:

- 8.5” x 11” plain white paper
- Use a standard font (like Times New Roman or Arial) unless otherwise instructed
- Number all pages chronologically in the upper right corner
- Double space throughout the paper
- Use 1” margins on all sides
- Include your header on all pages, including your title page

APA Formatting – Title Page:

- Include the title of your paper in the upper left corner
 - You can set this up to appear in your Header (the top portion of your paper, repeating on every page) by selecting the “Insert” tab in Microsoft Word, and then navigating to “Header” (also known as a Running head).
 - To construct your Header, please include the first 50 characters (words & spaces) of the title of your paper in all capital letters in the upper left corner. If your title is longer than 50 characters, select 50 characters that best convey a shortened version of your title.
 - **Tip:** It is easiest to insert your page number first (see below) and then construct your heading. Inserting the page number in the upper right corner will open your header while placing the page number in the correct location, leaving a blinking cursor that you can use to input the title of your paper in all capital letters. You can then use the Tab key to adjust the spacing so your title appears in the upper left corner while your page number stays in the upper right corner.
- Include your page number in the upper right corner
 - Your page number should also appear in your Header. To insert a chronological page number into your Header, select the “Insert” tab in Microsoft Word, then navigate to “Page Number”. Select the plain page number in the upper right location.

- Halfway down the page, center and include:
 - **The full title of your paper [in bold]**
 - [a blank line of space]
 - Your Name
 - Your Institution
 - Your Instructor
 - Your Course
 - The Due Date
- At the bottom of your paper, you may include the heading “Author’s note” centered, followed by a brief paragraph that lists specific information, if necessary.

APA Style – References:

- Include any and all sources that you have used within your paper
- Alphabetize your references by the last name of the author/s, editor/s, or publishing organization. When a work has no author, alphabetize it by the first word of the title.
- Invert all authors’ names and use initials in place of first and middle names.
- Format your References Page using a hanging indent. To do this, highlight all of the entries in your References page and select “Line Spacing Options.” Then, under “Indentation” select “Hanging” from the drop-down menu.

- **Common References – Books:**

Model:

Author’s Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year of publication). *Title of the book* (edition). Publisher. DOI or URL (if accessed online).

Example:

Calfee, R.C., & Valencia, R.R. (1991). *APA guide to preparing manuscripts for journal publication*. American Psychological Association.

- **Common References – Print Articles:**

Model:

Author’s Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical* (*journal, magazine, newspaper*), volume #(issue #), pages.

Example:

Harlow, H.F. (1983). Fundamentals for preparing psychology journal articles. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 55(1), 893.

- **Common References – Online Journal Article with DOI:**

Model:

Author's Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Online Periodical*, volume # (issue #), pages. DOI.

Example:

Woolridge, M.B., & Shapka, J. (2012). Playing with technology: Mother-toddler interaction scores lower during play with electronic toys. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33(5), 211-218.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2012.05.005>

- **Common References – Online Journal Article without DOI:**

Model:

Author's Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume #(issue #), pages. URL

Example:

Smyth, A.M., Parker, A.L., & Pease, D.L. (2002). A study of the enjoyment of peas.

Journal of Abnormal Eating, 8(3). 120-125. <http://www.articlepage.com/full/url>