How to Format a Paper in APA Style

Student Name

University of the Rockies

Abstract

Your professor may require an Abstract, which should appear on the second page with the label centered and not bolded. The Abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly. Most scholarly journals require an abstract. The Abstract is the only part of an APA document where the first paragraph is not indented. The Abstract is usually only one paragraph in length and should not exceed 250 words. Ask your instructor if your Abstract is allowed to be longer.

How to Format a Paper in APA Style

Your college papers here at University of the Rockies will all be formatted the same way. Once you learn the correct format, you will not have to worry about how to prepare your written assignments. It is important to learn American Psychological Association (APA) writing guidelines because all University of the Rockies assignments must be formatted in APA style. While there may be a variety of sources from which you receive advice about APA formatting, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition), printed October 2009 or later, is the most accurate source for proper APA formatting. Unfortunately, the first printing of the sixth edition had many errors, so check the copyright page to make sure it says “Second printing” or later. This brief sample paper shows you how APA style looks when applied to a written assignment and can be used as a Microsoft Word template for you to format your own papers.

# General Formatting Information

Set the margins of your document to be one inch on each side—top, bottom, left, and right. Double space all the lines in your document with no extra space between paragraphs or before or after headings. Left justify the paragraphs and leave the right side of your text ragged. Most paragraphs will have the first line indented by .5 inches. Use the Microsoft Word paragraph formatting tool to set your paragraph spacing. Make sure that Line Spacing is set to “Double” and that “Spacing” is set to 0 pt for both “Before” and “After.”

There are separate considerations for different parts of your paper: the title page, the abstract, the first and subsequent pages of text, and the references pages. Directions for formatting the abstract are written in the abstract for this sample paper (see above). Directions for formatting the other parts of your paper are written in the following sections.

## Title Page

Note the format of page 1, the title page. It includes the title of the paper, your name, and University of the Rockies. Check with your instructor whether additional information, such as a date or assignment number, is allowed or desired.

In the header of the first page, the title page, place the words “Running head:” followed by a shortened version of your title in capital letters. On subsequent pages, put that same shortened version of your paper’s title in caps, but without the “Running head:” designation. You will have to use the Microsoft Word Header and Footer tool and check “Different First Page” to get a unique header on the title page.

## Body of Paper

The body of your paper starts on page 3 (or page 2 if an abstract is *not* included). Please note that the full title of the paper that appears on the title page is repeated on a centered line just before beginning the body of the paper and is not bolded and is not repeated on subsequent pages. The following (sub)sections describe other formatting considerations within the body of the paper.

**Page header.** Every page must be numbered in the upper right corner and must include a page header in the upper left corner that is a shortened title of the paper, in capital letters. The header is the same for all pages in your paper, including the abstract and reference pages, except for page 1, the title page.

**How to format headings.** Note that this paper formats headings as noted in Table 3.1 of the APA Publication manual (American Psychological Organization, 2010). In general, papers are divided into sections and subsections. There are five levels of headings whose format is specified, but it is very unusual to use more than two or three levels of heading. Level 1 heading is the highest level and should be the first heading used in a paper. In this paper, General Formatting Information and Crediting Sources are Level 1 headings. The first level of subheadings is Level 2, such as the headings Body of Paper and Reference Page in this paper.

The third level of heading is used as an example in this section--How to format headings. Usually a section is not given a heading unless there is more than one heading in that level.

## Reference Page

Begin the references on a new page with the label “References” centered at the top, not bolded. All reference entries are formatted with a “Hanging” indent of .5 inches. Use the Microsoft Word paragraph formatting tool to set your paragraph spacing by choosing “Hanging” under “Special.” List references according to APA 6th edition style, see especially chapter 7 for examples.

# Crediting Sources

When you use an idea that is not your own, you must give credit to the author of that idea. The importance of giving credit for outside sources cannot be overstated. Every print source and everything found on the Internet must be cited in the text of your paper. The two sentences that follow are examples of how to create in-text citation of an article you found on a website.

An article on the Ethics Resource Center website (Sears, 2004) presents three scenarios that demonstrate the types of ethical situations employees might face in their jobs.

Or,

Sears’ article (2004) from the Ethics Resource Center website presents three scenarios that demonstrate the types of ethical situations employees might face in their jobs.

Your in-text citations must also have a complete citation on a reference page. This reference page citation provides more detailed information for each source. Only include references on the reference page that you have cited in your paper.

**Conclusion**

Note that papers generally do not have an “Introduction” section labeled, but often have a “Conclusion” section with its own heading. The introduction is generally understood as the first section of text following the title and does not need a header.

This paper has been formatted as a sample paper for use by students. It is not intended to be a tutorial on APA style, but what is included in the text is correct. Once one learns formatting basics, writing papers for submission to class or for publication becomes easier. Happy writing!

References

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Sears, B. (2004). Conflicts of interest. *Monitor on Psychology*, *39*, 38-48. doi:10.1037/0278- 6133.24.2.225

**OR, if the article does not have an assigned DOI number**

Sears, B. (2004). Conflicts of interest. *Monitor on Psychology*, *39*, 38-48.

**OR, include the URL homepage of the journal (section 6.32 in APA manual)**

Sears, B. (2004). Conflicts of interest. *Monitor on Psychology*, *39*, 38-48. Retrieved from http:www.ethics.org/resources/articles-organizational-ethics.asp?aid=860

**Do not indicate retrieval from library databases.**

**Do not include retrieval dates for any source unless the source material may change over time.**