INTRODUCTION TO APA STYLE

Center for
WRITING EXCELLENCE

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July 2011
INTRODUCTION TO APA STYLE

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INTRODUCTION TO APA STYLE

Introduction of APA Style

The American Psychological Association has set the standard for communication in the medical and social sciences since 1929. This handout is based primarily on the Publication Manual of the APA, Sixth Edition © 2010.

The most important goal in writing an APA-format research paper is keeping track of information sources and how they are relevant to the topic and argument. Introducing sources and identifying how they support claims are just as important as the technical aspects of the citation itself.

Elements

Each paragraph or section of the research paper needs to have three distinct parts: claim, evidence, and discussion. The claim refers back to the thesis, the evidence supports the claim, and the discussion explains how the evidence given is relevant to the claim.

When using primary research, such as interviews or surveys, the research methods need to be explained. However, when evidence is one or more outside sources from a journal or a book, you will need to use the citation information to explain why each source is useful. The most important piece of information for APA style is the date; in this style, newer knowledge is almost always preferred.

Organizing Formal Research Papers

If you are writing a formal research paper, the following elements are usually used.

Introduction
Introduce the research question and explain the background of the issue you are researching.

Review of Literature
Synthesize background research on the topic.

Methodology
Explain your experiment/research process.

Findings
Provide the data produced by your research.

Discussion
Explain the implications of your findings along with your research conclusions.

Simply presenting evidence is never enough. Always explain how the source can be used to support the claims as well as the overall purpose of the paper. It is better to have one or two sources that are thoroughly explained than to have three or four sources that have no context or explanation.

Presentation

The box at left explains the elements of a formal research paper; however, not all APA papers are formal research projects.

All APA papers use the same specific formatting. The use of a specific format allows the reader of your paper to quickly identify the information they need. APA is intended primarily for use in the sciences; in order for research to be useful, it must be shared with others. It is important that the reader be able to determine how and where information was obtained.

On the following pages are examples of APA format.
Letting Go: How Boot Camp Conditions Soldiers to Leave Their Homes

Jane P. Jones and Robert R. Smith
University of North Alabama

Author Note
This research project was completed in March 2011 with the help of Dr. Jane Bruce in the Nursing Department during NU 453. Thanks to the ROTC at the university for help in conducting interviews and collecting information.

LETTING GO

Abstract

Boot camps are designed to provide recruits with a sense of group solidarity and identity within the military brotherhood. This project attempted to determine what theories for the adoption of new social constructs are modeled by this training. Research for this project was conducted using interviews with the university ROTC and searches of prior studies in the nursing research databases. This paper identifies the most common psychological systems used in boot camps.

The four sentences in this short paragraph introduce the topic, present the research question, explain the types of research done, and relate the intended results. Further summary is not necessary.
LETTING GO

Letting Go: How Boot Camp Conditions Soldiers to Leave Their Homes

For many soldiers, the most memorable aspect of their training was boot camp. Boot camp is the transitional period wherein troops learn to identify with their branch of the armed forces. The process of boot camp has grown along with the field of psychology, and so a comparison between boot camp methods and psychological methods poses an interesting series of questions.

The 1972 Boot Camp Reform Act (Thompson, 2008) instituted a series of changes to the way that the different branches of the military conducted Basic Training.

References


Creating a Reference Page

All the sources specifically mentioned in your paper must appear, alphabetized, on your reference page (certain exceptions exist for interviews, extremely common sources such as Scripture, and personal communication; see the APA Publication Manual). If your professor asks you to include a bibliography of sources you read but did not reference, this is also where they go.

If Microsoft Word’s “References” tab is used, be sure to check the final product against a style guide. Automatic formatting or citation machines are often incorrect.


Who. Identify the author, authors, or editors of a document. If a given document is produced by a corporate author, then the name of that entity may be used. The name of a website, however, should not be used here; it is part of Where, along with the page URL.

(When). Placing the latest date of publication in parentheses after the author indicates how recent the information is. The year of publication is usually sufficient; however, some source documentation formats require a more precise date. It can be included in the following format: (2008, September 30) or (2008, September). If there is no date, it is all right to use (n.d.) to indicate this; however, sources without a date may not be reliable.

What. This identifies the title of the article, book, webpage, film, project, section, or chapter. Only the first word and any proper nouns (plus the first word of the subtitle) should be capitalized, regardless of how the capitalization looked in the original title. Titles of major works, like books and films, should be italicized; titles published within a larger work are not italicized. Citations of a specific chapter in a book include the chapter title and the book title with only the book title italicized. If the source is an editorial, monograph, special section, diagram, or other uncommon source, indicate this at the end of the title using [brackets].

Where. This provides the reader with instructions on how to find the What. The type of information listed here depends on what type of source is being cited. Include the page number range if citing a specific portion of the text not identified in the in-text citation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What type of source</th>
<th>Where to find it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book title</td>
<td>Location: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article in a print journal.</td>
<td>Journal name, VOL(ISSUE).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article in an online journal</td>
<td>Journal name, VOL(ISSUE). Retrieved from <a href="http://URL">http://URL</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article in an online journal</td>
<td>Journal name, VOL(ISSUE). Doi:######</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter in book.</td>
<td>Book title (pp. #-#). Location: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point of citing sources is to provide the necessary information for the audience to be able to identify, assess, and locate sources. Include as much information about the source as possible. The goal is to present who, when, what, and where in the proper order with the proper formatting.

If one of the who/when/what/where elements is missing, then organize whatever is available such that when is still the second entry in the citation. For example, if you don’t have an author for an online magazine article, organize the citation based on what, when, and where:


For more examples of APA citations, visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1 or look at the APA Sixth Edition Publication Manual.

In-Text Citations

Choosing Text to Integrate

1. Read the entire text, noting the key points and main ideas.
2. Summarize in your own words what the single main idea of the essay is.
3. Paraphrase important supporting points that come up in the essay.
4. Consider any words, phrases, or brief passages that you believe should be quoted directly.

All works used within the paper must be cited. If you use an idea or paraphrase information from another source without citing it, you are plagiarizing. All specific statements of fact that are not your own personal experience or general knowledge must be cited. In-text citations should always include the author’s name and may require a page number. See the Writing Center’s page on source integration for more information on specific types of in-text citation.

When deciding which information to integrate into your paper, you should first read the entire text. Make sure that the main ideas and key points within the source agree with what you wish to say. It is not acceptable to simply take a portion of the text and misrepresent the author’s meaning.

Summarize any ideas or text that you believe to be important. Proper summarization should condense the main idea or text of several pages or even the entire source into a brief overview. By summarizing, you save many paragraphs or pages of unnecessary text. When using in-text citations for summaries, you must always cite the author. If there is no author listed, cite the article name. Summaries do not require page numbers; this is because the text summarized will usually cover several pages of text or information.

Some bits of text may be too important or detailed to summarize. If you are unable to summarize the information, then you should paraphrase. Paraphrasing involves putting the text into your own words. Paraphrased information is usually shorter than the original text, but it gives a more detailed view than simply summarizing. All ideas should be attributed to the original author, even though the words used are your own. For paraphrases, include the page number from the original source.

Quoting should only be used when the author’s words are so precisely and accurately stated that they cannot be paraphrased or when you intend to dissect the meaning of a specific bit of text. Professors usually prefer students to avoid quotations unless they are absolutely necessary.

Direct quotations that are less than 40 words should be incorporated into the text, surrounded by quotation marks, and cited. Quotations that are more than 40 words should be placed in a block quote without quotation marks around it. The parenthetical citation for block quotes should always go outside of the ending punctuation.

process of boot camp has grown along with the field of psychology. Research in the Navy found:

Psychological profiling in military situations has led to a decrease in the number of Basic Training dropouts wherever the practice has been instituted. Drugs to suppress incidents of “drill rage” were less successful than careful organization. (Masterson, 1985, p. 248)

After General Wilson instituted the 1972 Reform Act for the Army’s Basic Training in 1975, many drill
Always introduce sources that you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting. When you introduce a source with the author's name and/or the date, this information does not need to be repeated in the parenthetical citation at the end. Introducing sources in this way is called **signal phrasing**.

When using signal phrases, always remember that what is not signaled at the beginning of the sentence must be cited in parentheses at the end.

Examples of in-text citations:

**Limited signal, everything in citation**

... end of paraphrased or summarized sentence, in which you convey the author's ideas in your own words (Krepp, 1985, p. 103).

"... end of quoted sentence" (Krepp, 1985, p. 103).

**Author and year in signal, page in citation**

In 1985, Krepp reported that ... (p. 103).

Krepp (1985) tells us that ... (p. 103).

According to Krepp (1985), "..." (p. 103).

**Multiple works signaled (list alphabetically)**

Studies (Jones, 1966; Krepp, 1985; Smith, 1973) have shown that ...

**No author**


According to the news article "Stocks Lose Again" (1991), ... (p. B16).

To help the reader find the citation on the reference page, start your in-text citation with whatever comes first on the reference page. This is usually the author’s last name, but it can be the first part of the title if there is no author. If the title is the name of the article, put it in quotes; if the title is the name of a book, put it in italics. Add the year of publication so that the reader will know how current the information is.

(Richards, 2008)

("How to improve your writing," 2009)


Page 177 of the APA Publication Manual provides a clear table for producing different types of in-text citations.

Include page numbers if the source is a physical print publication and the citation is a paraphrase or quote of a specific portion of the text. Summaries of the entire source do not need page numbers. If you include a page range on the references page, you should not include the same page range in your in-text citation.

**Organizing Information**

APA style has specific recommendations for creating **levels of heading**. Generally, papers shorter than 5 pages will not require any headings; headings exist to separate sections of the paper, not to label
individual ideas. Constructing paragraphs with topic sentences at the beginning and transitions at the end will serve to label and organize ideas; headings should only be used when very large sections need to be separated. If your professor has specific headings that he wants to see in your paper, follow those recommendations.

Do not use numbers, letters, or roman numerals with your headings.

For medium-length papers that only need to be broken up into 3 or 4 sections, use only the first level of heading. When those sections need to be broken up into smaller subdivisions, use the second level of heading for that. When those sections are still long enough to require further organization, use the third level of heading, and so on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of heading</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Centered, Boldface, Capitalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush Left, Boldface, Capitalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only very rarely will more than the first two or three levels of heading be necessary. At right is an example of how the levels of heading can be used. Each heading should have a substantial quantity of text under it. Do not create subheadings if that subheading is the only one at its level.

The first part of your paper is always the introduction. Never use a heading for your introduction unless requested by the instructor. Your reader will assume that the first section is the introduction without a header.

Method
Sample and Participant Selection
Assessment and Measures
  - Q-sort measures of inhibition and aggressiveness.
  - Life history calendar.
Results
Outcome of Inhibited Children
  - Personality and self-esteem.
  - Social network.
  - Life history and IQ.
Outcome of Aggressive Children
  - Discussion
  - Inhibited Children: Delayed Social Transitions
  - Conclusions and Future Prospects

Numbering and bulleting of lists can help organize groups of ideas in your paper. It is important that these lists maintain parallel structure; they need to follow the same grammar, syntax, and concept. Use ordinary numerals with a period following (see example at left).

Only use a numbered list when the order of the material has some significance (importance, usefulness, or chronology). For lists that can be presented in any order, use bullets. Bullets can be small squares, circles, arrows, or anything else; remember, however, that academic writing should be professional; gaudy icons as bullets will likely distract readers.

When introducing bulleted or numbered lists, it is usually best to use passive voice to describe events and ideas. Because APA style is intended for scientific writing, passive voice is usually preferred. Occasional active voice can be used for emphasis.
Whenever a large quantity of information needs to be displayed, you can use a **table** to organize and present it. The table needs to have a numerical label (Table 1 or Table C or Table IV), a title (this should usually be italicized), and horizontal lines around the headings and at the base of the table. You can use Microsoft Word’s Insert > Table function to create these, or you can use paragraph formatting to insert the horizontal lines where you need them. A basic table with simple data presentation is shown on the following page.

Explanation of tables in your text is important so that the reader will understand their relevancy. Always reiterate the most important parts of the data and explain how they are related to your main arguments.

More complex tables can be made by using additional spanning lines to show different groups of data or a row of totals or averages. For very large tables, you can use boldface to highlight the most important points in the data. It may also be necessary to add a short note underneath the bottom span line for definitions.

**Contributors**

This APA style guide was created in 2011 for the University of North Alabama Library and Center for Writing Excellence by David MacMillan III as part of the Library’s libguide redesign program. The following individuals contributed to the contents and design of this guide:

Amber Huett  
Dr. Robert Koch, Jr.  
Katie Sanders  
Ash Taylor Crum

All instruction in this guide has been derived from the Sixth Edition Publication Manual © 2010 of the American Psychological Association. Further references used or consulted are included on the following page in APA reference style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Male Recruits</th>
<th>Female Recruits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that female recruits join the military at a later age than their male counterparts. Younger individuals are likely to enter the more rigorous branches.
References


APA formatting and style guide – The OWL at Purdue. (2007). Purdue University Online Writing Lab.

Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/


