

Sample APA Paper to Learn APA Style 6th Edition

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Abstract

The abstract is always on page two. It should be a concise and objective summary without evaluations or opinions. The abstract is the juicy advertisement that entices editors to read a paper, so fill it with alluring and direct language and convince the editor (and any reader) that your research topic is deeply interesting. In the 150-250 words of the abstract, all four parts of an empirical paper should be fully described: introduction, method, results, and discussion. Writing one or two sentences on each of the four sections could constitute an appropriate Abstract. In addition to the four parts of the paper, the following key points should be highlighted: research topic, research question, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions. Adding implications of the research results is optional. After the abstract paragraph, the author can opt to include keywords. For best results, compose the Abstract last. Keep in mind: the closer to 150 words, the better. Short abstracts are preferred.

Keywords: APA format, sample paper

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The first part of the APA paper is the Introduction, but there is no heading that labels it the “Introduction.” Instead, the title of the paper is restated (justified in the center) and the writing simply begins to flow.

The primary focus in the Introduction section is to provide background literature. After the reader receives a logical sequencing of information in the background, he will be able to determine that the research hypotheses presented at the end of this section are indeed reasonable. The background literature should contain plenty of citations, as is evidenced in the article by Cameron (1955). Books, articles, magazines, and online content are cited differently in the References section; however, when they are written in the body of the paper, specific standardized rules apply (Gayle, 1984). These rules have been strictly utilized in the sample references thus far. According to McMillan (1953), different citations are “drafted in an identical manner” when in the body of the paper (p. 42). All items in the references section must be found cited in the paper; all items cited in the paper must be found in the references section.

At the end of the Introduction, the author should introduce the purpose of the research. This can usually be explained in just a few sentences. The final element in an Introduction is the author’s hypotheses. These are written in the past tense and should be stated in the active (e.g., “I predicted...”), rather than passive voice (e.g., “It was hypothesized that...”).

When selecting a title, bear in mind that it should be able to stand alone, summarizing the paper’s main idea. Avoid words that do not provide distinction (e.g., methods, analysis, results, a study of...). Try to keep it no more than 12 words.

SAMPLE APA PAPER

In the author note, each paragraph starts with an indent. This is true for the body of the writing too. The only item that does not have an indent is the Abstract. This is contained in a single paragraph, with no justification. There is no specification for font size and style, but 12-point font in an easily readable style is a good rule of thumb. Margins should be one-inch wide on all sides, but this is the standard that comes with Microsoft Office (Stewart, 1981), so no extra keystrokes for formatting will be required. Double spacing is required.

Note the header on each page, written in all capital letters. The cover page has the words "Running head" in the proper capitalization prior to the actual header. There is also a page number on the top right corner.

Method

As the reader should recall, there are four parts of an empirical paper: Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion. Part two of an APA paper is the Method section and in this section there are several subsections that are separated by headings. The main headings are formatted in bold with uppercase and lowercase letters and are justified in the center. Main headings are only used for the Method, Results, and Discussion sections.

Note: when the APA paper is a literature review, there would not be a Method section because there is no empirical research.

Participants

The participants heading above is a level 2 heading. It is left aligned, bold, and contains both upper and lower case letters. Other level two headings include: Research Design, Measures, and Procedure.

SAMPLE APA PAPER

In this participants section (Note: “participants,” not “subjects”), mention the number of participants, the percentage of female and male participants, the mean age (abbreviated *M*), and their ethnicity or cultural background.

Research Design

In this section, the design of the research should be explained, highlighting independent and dependent variables. An example provided in the paper I am reviewing states that the study might involve a 2-by-2 design with one independent variable being treatment/control conditions and the other independent variable being biological sex.

Measures

The Measures section describes test or instruments used. If a questionnaire was used, the measures section is the place where the scale should be explained. If the scale is self-developed, the reliability and validity would need to be explained in this section.

There are five levels specified in the APA headings chart. This paper has thus far only addressed level 1 and 2. For future information, level three headings could be used in the participants category, denoting “Demographics of the Participants.” In this case, the heading would be indented, bold, and lowercase. However, in the example that I saw, upper and lower case was used, so perhaps it is best to review APA guidelines on headings to note the distinction.

Procedure

Procedure in this instance refers to the data-collection procedures. In this section there should be information on how the participants were included, whether they participated alone or in groups, what they were asked to do, how informed consent was obtained, how they were

compensated, and as much information as you can list. This section should be so thorough that another researcher would be able to duplicate your study exactly.

Results

In this third section, the statistical analysis is written in detail. The type of data analysis used (correlation, ANOVA) as well as the alpha level adopted are important to include. Remind the reader of your hypothesis before presenting each result, but be careful not to interpret or explain the result. It is appropriate to state whether or not the hypothesis was supported, but the explanation is reserved for the fourth part of the paper: Discussion.

Most information is presented in tables and this has its own style requirements. As a general rule, table content should be limited to essential information. Table entries that are being compared (e.g., mean, standard deviation) should be next to one another. Tables should be numbered in the order they appear (e.g., Table 1, Table 2), and should be referred to by their name when appearing in the text. Eliminate vertical lines. If there is a cell where data isn't applicable, simply leave it blank. See Table 1, a properly formatted table at the end of this paper, for further description.

Discussion

The Discussion section is the fourth and final section of the paper. In the bulk of this section, results will be explained and interpreted. Are the results as predicted? Did the findings fit with previous theory and literature?

In two additional parts of this section, include the limitations of the study (ways in which internal or external validity was compromised, or explain if sample was biased) and the implications of the findings (e.g., how does this study add to psychological theory).

References

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Table 1

Sample Table Describing Fake Data

	Variable A		Variable B	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Men (n=100)	32.61	9.95	18.08	8.2
Women (n=80)	33.02	8.98	17.67	5.3

Note. These data were made up, simply to provide an idea of formatting.