

An Introduction to APA

Jayne Jones

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Professor X

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## An Introduction to APA

This essay introduces the American Psychological Association's documentation style.

To begin, click the "Page Layout" tab and "Margins" to make sure all margins are set at one inch or "Normal"; then right click and choose "Paragraph" to make sure "Indentation" is set at ½ inch or 0.5 and "Before" and "After" are set at 0 pt. Set the font size at twelve, the font style at Times New Roman, and line spacing at double; double-space the entire paper—from title to references. For the title page, choose the "Insert" tab, "Page Number," and "Plain Number 3." Type the words "Running head," followed by a colon and (in all caps) your paper's title; hit the space bar until the title is left-aligned (the page number should remain on the right). To format the first page of text, choose the "Page Layout" tab, "Breaks," "Section Breaks," and "Next Page." You will also have to click "Link to Previous" so that you can create a separate header for the text pages. For the running header for the text pages, the page numbers should begin at two and the title should be in all caps (but do not include the words "Running head"). At the top of the first text page, center the title. Do not bold, italicize, or underline the title; also, do not use all caps, a bigger font size, or quotation marks. In discussions of others' work, APA requires the past tense.

APA also has guidelines for using and citing quotations. Begin by integrating quotes of less than forty words into your paragraphs. In the quote's introduction, you will typically mention the author's or authors' name(s), followed by the source's year of publication in parentheses. After the quote and in parentheses, abbreviate the word "page" with a "p" or "pp" followed by a period; then cite the page number(s) from which you took the quote (p. # or pp. #). If you have not mentioned the source's author and year at the beginning of the quote, you must do so at the end, like this: (Smith, 2012, p. 5). As for paraphrasing, according to the *Publication Manual of the APA* (2010), APA guidelines do not require you to cite a page number for

paraphrased information, but “you are encouraged to provide a page or paragraph number, especially when it would help an interested reader locate the relevant passage in a long or complex text” (VandenBos, p. 171). Notice that I have placed the period *after* the citation. Also, note that I have italicized the book’s title; for article titles, use quotation marks. For a quote of forty or more words, you will need to create a special type of quotation:

[O]mit the quotation marks. Start such a *block quotation* on a new line and indent the block about a half inch [or one tab] from the left margin (in the same position as a new paragraph). . . . Double-space the entire quotation. At the end of the block quotation, cite the quoted source and the page or paragraph number in parentheses after the final punctuation mark. (VandenBos, 2010, p. 171)

Did you notice any unfamiliar punctuation in this quote? APA also has guidelines for changing, adding, or omitting information. If you change or add material, use square brackets around the change or addition. If you omit material, use an ellipsis (within sentences, use three periods; between sentences, use four). To create a “hanging indent” for your references, right click and choose “Paragraph”; under “Indentation” and “Special,” choose “Hanging” from the drop-down. APA guidelines often annoy student writers, but as Elbow (1998) asserts, “the . . . appearance of your writing has a big effect on how people experience your words [and ideas]” (p. 170).

References (usually on a separate page)

Elbow, P. (1998). The last step: Getting rid of mistakes in grammar. In *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process* (New ed., pp. 167-172). New York: Oxford University Press.

VandenBos, G.R. (Ed.). (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.