APA Style Guide: Overview

This guide explains what APA style is, why we use it, and how you can learn to use it for your courses. Not citing the source of information is plagiarism and falls under academic dishonesty penalties for your course and the college.

*Note: Your instructor might have specific requirements that vary from this, so always pay attention to your instructor’s directions.*

What is APA style?

- It is the style of the American Psychological Association. The 6th edition of the APA Style Manual is currently in use.
- The APA Style Manual includes information on how to properly format everything from entire books to how we write numbers to how we write statistical data and how we cite the sources we use when we write.
- It is the standard format used within psychology (and several other disciplines) for formatting papers, articles, books, citations, and references.
- It allows anyone reading anything written in APA style to find the same information in the same place no matter who wrote it.
- It helps to ensure proper citation for all references used.

Why do we use it?

We use it because we should:

- Demonstrate our accountability for using others’ research.
- Acknowledge the work of others.
- And because learning and using APA style is an important part of understanding and communicating in the field.

How do you learn how to use APA style?

There are a number of great ways to learn to use APA style and a few bad ones. The great ways to learn to use APA style include:

- Referring to the 6th edition of the APA Publication Manual - available in all HACC libraries
- Taking one of the many APA style training sessions offered by HACC librarians or Learning Center staff
- By visiting online resources such as the Purdue OWL website or your course libguide if there is one

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Bad ways to learn to use APA style (because they are often out of date of have many errors) include:

- Random internet searches for APA style.
- Using software that creates the citations for you (citation generators or managers).
- Using old versions of the APA manual - The APA Publication Manual updates every few years and a great deal changes each time. The current edition is the 6th.

What are some of the Basics of APA Style Papers?

Depending on the assignment the specific requirements may vary, but at a minimum, in-text citations and references are always needed. In general complete APA style papers have the following components:

- The entire document should have 1” margins and be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font.
- Each page should contain page numbers and a running head.
- Page one includes several elements: title, running head, author name, and name of institution.
- Page two contains an abstract (if required by the instructor).
- All resources used are cited throughout the writing of the paper.
- The “References” page is on a separate page at the end of the paper.
- References are alphabetized and formatted with hanging indentions.