Primer on 6th ed. APA Style

Ioakim Boutakidis, Ph.D.
Child and Adolescent Studies
California State University, Fullerton
What is APA Style

- Publication format devised by the American Psychological Association (APA) that determines manuscript styles for papers to be submitted to scholarly/academic publications.
- The style has come to govern writing in all of the social and many of the health sciences.
- The principles promoted in APA style include uniformity of formatting, clarity in expression, and elimination of bias. In addition there is extensive guidance on the presentation of statistical information, tables, figures, as well as how to reference various sources.

Changes/Additions to the 6th ed. generally involve:

- More detailed guidance on citing the myriad internet-based resources now available, including use of DOI.
- Some formatting changes, e.g., elimination of italics, addition of bold face.
- Further guidance on authorship and plagiarism (including self-plagiarism)
- Some minor changes in citational style.
Basic Formatting

- All pages should have 1 inch margins top/bottom/left/right.
- Lines of Text should be double-spaced.
- Font size should be 12pt, font style preferably Times New Roman.
- 2 spaces after periods (major change!!!!).
- Generally speaking, a “full” paper should contain 4 sections: Title Page, Abstract, Main Body (intro, methods, results), and References.
Title Page

- The Title Page is the very first page (cover page or sheet) of the manuscript. It should contain the following:
  - Running head
  - Page number
  - Full Title
  - Name of author(s)
  - Institutional Affiliation
- Here’s a sample:
Headings

- Content in APA style is formally divided into sections, which are identified by headings.
- Not all headings are used for any given paper, and instructors in particular courses should provide guidance to students as to what headings and sections are required.
- The most basic headings denote the major sections of a paper.
- These headings include:
• Abstract*
• Method
• Results
• Discussion
• References*

All of the above should be centered on their own line before the section begins and are bold-face, with the exception of the Abstract and References headings. Upper case and lowercase letters can be used. These are all considered LEVEL 1 headings.

The full title of the paper, as it appears on the Title Page, also appears at the top of the first page of the main body, centered, but not bold-face. This indicates the formal beginning of the paper, typically starting with the introduction and lit review.
• **Other heading Levels**
  
  • **Level 2** = Left-aligned, boldface, uppercase and lowercase heading.
  
  • **Level 3** = Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period.

  • In the vast majority of cases, Levels 1, 2 and 3 will cover the necessary sections. In most student papers, level 2 will suffice.

  • Here is an illustration of what the 3 levels would look like in text.
Level One Headings

Level Two Headings

Level three headings. Sixth edition style maintains the typical five levels of headings, with Levels 1-3 covering most cases, but has changed the text formatting required.
Citations

- Any claim of fact that is not a general proposition must be cited. Any reference to a scholarly source must be cited. Any reference to a specific audio, video or text product must be cited. Even personal communications must be cited.
- Citations appear in two places in APA style. The first is in the main body, known as an in-text citation, and sometimes more specifically as a parenthetical citation.
- The second place is in the References section of the paper.
Reference Citations

- Any cited source in the abstract or main body of a paper must be linked to a full citation in the References section and vice-versa.
- There are dozens of potential Reference formats, including scholarly journals, books and book chapters, periodicals, online databases, etc.
- However, for the vast majority of student papers, only the formats covering scholarly journals (including online formats) and non-scholarly internet sources are utilized.
Scholarly Journal Articles

- Basic citation for a journal article, single author:

• 2 to 7 Authors:

More than 7 Authors:

Online Periodicals

- All of the basic formatting rules apply, but in addition, writers should include a doi when available (usually is).

If no doi is available, then the writer must provide a full URL to allow a reader to track down the source.

Some common errors to watch for:

1) Students often include the date of retrieval when citing an online periodical. This is generally NOT necessary, unless there is reason to believe that the article will move or will be pulled after a limited time.

2) Students will often include the online library database that an article was retrieved from (e.g., PsychINFO or PubMed). This is also generally unnecessary unless the database is obscure.

3) Students will capitalize every key word of article title or alternatively will over-extend the rule and NOT capitalize proper nouns in the article title.
Non-periodical Online Sources

- If writer is referring to some general Web document retrieved online, e.g. webpage or report, then the following format applies:

  - Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication).

• Other important formatting issues
• The References must begin on a new page (main heading, centered) immediately following the main body of the paper.
• References are ordered alphabetically by the first author’s last name.
  • In cases with two authors with the same last name, use the first initial.
  • In cases with more than one study by the same author or set of authors, the earlier publication date is placed ahead of later publication dates.
  • In cases with the same author or set of authors and same publication year, the writer must add a lowercase letter notation to the year to keep them distinct, e.g. 1991a and 1991b. This notation must carry over to the in-text citations as well.
The necessary components of any in-text citation include the author’s last name(s) and year of publication. This information can be conveyed in multiple ways, e.g.,

Some of the earliest acculturation research focused on Native Americans in the United States (Herkovits, 1937). However, the shift to a more precise measurement of acculturation did not happen until the 1970s with the pioneering work of Berry (1975). More recently, Jean Phinney added her now famous ethnic identity measure to the mix in 1991.
- 2 to 5 authors:
- Boutakidis and Rodriguez (2002) determined that the measurement of acculturation must be more domain specific.
- Others have determined that the measurement of acculturation must be more domain specific (Boutakidis & Rodriguez, 2002).
- It is now recognized that a multidimensional model of acculturation is superior to one-dimensional models (Berry, Phinney, Suh, & Greenfield, 2001).
If a study or article with 3 or more authors is cited more than once, citations subsequent to the first need only include the first author’s name. E.g.,

Harris, McCormick, and Scotts (2008) determined the optimal stress-performance curve for elite athletes. However, Harris et al. were uncertain as to whether this function could be generalized to non-athlete populations.
In addition, the et al. format may be used with the very first citation, if the source has 6 or more authors.

- Harris et al. (2001)
- (Harris et al., 2001)

Another thing that causes students confusion:

- Students are told to always include the date of publication with in-text citations. However, a writer need not do this if the *same* article is being cited multiple times within the same paragraph, and it is clear that the same study is being referred to.