

How to Write a Research Paper in APA Format — A Complete Guide

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Completed your research experiments and collated your results? Does it feel like you have crossed a major hurdle in your research journey? No, not even close! What lies next is — publishing your research work for it to reach the science world! The process of publishing a [research paper](#) is so intricate, if you miss one aspect, you could end up struggling with revisions and reworks or getting a rejection! Thus, there is a necessity of following an exceptional mode of writing. The APA style research format comes to a researcher's rescue.

This article discusses how to effortlessly write an APA style research paper and how it is necessary to understand the basic elements of APA style research paper in order to write an article in APA style research format.

What Is APA Style?

The APA format is the official style of American Psychological Association (APA) and is commonly used to cite sources in psychology, education and social sciences. **APA**

research paper format is widely used in the research publishing industry.

Students and researchers usually get confused with various research paper writing formats and are unclear about the requirements from the research publication journals. Therefore, the best way to deal with beginning to [write a research paper](#) is to first know the journal's requirement and then follow the guidelines accordingly.

Though the reference section may change over the course of time, the information related to the other sections in **APA research paper format** is similar and could be referred to, for writing an exemplary research paper.

Guidelines for APA Style Paper (7th edition)

An APA style research format is different as compared to a term paper, a creative writing paper, a composition-style paper, or a thought paper. Throughout the paper you need to apply these guidelines while writing the paper –

- **Page Layout:**

Type the content and keep double-space on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11"), with 1" margins on all sides.

You should indent the first line of every paragraph 0.5 inches

Include a page number on every page.

- **Font:**

You could use an accessible font like Times New Roman 12pt., Arial 11pt., or Georgia 11pt.

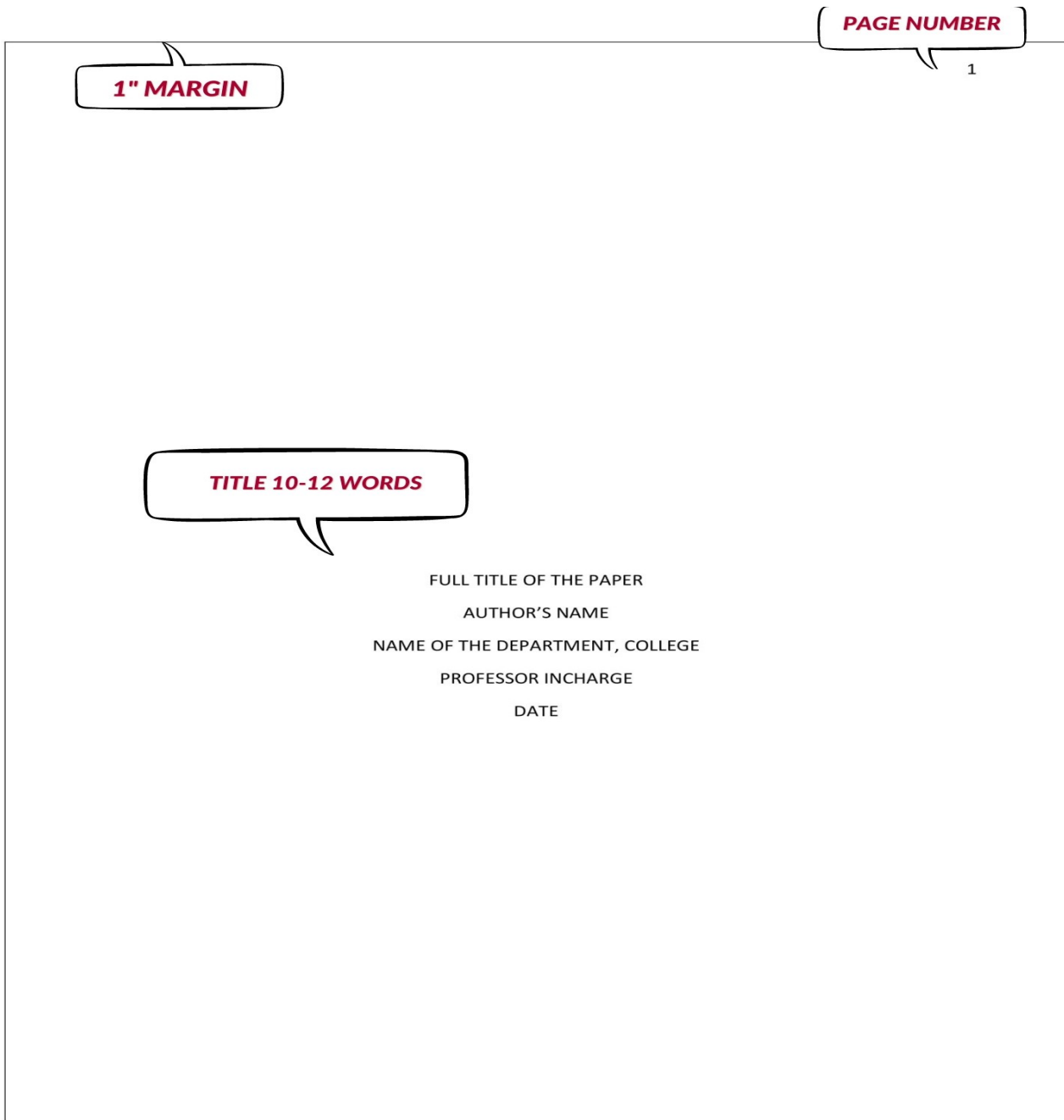
APA Research Paper Sections

The APA research paper format is based on seven main components: title page, abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and references. The sections in [APA-style paper](#) are as follows:

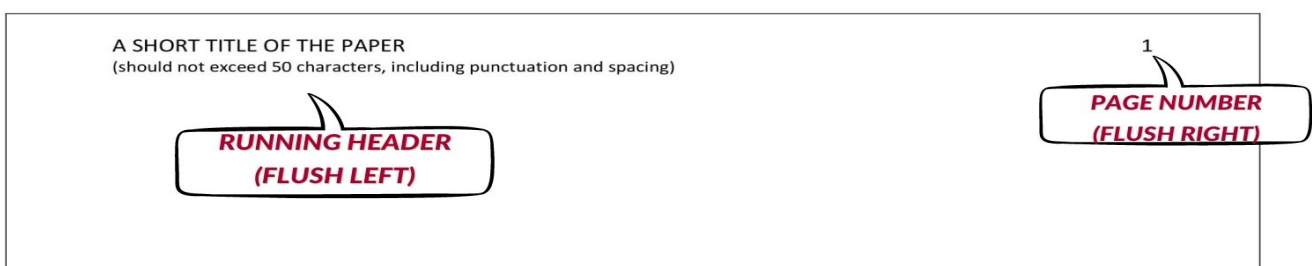
1. Title Page

As per the APA research paper format, the title should be between 10-12 words and should reflect the essence of the paper. After writing the title, write your name followed by name of the college. Furthermore, create a page header using the "View Header" function in MS Word and on the title page include a running head — a short title that

appears at the top of pages of published articles (flush left) and page number on the same line (flush right). The running head should not exceed 50 characters, including [punctuation](#) and spacing. Moreover, you could use the toolbox to insert a page number, so that it automatically numbers each page.



[APA Style – Student Paper in APA 7 Style](#)



APA Style – Professional Paper in APA 7 Style

2. Abstract

Abstract should contain **no more than 120 words**, and should be one paragraph written in block format with double spacing. Additionally, state the topic in a sentence or two. Also, provide overview of methods, results, and discussion.

A SHORT TITLE OF THE PAPER
(should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation and spacing)

**RUNNING HEADER
(FLUSH LEFT)**

Abstract

Abstract should contain no more than 120 words, and should be one paragraph written in block format with double spacing. Additionally, state the topic in a sentence or two. Also, provide overview of methods, results, and discussion. The APA format is the official style of American Psychological Association (APA) and is commonly used to cite sources in psychology, education and social sciences. **APA research paper format** is widely used in the research publishing industry. Students and researchers usually get confused with various research paper writing formats and are unclear about the requirements from the research publication journals. Therefore, the best way to deal with beginning to write a research paper is to first know the journal's requirement and then follow the guidelines accordingly.

Keywords: APA format, APA style guidelines

1
**PAGE NUMBER
(FLUSH RIGHT)**

**120 WORDS ABSTRACT
ONE PARAGRAPH
DOUBLE SPACING**

1" MARGIN

APA Style – Abstract in APA Style

3. Introduction

An introduction of **APA research paper format** is the most difficult section to write. A [good introduction](#) critically evaluates the empirical knowledge in the relevant area(s) in a way that defines the knowledge gap and expresses your aim for your study and why you conducted it. However, the challenge here is to keep the reader's interest in reading your paper.

A good introduction keeps readers engaged with your paper. For writing an interesting introduction, researchers should introduce logical flow of ideas which will eventually lead to the [research hypothesis](#). Furthermore, while incorporating references into your introduction, do not describe every single study in complete detail. Summarize the key findings from the article and do not quote from the articles, instead [paraphrase the content](#).

4. Methods

The method section in **APA research paper format** is straightforward. However, the protocol and requirements should be mentioned precisely. The goal of this section is to describe your study and experiments in detail, so that there is no issue in reproducibility of results and other researchers could duplicate your methods effectively.

This section includes Materials and/or Apparatus and Experiments/Procedures/Protocols. Furthermore, keep the procedures brief and accurate, and make sure to read through so as to not repeat the steps or avoid redundancy.

5. Results

In this section, you could describe how you analyzed the data and explain your findings. If your data analyses are complex, then break the section into subsections, ideally a subsection for each hypothesis and elaborate the subsections by using statistical analysis and including [tables or figures](#) to represent results visually. Most importantly, do not share interpretation of the results here. You can interpret and explain the results in the discussion section.

6. Discussion

Results are interpreted and understood in this section. [Discussion section](#) helps understand the research hypothesis better and places the results in the broader context of the literature in the area. This section is the reversal of introduction section, wherein you begin with the specifics and explain the general understanding of the topics.

In discussion, you start with a brief of your main findings, followed by explaining if your research findings support your hypothesis. Furthermore, you could explain how your findings enhance or support the existing literature on the topic. Connect your results with some of the literature mentioned in the introduction to bring your story back to full circle.

You could also mention if there are any interesting or surprising findings in your results. Discuss other theories which could help you justify your surprising results.

Explain the limitation of your study and mention all the additional questions that were generated from your study. You could also mention what further research should be conducted on the topic and what are the knowledge gaps in the current body of research. Finally, mention how your results could relate to the larger issues of human existence and highlight “the big picture” for your readers.

7. References

Provide an alphabetical listing of the references. Do not keep extra spaces between references and double-space all the references. The second line of each reference should be indented. You could refer to the examples (mentioned below) to know how to format references correctly.

I. Journal Article:

Only first letter of the first word of the article title is capitalized; the journal name and volume are italicized. If the journal name had multiple words, each of the major words are capitalized.

Example: Ebner-Priemer, U. W., & Trull, T. J. (2009). Ecological momentary assessment of mood disorders and mood dysregulation. *Psychological Assessment*, 21, 463-475. doi:10.1037/a0017075

II. Book Chapter:

Only the first letter of the first word of both the chapter title and book title are capitalized.

Example: Stephan, W. G. (1985). Intergroup relations. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 599-658). New York: Random House.

III. Book:

Example: Gray, P. (2010). *Psychology* (6th ed.). New York: Worth

IV. Table:

There are various formats for tables, depending upon the information you wish to include. So, be thorough and provide a table number and title (the latter should be italicized). Tables can be single or double-spaced.

V. Figure:

Be sure to mention x- and y-axes clearly. Underneath the figure provide a label and brief caption. The figure caption typically includes variables and units of measurements. Also, include error bars in your bar graphs, and note what the bars represent in the figure caption – Error bars represent one standard error above and below the mean.

VI. In-Text Citation:

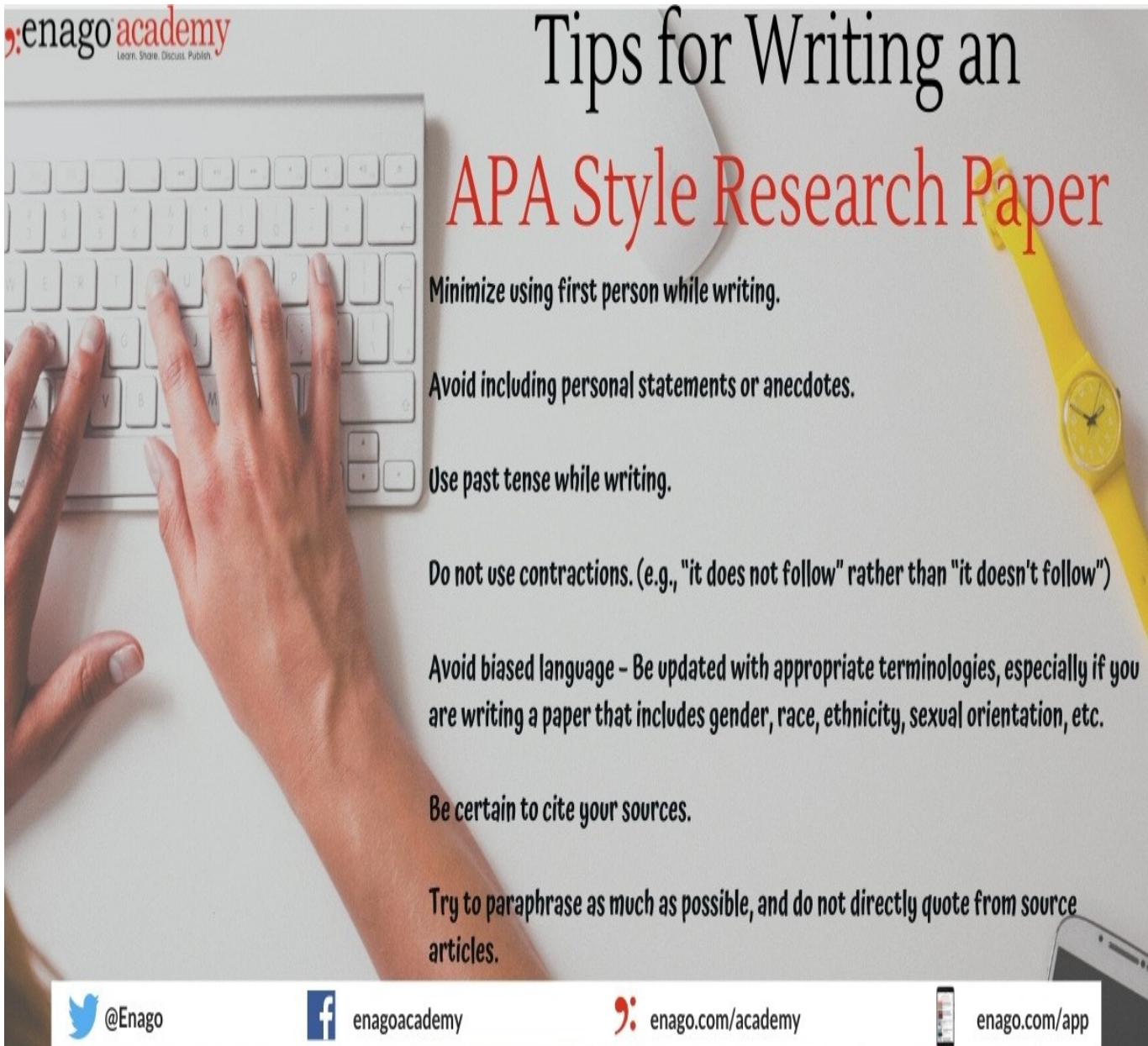
1. Mention the authors' names and publication date while citing sources in your paper.
2. When including the citation as part of the sentence, use AND: "According to Jones and Smith (2003), the..."
3. When the citation is written in parentheses, use &: "Studies have shown that priming can affect actual motor behavior (Jones & Smith, 2003; Kiley, Bailey, & Hammer, 1999). The studies in parentheses should appear alphabetically by first author's last name, and separate it with semicolons.
4. You should avoid quoting directly, but in case you do – along with the name and date, include the page number.
5. For sources with three or more authors, once you have listed all the authors' names, you may write "et al." on subsequent mentions: "Klein et al. (1999) found that..."
6. Meanwhile, when source has six or more authors, the first author's last name and "et al." are used every time the source is cited.

VII. Secondary Source:

It is a term used to describe material that is cited in another source. Avoid using secondary sources in your papers. Try to find the primary source and read it before citing in your work. However, if you must mention a secondary source, refer to the APA style paper example below:

Primary source author's last name (as cited in secondary source author's last name, year) argued that...

7 Tips for Writing an Error-free APA Style Research Paper



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Learn. Share. Discuss. Publish.

Tips for Writing an APA Style Research Paper

- Minimize using first person while writing.
- Avoid including personal statements or anecdotes.
- Use past tense while writing.
- Do not use contractions. (e.g., "it does not follow" rather than "it doesn't follow")
- Avoid biased language – Be updated with appropriate terminologies, especially if you are writing a paper that includes gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.
- Be certain to cite your sources.
- Try to paraphrase as much as possible, and do not directly quote from source articles.

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1. Although there are exceptions, minimize using first person while writing.
2. Avoid including personal statements or anecdotes.
3. Although there are exceptions, use past tense while writing.
4. Do not use contractions. (e.g., "it does not follow" rather than "it doesn't follow")
5. Avoid biased language – Be updated with appropriate terminologies, especially if you are writing a paper that includes gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.
6. Be certain to cite your sources.
7. Try to paraphrase as much as possible, and do not directly quote from source articles.

This article contains only a few aspects of an APA research paper format. There are many APA style rules which can be explored before you begin to write an APA style

research paper. Many of the **APA research paper format** rules are dynamic and subject to change, so it is best to refer to 7th edition (latest) of the [APA Publication Manual](#) and be thorough with every section's format before writing a research paper.

Have you used an **APA research paper format** to write your article? Do write to us or comment below and tell us how your experience writing an APA style paper was?

Cite this article

Shrutika Sirisilla, How to Write a Research Paper in APA Format — A Complete Guide. Enago Academy. 2022/06/02. <https://www.enago.com/academy/write-research-paper-apa-format/>