

Example Paper Illustrating Some Conventions Employed

by the American Psychological Association Style

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This is a mock paper designed to show several conventions of the American Psychological Association (APA) style. In this paper, I show how to use level headings to organize a paper, cite texts within the paper, and reference texts in a reference list. In addition, I show how to write numbers, emphasize a word or words, and seriate ideas, and well as other conventions.

Concerning the title and introduction, note the words and format of the title are the same on the cover page and the first page of the paper. APA does not use bolding to emphasize the title; use bolding only for level headings, as explained below. The first paragraph serves as the introduction and is immediately below the title. There is no separate section labelled as an *introduction*; the introduction is implied.

As to spacing and typeface, APA requires double spacing in manuscripts. Infrequently, the APA style allows for single spacing, such as in tables. See the APA manual for more on tables; but generally, everything, that is, everything, is double-spaced. In addition, “The preferred typeface for APA publications is Times New Roman 12-point font size” (APA, 2009, p. 228).

### **APA Level of Headings**

APA style provides five levels of level headings. All five levels are infrequently used, but may be necessary. Think of the level headings as the headings used in an outline. This means the first level heading is the same as using a Roman numeral I, the second as using the English letter A, and so on.

**Level 1: Center, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**

The first sentence under the first level heading is on a new line and is indented.

**Level 2: Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**

The sentence under the second level heading is on the first line and is indented.

**Level 3: Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.** The first sentence under the third level heading follows *immediately* after the period.

***Level 4: Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.*** The first sentence after the fourth level heading follows *immediately* after the period.

***Level 5: Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.*** The first sentence after the fifth level heading follows *immediately* after the period.

For more information about level headings, please see page 62 of the APA manual.

**Within Text Citations**

In this section, I provide examples and explanations illustrating how to paraphrase, quote directly from a reference, and cite books and journal articles within the text.

**Paraphrase**

To paraphrase (i.e., use your own words to express another's idea), use only the authors' last names followed by the year of the publication. For example, Palmer and Poppink (2015) indicated that students and faculty should enjoy their time at Western Michigan University (WMU) by living life to the fullest.

**Direct Quote**

To quote directly, a page number must be included. An example is Palmer and Poppink (2015), referring to attending graduate school at WMU, stated, "Students can make the most of

their time at Western Michigan University” (p. 214). Note there is a space after the abbreviation for page (p.) and the number.

Another way to quote this is, “Students can make the most of their time at Western Michigan University” (Palmer & Poppink, 2015, p. 214). An ampersand (&) is used instead of the word “and” when citing a quotation in parentheses.

To cite more than two author, use a comma after the last name before the ampersand. “Students are the lifeblood of the university” (Palmer, Poppink, & Ebejer, 2017, pp. 34-35). If the citation is on more than one page, indicate the pages with a “pp.” Finally, note that for citations with three or more authors, use “et al.” for future citations in that paper (e.g. Palmer et al., 2017).

If a quote is less than 40 words, place it within quotation marks, as illustrated above. If a quote is more than 40 words, indent the entire quote on the left hand side with no quotation marks, as illustrated below.

For example, *pretend* this paragraph is a direct quote from the APA manual. Because it is more than 40 words long, indent the entire quote on the left hand side with no quotation marks. Do not change the right hand side. (APA, 2009, pp. 170-171)

Place a final period of the block quote at the end of the sentence, not after the citation.

### **Cite Books and Journal Articles Within the Text**

This section illustrates not only how to cite books and journal articles within texts, but also how to refer to a book, a book chapter, a periodical, and an article within the text of the document. Treat books, chapters, periodicals, and articles differently in the reference section than they are treated within the text.

Within the document, capitalize the first letter of each word, and italicize books and periodicals; and make documents typically found inside books and periodicals, that is, chapters and articles, such that the first letter of each word is capitalized and the entire title is in quotation marks.

In their book, *The Joy of Graduate Studies at Western Michigan University* [book], Palmer and Poppink (2015) included a chapter specifically for students titled “The Students’ Guide to Earning a Graduate Degree at Western Michigan University” [book chapter], which encouraged students to make the most of their experience at WMU.

Poppink and Palmer (2016) published a version of their book chapter on teaching as an article titled “Joyful Teaching at Western Michigan University” [article] in the periodical *Michigan Collegiate Living* [periodical]. In this article, they continued to elaborate on living life to the fullest, particularly while teaching in WMU’s Graduate College.

For more information on citing in APA, please see page 174 of the APA manual.

### **Numbering, Emphasis and Seriation**

APA directs writers on how to use the conventions of (a) numbers, (b) emphasis, and (c) seriation.

#### **Numbers**

Write out numbers that are below 10, and express the number 10 and above as a numeral. This paper is eight pages long and has approximately 25 paragraphs. However, write out a number than begins a sentence. Ten people will read this paper today, for example. Please refer to page 111 in the APA manual for more specificity.

**Emphasis**

Emphasize words by using *italics*. APA does not use bolding or underlining for emphasis.

**Seriation**

Seriation means putting items in a list and ensuring they are syntactically and conceptually parallel. APA has specific instructions for how to order ideas (a) within a sentence and (b) as freestanding thoughts or paragraphs. You can seriate a sentence by using lowercase letters in parentheses, as I have in the previous sentence. Alternatively, you can seriate a sentence with bullets. That is, there are two ways to seriate a sentence, with

- lower case letters in parentheses, or
- bullets.

To seriate freestanding paragraphs, use either Arabic numbers or bullets. For instance, I have several observations about the use of APA conventions that are complete thoughts. See below for the Arabic numeral approach.

1. Set off research questions with Arabic numbers.
2. Journals in the field of education tend to use APA because the field grew out of the discipline of psychology.
3. APA has its own logic and can take some getting used to.

The three freestanding ideas above could also be set off with bullets.

See page 63 of the APA manual for more explanation.

**Summary**

This paper illustrated some of the APA writing style conventions. I have a hard copy of this paper in a clearly marked folder that I use for all my writing. I also use it to help me

examine students' papers. It has most, but perhaps not all, of the conventions that are required in class papers.

Note that when referring to myself in this mock paper, I use the word "I," and not "the researcher" or "the author." APA does not use the third person when referring to oneself for any reason. Some academic journals encourage the use of the third person; APA does not. If you do not believe me, please see page 69 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* to verify the use of the first person.

Finally, I thank my colleagues Mary Ebejer and Louann Bierlein Palmer for helping me review and edit this paper.

## References [Examples]

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