

Sample APA Paper for Students Interested in Learning APA Style 7th Edition

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Abstract

The abstract should be a single paragraph in block format (without paragraph indentation), and the appropriate length is 250 words. Section 3.3 of the American Psychological Manual has additional information about the abstract. The abstract is important because many journal readers first read the abstract to determine if the entire article is worth reading. The abstract should briefly describe all the parts of your (e.g., Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion). Consider writing one or two sentences summarizing each part of a paper, and you'll have a nice abstract.

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Before getting started you will notice some things about this paper. First, everything is double-spaced and in Times New Roman font (size 12). Second, margins are 1-inch wide on all sides. Third, there are several headings used throughout to separate different parts of the paper; all the headings are in bold. Fourth, there is exactly one space after each punctuation mark. Fifth, the upper left of each page has a running head in capital letters, and the upper right has the page number.

This first part of the paper is called the “Introduction” section or “Literature Review”, yet it does not have a heading that actually says “Introduction”. Instead, the title of the paper is typed at the top of the first page (centered). The importance of the topic should be pretty clear from the first paragraph or two of the Introduction. Section 3.4 of the APA manual (APA, 2020) will help give you some ideas about how to write this.

The bulk of the Introduction section is background literature on the topic, often helpful to provide a theoretical or empirical basis for your research. Remember to cite your sources often in the Introduction and throughout the manuscript. Articles and books are cited the same way in the text, yet they appear different on the References page. For, example, an article by Cronbach and Meel (1955) and a book by Bandura (1986) are written with the author’s name and the year of publication in parentheses. However, if you look on the References page they look a little different. Remember that APA style does not use footnotes or anything else for citations. Two other things about citations are important. When a citation is written inside parentheses (e.g., Cronbach & Meehl, 1959), an ampersand is used between authors’ names instead of the word “and.” Second, when citing an author’s work using quotations, be sure to include a page number. For example, Rogers (1961) once wrote that "the core of man's nature is essentially positive" (p.73) Notice that the page number is included here. Unless a direct quote is taken from a source,

the page number is not included. If there are more than two authors, you can use just the first author's name followed by et al., and the year (et al. means 'and everyone else'). For example, an article written by Markaby, Holmes and Davis (2001) would be cited as Markaby et al. (2001).

All the authors (up to 20) would be listed in the references.

The last section of the Introduction states the purpose of the research. Hypotheses are also included here. State your hypotheses as a prediction (e.g., "I predicted that..."), and try to avoid using passive tense (e.g., "It was predicted that..."). You will notice that hypotheses are written in past tense because you are describing a study you have finished.

Method

The Method section is the second of four main parts of most empirical papers (see Sections 3.6 and 3.14 of the APA (2020) manual). Papers that are reviews of literature would not have a Method section. There are typically three or four major subsection in the Method although there can be more. Much of the decision about your sections will be based on the specifics of the research you conducted. These subsection are separated by headings described in section 2.27 of the APA manual (APA, 2020).

Participants

This brief section describes the people who participated in your study. (They should be called "participants" not "subjects".) Mention the number of participants, the percentage of women and men, the mean age (where "mean" is abbreviated *M*), variability, and their ethnicity or cultural background. Any other demographic information describing your sample would be appropriate here.

Materials

This section describes the tests, surveys, or instruments used to collect data. For example, if you used the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale in your research, you might say that

the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) comprises 33 true-false items that measure social desirability. You would also provide the reader with information regarding the quality of the MCSD scale, such as validity. Do this for each and every measure used in the study. If the purpose of your paper is to develop a new questionnaire, you may wish to describe reliability and validity in the Results section (see below).

Procedure

This section describes in great detail the data-collecting procedures. Describe things that are important like how participants were recruited, whether they participated alone or in groups, what they were asked to do, or how they were compensated for their participation. You should describe the procedure in enough detail that another researcher could conduct the same study (i.e., replicate it) just by reading about the procedure.

Results

This is the section where the results of the data analyses are presented. Section 3.7 in the APA manual (APA, 2020) will help a little bit. It's often helpful to use tables or figures to help describe your results, especially when you have a lot of data to report. If you use these forms of data presentation, don't also include the information in the text. You don't need it twice. Direct the reader's attention to these summaries by including (see Table) in your text. Figures and Tables can go in the text of the Results section, or on their own pages at the end, after the references.

You may find it helpful to remind the reader of the hypothesis before presenting each result. It is also a good idea to tell the reader what type of data analysis was done (e.g., correlation, ANOVA) before it is presented. Effect sizes, Confidence Intervals and Descriptive Statistics all go here. State what alpha level you adopted if you did an inferential test; an alpha level of .05 is the standard. You don't interpret or explain your results here. It is appropriate to

state whether or not your hypotheses were supported, just don't try to explain them—that's why you have the Discussion section.

Discussion

The Discussion is usually the final section of the paper. This is the part where you interpret and explain your results. Try to explain why you found what you did in your study. Is it what you predicted? If not, why? Also, how do your findings fit in with information in your Introduction? Are your results consistent or inconsistent with what has been found in the past? If they are inconsistent, how can you explain this? The explanation and interpretation of results will probably be the biggest part of the Discussion.

There are at least two additional parts of the discussion. First, include limitations of the study. Describe the ways in which the internal or external validity of the study may have been compromised, low quality measures, sample size or validity. Also include a short section on why your results are important. Are there applications of it in real life? Does it support a particular theory? Have new questions come up based on your results? Perhaps give some additional directions for future research.

References

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- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Cronbach, L. J., & Meehl, P. E. (1955). Construct validity in psychological tests. *Psychological Bulletin*, 52(2), 281-302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040957>
- Crowne, C. P., & Marlowe, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 24(4), 349-354. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0047358>
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- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.