ABOUT RESEARCH WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing a research paper develops skills you are going to need in order to succeed in whatever profession you choose. Here are just a few of the skills you develop by writing a research paper:

- Engaging a topic, and researching what others have said or discovered.
- Synthesizing information to form a position of your own that is logically derived from your research and your own thoughts.
- Articulating that position in a logical discussion that can be easily followed and understood.

WHY WE USE STYLEGUIDES.

Style guidelines provide standards that help writers present information in an organized, uniform manner. Rules for margins, font size, and spacing, help ensure that all 5 page essays are the same length. Instructions for the formatting of bibliographic references make certain readers can identify the type of source being cited.

WHY WE DOCUMENT SOURCES

The bibliographic citations you include in your papers serve a number of purposes:

- Provide evidence that your position is well-researched and carefully considered.
- The references you provide your readers allow you to demonstrate that your position or argument is thoroughly researched and that you have referenced, addressed, the critical authorities relevant to the issues. Researching what others have written about your topic allows you to support your own position with the opinions of experts, shows that you are able to address the opinions of those who might disagree with you, and generally illustrates that you have educated yourself by consulting experts in the field.
- Give credit to the author of an original concept or theory presented.

Giving proper attribution to those whose thoughts, words, and ideas you use is an important concept in scholarly writing. For these reasons, it is important to adopt habits of collecting the bibliographic information on source works necessary for correct citations in an organized and thorough manner. Understanding and adhering to the guidelines for attributing concepts and ideas to others, too, is an important part of the research writing process. Direct quotes, paraphrased passages, and summaries of general research findings should ALL be cited.

Help readers identify and locate the source work.

Readers often want to locate a work you have cited, either to verify the information, or to learn more about issues and topics addressed by the work. It is important that readers should be able to find the works you have used to inform your research easily and efficiently from the information included in your citation.

WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS NEED TO BE REFERENCED

The following types of research materials must be documented:

- An original idea, opinion, theory, or research finding expressed, either verbally or in writing, by another person
- Facts, statistics, graphs, drawings, and other pieces of information that are not generally recognized as common knowledge
- Direct quotations of another person’s spoken or written words
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APA Format Basics.

APA Style requires that manuscripts include the following sections, in the following order:

- A cover or title page
- An abstract page (optional; usually, this is required only for papers over 15 pages, or articles submitted to journals)
- Body of the paper, with section headings and quotations properly formatted

Any additional materials (Appendices, Tables, Author note, Figures)
- Reference List

TITLE OR COVER PAGE

Page header and page number

1/2 inch from the top of the page, aligned to the right margin, type the page header: this should include the first two or three words of the paper title, and the page number. The cover page is page 1.

Running head

The running head is an abbreviation of the title; it should be typed on the line below the page header, flush left, in UPPERCASE, following the words “Running head.” It should not exceed 50 characters, including punctuation and spacing.

Paper title

About a third of the way down the page, type the title of the paper, centered on the page. Capitalize all the significant words in the title.

Author name and affiliation

Beneath the title, your name (author), and your school should be typed, centered, on separate lines.

ABSTRACT PAGE

An abstract should be a brief summary of the paper’s primary premise and findings, no more than 120 words.

For the abstract page, center the word “Abstract” at the top of the page, and then include the abstract for the paper, double spaced, and flush against the left margin.

BODY OF THE PAPER

Margins. The margins for your paper should be uniform on all sides, set to at least 1” or 2.54 cm on all sides: top, bottom, left and right. Line length for each typed line should be no more than 6.5” (16.51 cm), and the maximum number of lines of text per page is 27.

Spacing. Double space all portions of the paper. This means you should leave a full line between each line of text in the paper.

Page headers. 1/2 inch from the top of each page, include a header, with the first two or three words of the title, and the page number.

Page numbering. Page numbering begins with the cover or title page.

Typeface. Use an easily readable serif font (such as Palatino, Courier, or Times New Roman) in 12 point size.

Text alignment. Set the text alignment to “Left,” so that the right edge of the text on the page is uneven.

Paragraph indentation. Set the paragraph indentation to 5 spaces, or about 1/2 inch.

Punctuation. Space once after periods, question marks, commas, colons, and semicolons. Do not space once after internal periods in abbreviations.

SECTION HEADINGS

Section headers help readers follow the organization of a discussion, and are an essential aspect of APA Format. To determine the format for the headings in your papers, you will need to consult your outline.

One or two levels of section headings.

For short articles and most student papers, only one or two levels of section headings are needed:

- Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Top Level Heading

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Second Level Section Heading

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Part of an APA Style Paper

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QUOTATIONS

For short quotations (less than 40 words):

A quotation of less than 40 words should be enclosed in double quotation marks and should be incorporated into the sentence.

For long quotations (more than 40 words):

Longer quotations should be set apart from the surrounding text, without quotation marks, in block format, indented five spaces from the left margin, and double spaced. If the quotation is more than one paragraph, indent the first line of the second paragraph about 1/2 inch (5 spaces).