

APA Style Tips Checklist

Created by Prof. Mike Strahan, Northern Michigan University

6/28/2013, rev. 8/28/2013, 11/14/13

(based upon the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed., 2nd printing, ©2010)

- **Many APA mistakes are due to poor planning/time management combined with carelessness and lack of knowledge.**
- **The APA *Manual* was designed to be consulted, not read cover-to-cover like a novel.**
- **The [NMU Olson Library APA Reference Style Guide](#) has many reference examples, but is not a replacement for the entire *Manual*.**
- **Most frequently-used chapters of the *Manual* are:**
 - Chapter 4: Mechanics of Style (capitalization, numbers, quotation marks, symbols, etc.)
 - Chapter 5: Displaying Results (format/layout of tables, & figures—charts, pictures, etc.)
 - Chapter 6: Crediting Sources (citing in-text, quotations, formatting names in references)
 - Chapter 7: Reference Examples (online & print sources)
- **Setting up your paper**
 - Margins: Unless specified by the course instructor/assignment/project guidelines, set margins on all sides as one inch (1”).
 - Styles: When beginning to write your paper, do not use the default Normal style—which employs 1.15 spacing. Even if you set it to double-spacing, it still adds an extra partial line between paragraphs.
 - **Instead, select the No Spacing style, and set Line Spacing to double (2.0).**
 - **Unless specified by instructor or guidelines, do not add extra space before or after paragraphs.**
- **Title page, running head, page #**
 - **APA does not provide a sample title page for coursework.** Consult instructor or guidelines instead.
 - Unless specified by the course instructor or guidelines, title page includes running head & begins with page 1.
 - Running head & page number are in the Header section, not the first line of the body:
 - running head is located upper-left of each page
 - page number is upper-right of each page
 - On the Title page only, the running head begins with: Running head:
 - followed by a descriptive short title (50 or fewer letters) of the work IN CAPS.
 - Subsequent pages have the running head (short title),
 - but without:** Running head:
 - [See video demonstrating how to insert page # & create a running head](#)
- **Number-related formatting (Chapter 4) [see Chap. 5 for tables]**
 - When beginning a sentence with a number, always spell out the number as a word.
 - For example: One nurse supervises
 - not:** 1 nurse supervises
 - Unless a specific exception, numbers below 10 are written out (example: five).
 - Unless a specific exception, numbers 10 and above are Arabic numerals (example: 76).

- When discussing percent, always use numeral followed by % sign
For example: 12%
not: 12 percent
- However, when discussing percentile, spell out word percentile.
- **Quotations (Chapter 6)**
 - Direct quotations fewer than 40 words must include quotation marks “ ” surrounding phrase/sentence.
 - Direct quotations 40 or more words have the entire quote as a block quote (all lines of quote indented at paragraph indent).
 - When determining length of direct quotation, count all words (including prepositions & conjunctions), not just main words.
To determine, **highlight words** & program will indicate how many words.
 - When citing direct quotations in-text, always include page number(s) within parentheses, & insert a space between p. and page number.
Examples:
 - Some authors believe that “pigs do fly” (Walch & Clumpner, 2013, p. 4).
 - Walch and Clumpner (2013) believe that “pigs do fly” (p. 4).
- **Common mistakes: citing in-text**
 - Use of and within parentheses:
Incorrect: (Smith and Jones, 2012)
Correct: (Smith & Jones, 2012)
 - Make sure all entries on the References list are cited in-text and vice versa.
 - Double-check author name(s) against original works for correct form and spelling.
 - Verify publication year against original works for both in-text citations & reference entries.
 - APA rules of when to use et al. is different from other styles and some textbooks.
Please consult the *Manual* p. 177 for a great table showing basic citation styles examples of citing in-text, & when you may use et al. in your manuscripts.
[Also available online](#)
 - Students should not use secondary sources (Manual p. 178), as it relies too much on another author’s interpretation. Instead, students should make every effort to acquire the original source, and make their own conclusions.
- **Common mistakes: References**
 - Title of page is References
not Works Cited
not Bibliography
 - The word References is centered on the first line, only R is capitalized, no underlining.
It is not in bold print.
 - After typing, hit enter and begin typing your references.
 - **There are no extra lines** between title and first reference entry.
 - All entries are double-spaced both within and between entries (not triple or quadruple).
 - All use hanging indent format.
 - Arrange entries alphabetically by first author’s last name, organization name, or title of work if no author is provided.
 - For an individual reference, do not change the order of authors as they appear on the work. Arrangement is usually by the amount of work contributed by each author.

- _ et al. no longer appears in reference entries.
- _ List all of the authors for works with 1 through 7 authors.
- _ For works with 2 through 7 authors, insert an ampersand: & before the last author
Example: Smith, D. A., Jones, R. L., & Finn, J. B.
- _ For works with 8 or more authors, list the first 6 authors followed by 3 ellipses followed by the last author. Example:
Caselli, D., Carraro, F., Castagnola, E., Ziino, O., Frenos, S., Milano, G. M., . . . Aric, M.
- _ Always include author middle initial(s) if provided.
- _ Make sure there is a space between author initials, & a comma following both last name & set of author initials.
However, there is no space when abbreviating United States as U.S.
- _ Always capitalize proper names, acronyms, and first letter of first word of titles and subtitles of works and article titles.
- _ For periodical (journal, magazine, newspaper) titles, capitalize all significant words, and italicize entire title.
Example: *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*
- _ Italicize journal volume number but not issue number.
- _ Insert issue number in parentheses but not italicized.
Example: *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 4(8)
- _ If journal article (online or print source) is assigned a DOI, it must be provided in the reference.
See Articles section on the [library's APA guide](#) and click on link labeled "How to find assigned DOI"
- _ If a DOI was not assigned to an article AND you retrieved the article online, you must provide the official journal home page web address (URL).
This is different from the journal publisher's home page web address, and is usually not the same as the URL which appears when retrieving an online article through NMU Library.
In APA style, URLs are not underlined. To remove underline, highlight URL and hold Ctrl key and twice type the letter U
[for Apple® devices, hold command key and twice type the letter U]
Unable to find journal home page web address? See Articles, not assigned a DOI section on the [library's APA guide](#) for tools to help find journal URLs.
- _ Book/report titles: italicize & capitalize appropriately.
Example: *Handbook of accreditation*.
- _ Web pages: Do not italicize titles, but capitalize appropriately.
Example: APA reference style guide

NMU Olson Library faculty and staff look forward to teaching students & faculty how to use APA style. However, library personnel are not responsible for "enforcing" the style. Instead, it is the course instructor, thesis/dissertation committee, or journal editor in conjunction with the student.