APA 6th Edition: An Overview of the Basics

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2009

Please note that this guidebook is not designed to be exhaustive, but a practical guide to basic rules associated with the APA 6th Edition writing style. Users are encouraged to consult the full APA 6th Edition manual for additional questions. Please share any comments, inaccuracies, or suggestions with me via email (jdugan1@luc.edu). Feel free to share widely, but credit appropriately.

FORMATTING BASICS

(pp. 228-229)

- ☐ **Margins:** Page set-up should reflect 1" margins on all sides.

- ☐ **Font:** Use a serif font, preferably Times New Roman, with size set at 12-point. Use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial or Helvetica) at 12-point for all wording in figures.

- ☐ **Indentation & Alignment:** The first line of each paragraph should be indented five spaces (use tab key). Exceptions to this include: abstracts and block quotes. Left align all text except for particular heading titles. Do not right and left justify or hyphenate words.

- ☐ **Spacing:** The entire paper should be double-spaced including the reference list, figures, tables, quotations, titles, and headings. Do *not* add an extra line after a paragraph or before new headings.

- ☐ **Punctuation Spacing:** Place two spaces after sentence terminators (e.g., periods, question marks, exclamation marks). Place one space after commas, colons, and semicolons; periods as part of a reference citation; periods of initials in personal names. EXCEPTION: No spaces are used in abbreviations such as i.e., e.g., a.m., and colons used in ratios.

- ☐ **Title Page:** Your title page should include three components: title of the paper, author and institutional affiliation, and running head. See page 41 in the manual and page 4 of this guidebook for examples.
    - **Running head:** A running head should be included in all papers and appears in the header of the document. It is traditionally a shortened version of your paper title. Typically, people will use the first part of a title when it includes a colon. The running head should be no more than 50 characters. Note that this is characters and not words. All punctuation, letters, and spaces count as characters. The name of your running head appears in all uppercase letters, is left justified, and preceded by the term "Running head." Note that the word "head" is *not* capitalized and that only the abbreviated title should appear in the header after the first page (i.e., the words "Running head" no longer appear after the first page). See the sample title page for a clear example.

- ☐ **Page Numbers:** Begin numbering your paper with the title page serving as page one. All page numbers should appear in the upper right hand corner within the document header. Use the view > headers and footers function in word processing programs to set this.

- ☐ **Headings** (pp. 62-63)**:** There are a total of five heading categories, although most papers will use only three to four levels. Heading levels provide a hierarchical organization to your paper. Topics of equal importance should have the same level. Additionally, sub-sections must have at least two headings for each section. The title of your paper always appears centered in upper and lower case at the top of the first page, but does *not* count as a level in your paper. Always begin with the first level and work towards the higher levels. Additionally, you should never use a heading titled *Introduction* as it is assumed that the first part of your paper is just that. See the next page for further details.

Centered, Bold, Upper and Lower Case Heading — Level 1

Left Justified, Bold, Upper and Lower Case Heading — Level 2

Indented, bold, lower case, paragraph heading ending with a period. — Level 3

Indented, bold, italics, lower case paragraph heading ending with a period. — Level 4

Indented, italics, lower case paragraph heading ending with a period. — Level 5

EXAMPLES

SHORT PAPER (ONE LEVEL)

Student Athletes: An Overview of Population Specific Needs (Title)

Historical Issues (Level 1)

Developmental Concerns (Level 1)

Future Trends (Level 1)

MEDIUM LENGTH PAPER (TWO LEVELS)

Student Athletes: An Overview of Population Specific Needs (Title)

Historical Issues (Level 1)

Developmental Concerns (Level 1)

Cognitive Development (Level 2)

Identity Development (Level 2)

LONG PAPER (THREE LEVELS)

Student Athletes: An Overview of Population Specific Needs (Title)

Historical Issues (Level 1)

Developmental Concerns (Level 1)

Cognitive Development (Level 2)

Identity Development (Level 2)

Racial identity. (Level 3)

Gender identity. (Level 3)

Future Trends (Level 1)

THESIS OR DISSERTATION LENGTH (FOUR LEVELS OR MORE)

Student Athletes: An Overview of Population Specific Needs (Title)

Historical Issues (Level 1)

Developmental Concerns (Level 1)

Cognitive Development (Level 2)

Identity Development (Level 2)

Racial identity. (Level 3)

Asian American college students. (Level 4)

Latino college students. (Level 4)

Gender identity. (Level 3)

Future Trends (Level 1)

Rethinking Mentoring: Developmental Relationships as Opportunities for Leadership Learning

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR MECHANICS, STRUCTURE, & STYLE

The following is a collection of additional APA 6th Edition rules that should be taken into account as you write. APA 6th Edition has an extensive front section that provides excellent insights into common grammatical and stylistic issues (e.g., economy of expression, passive voice) in the writing process (pp. 65-86).

☐ **Biased Language** (pp. 71)**:** APA 6th Edition calls for the reduction of biased language in writing. This section of the book also provides substantial information on language issues. In general, avoid use of "loaded" terms (e.g., at risk) as they are not specific and open to misinterpretation.

- **Gender:** Never use *he* as a generic pronoun. Writing should be done in such a way that gender-specific pronouns are not needed. Avoid use of *he or she* or *he/ she* as it becomes distracting to the reader. Additionally, authors are advised that gender is cultural and sex is biological. Accurate use of these terms in writing is encouraged.
- **Racial/ Ethnic Groups:** Capitalize names of racial/ ethnic groups, including *Black* and *White*. Do not use hyphens in designations such as *Asian American* or *African American*. Avoid language that reifies race or situates one group as normative (e.g., "minority" when meaning "non-White").
- **Sexual Orientation:** Do *not* use the term homosexual. Instead, use the terms *lesbian*, *gay* or *gay man*, *bisexual*. ** NOTE: APA 6th Edition does not call for these terms to be capitalized. However, many authors do so in publication as a means to advocate for the legitimacy of the population.
- **Disabilities:** Use the term *handicap* only to refer to the source of limitation. When referring to people, use the terms: *person with _____; person living with _____; person who has _____*.
- **Age:** As a general reference, *boy* and *girl* are used for people of high school age and younger, while man and woman are used for people 18 and older. The term *older person* is preferable to *elderly*.

☐ **AND versus &:** Only use the ampersand (&) in the reference list and in parentheses. Otherwise you should always use the word 'and' spelled out.

☐ **Commas in Series** (p. 88)**:** Although it is grammatically correct to either use or omit a common before the words *and/ or* in a series of three or more, APA requires use of the comma to increase readability.

☐ **Parentheses** (p. 94)**:** Do *not* use back to back parentheses. Include everything in a single set of parentheses separated by a semicolon.

- *Incorrect*: … various leadership theories (e.g., chaos, relational) (Northouse, 2006).
- *Correct*: … various leadership theories (e.g., chaos, relational; Northouse, 2006).

☐ **Numbers** (pp. 111-114)**:** You should spell out the word for numbers between one and nine. Numbers 10 and up can be typed in their numerical form. If a number begins a sentence, title, or heading it should be capitalized. However, it is better to reword the sentence and

avoid using a number as the first word. Always use numerals for: representation of percentages (e.g., 7%), grouped comparison (e.g., 3 of 9 students completed the survey), statistical functions (e.g., multiplied by 7, 5 times as many), or denoting a specific place (e.g., chapter 5, row 9, page 196).

- **Decimal Fractions** (p. 113)**:** Use a zero before the decimal point with numbers that are less than 1 when the statistic can exceed 1 (e.g., Cohen's *d*, centimeters, inches).
- **Plural of Numbers** (p. 114)**:** When writing the plural of numbers you should not add apostrophes. The correct format would be: 1950s, sixes.

☐ **Latin Abbreviations** (p. 108)**:**

- **e.g.,:** this translates to "for example." It is always written in the lower case with a period after each letter and followed by a comma, and it is used only in parentheses:

  > The comparison sample will be used to examine specific student populations (e.g., athletes, resident assistants, orientation leaders) on campus.

- **i.e.,:** this translates to "that is." It is always written in the lower case with a period after each letter and followed by a comma, and it is used only in parentheses:

  > Researchers found that involvement in a positional leadership role (i.e., election to a particular office) was the strongest co-curricular predictor.

- **et al.,:** this translates to "and others." It is always written in the lower case and there is no period after "et."

☐ **Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols** (pp. 117-123)**:** Most statistical symbols are written in italics. See the above pages for further details.

☐ **Models, Theories, & Instruments** (p. 102)**:** The names of models and theories should not be capitalized in papers. However, the names of instrument, tests, or scales, which are often named after model or theories, are capitalized. The words "test" or "scale" are not capitalized when referring to subscales of tests of an overall instrument. See examples below:

- social change model of leadership
- Astin's theory of involvement
- social learning theory
- Socially Responsible Leadership Scale
- MMPI Depression scale
- Leadership Practices Inventory

When describing "anchors" in scales (i.e., the naming conventions describing opposite ends of a coding spectrum) do *not* use quotation marks. Instead, put the names of the anchors in italics (p. 105).

- Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

- ☐ **Passive Voice** (p. 77)**:** Avoid using the passive voice in your writing. For more information on how to reduce use of passive voice and for a more detailed explanation of what it is see: http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/passive.htm

- ☐ **Word Choices:** Be careful in your word choices and avoid some of the common errors below:
    - **Affect versus Effect:** *Affect* as a noun is emotion and feeling; as a verb it means to influence (e.g., color affects your impression of a painting). *Effect* as a noun is an outcome or consequence; as a verb it means to cause to happen (i.e., effect the results of the study).
    - **While versus Although:** *While* should only be used when you are referring to events that are happening at the same time (e.g., John cleaned the dishes while Erin put the food away). *Although* is often the word you should be using.
    - **Impacted:** The noun impact is appropriate, but use of the verb impacted is often incorrect. Only a tooth can be impacted. Switch to influenced or another word.
    - **Data:** The word *data* is typically plural. As such, you need to make sure you have subject verb agreement. "Data are representative of…"
    - **That versus Who:** *That* should never be used to describe a person. For example, it is "The researcher who guided," NOT, "The researcher that guided."

- ☐ **Paragraph Length:** As a general rule, paragraphs should be a minimum of three sentences long. No paragraph should be only one sentence. On the flip side of this, be aware of run-on paragraphs. Paragraphs should generally not fill entire pages. Divide up the information into organized sub-sections.

- ☐ **Anthropomorphism:** Anthropomorphism is the assignment of human forms, qualities, or actions to non-human things. In social science writing it is easy to do this (e.g., the research indicates, the data suggest). You want to reduce this as much as possible in your writing.

- ☐ **Prepositions:** Sentences cannot end with prepositions as it is grammatically incorrect. For a list of prepositions, see: http://www.uazone.org/friends/esl4rus/prepositions.html

- ☐ **Contractions:** Avoid using contractions (e.g., can't, won't, doesn't) in formal writing.

- ☐ **Etcetera:** Avoid using the term. It is the written equivalent of blah, blah, blah.

- ☐ **Redundancy:** Redundancy in writing is a common problem. Attempt to remove overuse of the same words or redundant language such as the following:
    - They were **both** alike
    - **A total of** 68 participants
    - Instructions, which were **exactly** the same as those used
    - **Absolutely** essential
    - Has been **previously** found
    - Small **in size**
    - **Period of** time

CITATIONS & REFERENCES IN TEXT

(p. 169)

The establishment of protocols for citing intellectual property and giving appropriate credit for original ideas is a core function of APA 6th Edition. Citations are provided not only for direct quotations, but also for any thoughts or ideas of others that you paraphrase. Whenever possible you should use primary sources in your papers. However, this requires that you go back to the original text and actually read it. Do *not* cite documents that you have not personally read.

SECONDARY SOURCES

IN TEXT: Name the original work, but give the citation for the secondary source:

> McClelland's study (as cited in Cotheart & Haller, 1996) examined…

IN REFERENCE LIST: Cite the secondary source:

> Coltheart, M., & Haller, M. (1996). Reading comprehension: Dual-route and distributed-processing techniques. *Psychological Quarterly, 9*, 589-608.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Citation of primary sources in text generally follows the author-date method. If the author's surname is mentioned in the text, then you simply add the year of publication in parenthesis. For direct quotes a page number must be added. For example:

(Walker, 2000)
Walker (2000) found that…
(Walker, 2000, p. 82)

If the name of an author appears as part of the narrative (i.e., in text) then the year follows in parentheses and it is *not* necessary to include the year again when the author's name is repeated in the narrative of the same paragraph and cannot be confused with any other citations in the same paragraph. Any parenthetical references (i.e., the citation appears in parentheses) in the same paragraph *should* include the year.

> In a recent study of reaction times, Walker (2000) found no interaction amongst variables in the cross-sectional data. Walker's research supports the work of others studying similar variables (James & King, 2004; Salinger, 1999). However, interactions among variables were identified in the longitudinal data (Walker, 2000).

However, if the full citation appears in parentheses *first*, subsequent citations should always present the year along with the author's last name.

> In a recent study of reaction times, no interaction amongst variables in the cross-sectional data (Walker, 2000). Walker's (2000) research supports the work of others studying similar variables (James & King, 2004; Salinger, 1999). However, interactions among variables were identified in the longitudinal data (Walker, 2000).

One Work, One Author

This post-industrial perspective on leadership is process-oriented and collaborative (Rost, 1993).

Rost (1993) introduced a post-industrial perspective on leadership that is process-oriented and collaborative.

One Work, Two Authors (always use both last names)

However, research has also challenged traditionally held assumptions regarding the transferability of leadership models across genders (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000).

Kezar and Moriarty (2000) point out that research challenges traditionally held assumptions regarding the transferability of leadership models across gender differences.

One Work, Three – Five Authors

Cite all authors the first time it appears in a manuscript. After the first time use only the first author's surname and et al.

Additional studies examined involvement in a formalized leadership program (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001). Results from these studies were inconclusive (Cress et al., 2001).

Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) examined involvement in a formalized leadership program. Cress et al. found that results were inconclusive.

One Work, Six or More Authors

In the text cite only the surname of the first author followed by et al. If two references with six or more authors shortens to the same format, including year of publication, then shorten only to the point at which the citations can be differentiated and then insert et al.

A number of limitations of identity models are identified (Myers et al., 1991).

Myers et al. (1991) identify a number of limitations of identity models.

* Note that in this situation you will still write out the fist six authors' names in the reference list at the end of your paper. For eight or more authors the reference listing changes as described in the reference section of this guide.

One Author, Two or More Works

Use the year of publication to distinguish between one author's multiple works. List dates chronologically beginning with the earliest. If the author has more than one work in the same year, assign lowercase letters to each publication by alphabetizing the titles (exclude *A* or *The* when considering alphabetical order).

Researchers suggest that mentoring relationships follow a predictable life-cycle and are limited in duration (Kram, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1996, 2004).

Kram (1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1996, 2004) suggests that mentoring relationships follow a predictable life-cycle and are limited in duration.

Groups as Authors

Sometimes work is published under the name of a group or association (e.g., National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, National Science Foundation, University of Pittsburgh). The name of the organization should be spelled out in the first citation and abbreviated thereafter if an abbreviation makes sense. You must provide the abbreviation in the first citation and spell out the name in your reference list. Write out the name when it appears in your reference list.

The social change model advocates for leadership development grounded in social responsibility (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996). Increasing the individual's level of self-knowledge is a central principal (HERI, 1996).

Works with No Authors

If the author is listed as Anonymous, simply use this as the surname and follow the above protocol. If no author is provided, you should cite the first few words of the reference list entry, which is typically the title.

Limitations of this study include the lack of a large sample ("Study Finds," 1982).

The author of "Study Finds" (1982) suggests that the lack of a large sample is a limitation.

Multiple Citations Supporting the Same Information

At times you will need to list multiple authors as supporting a statement. Simply list all the authors and publication dates separated by semicolons.

The development of students as leaders remains a central goal for institutions of higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000; Boatman, 1999; McIntire, 1989).

Personal Communications

It is recommended to use personal communications as infrequently as possible as they provide no direct means for the reader to access the cited information on their own. Personal communications include telephone conversations, emails, letters, personal interviews, and memos. Since personal communications cannot be recovered, you do not include them in the actual reference list.

The development of a leadership identity is an integral part of a college student's overall growth (S. R. Komives, personal communication, September 5, 2005).

S. R. Komives (personal communication, September 5, 2005) suggests that leadership identity development is an integral part of a college student's overall growth.

DIRECT QUOTATIONS
(p. 170)

Less than 40 Words

Consider the citation as part of the sentence and put the terminal punctuation mark after the closing parenthesis.

> It is suggested that "the redefinition phase is, finally, evidence of changes that occurred in both individuals" (Kram, 1998, p. 62).
>
> Kram (1988) suggests that "the redefinition phase is, finally, evidence of changes that occurred in both individuals" (p. 62).

More than 40 Words

Quotations of more than 40 words should be presented in block format with a five space indentation on the left hand side only (use the tab key). Start the quote on a new line and place the page reference after the terminal punctuation mark. In the event that you quote multiple paragraphs, add an additional five spaces indentation to the first line of each paragraph. Note that block quotes should retain the double-spaced formatting required by APA style.

Newcomb (1962) suggested that:

> In so far as we are interested in what college experience does to students' attitudes we
>
> must, because of the nature of attitude formation and change, be interested in the groups
>
> to which students (wittingly or not) yield power over their own attitudes. (p. 479)

Additional Considerations

- ☐ **Quotes within Quotes:** If a direct quote appears within the text that you are quoting enclose the secondary quote with single quotation marks (‘ ’) when in the text and with double quotation marks (“ ”) when in block format.

- ☐ **Ellipsis Points:** An ellipsis (. . .) is used to indicate that a segment of the direct quote has been omitted. Use three periods with a space before and after each period to indicate that something was left out of a sentence. Use four periods (one to end the sentence and three additional) to indicate that there is an omission between sentences.

- ☐ **Brackets:** Brackets ([ ]) can be used to insert text by someone other than the original author of a quote. These can be useful in clarifying material that may otherwise be lost when a quote is removed from the original text.

REFERENCE LIST
(p. 180)

A reference list should be provided at the end of all papers to assist readers in identifying and retrieving sources. Only include references for material cited in your paper. Note that this is what differentiates a reference list from a bibliography.

Items in your reference list should be listed alphabetically by the first author's surname. The list is double spaced and formatted using a hanging indent (i.e., the second line of each item is indented five spaces). There are five core elements to each listing:

Element One = author
Element Two = year
Element Three = title of article/ chapter
Element Four = name of journal/ book
Element Five = publisher location and name

Samples of common reference formats are provided on the next page. A more expansive list can be found in the APA 6th Edition book (p. 193).

Additional Considerations:

- ☐ **Publishers' Locations:** You are required to list the publisher's city and state for all books. If the publisher is a university you do not have to restate the name of the state if it appears in the name of the school.

- ☐ **Several Works by the Same Author:** Arrange the references chronologically starting with the earliest date.

- ☐ **Sources by both Author Individually and with Others:** In this case list the individual reference first, followed by the group publications.

- ☐ **Sources with Six or More Authors:** For references with six or seven authors, list all of them in the reference citation. For references with eight or more authors, list the first six authors, then insert three ellipses, and add the last author's name.

  Engberg, M., Dugan, J. P., Haworth, J., Williams, T., Kelly, B., Johnson, W., … Stewart, S. (2009). *Navigating the complexity of higher education preparation program administration*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- ☐ **Capitalization:** Note that only the first word of a book or article title is capitalized. If the title has a colon, then the first word after the colon is capitalized as well. Each word in the title of a journal is capitalized.

- ☐ **Italics versus Underline:** Italics are used for the names of book and journal titles in lieu of underlining.

EXAMPLES OF COMMON REFERENCE ITEMS

Books:

Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2004). *Multicultural competence in student affairs.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Edited Book:

Gilligan, C., Lyons, N. P., & Hammer, T. J. (Eds.). (1989). *Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

* NOTE THAT THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL RETAINS ITS CAPITALIZATION SINCE IT IS A PROPER NOUN *

Chapter in an Edited Book:

McEwen, M. K. (2003). The nature and uses of theory. In S. R. Komives, D. B. Woodard, Jr. (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (4th ed.; pp. 153-178). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

* NOTE THE COMMA, RATHER THAN A PERIOD, AFTER (EDS.) *

Second or Later Edition of a Book:

Komives, S. R., & Woodard, D. B. (Eds.). (2003). *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Book Review:

Komives, S. R. (1995). Elements of truth [Review of the book *Reform in student affairs: A critique of student development*]. *NASPA Journal, 32*, 316-319.

Journal Article:

Boatwright, K. J., & Egidio, R. K. (2003). Psychological predictors of college women's leadership aspirations. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*, 653-669.

Komives, S. K., Owen Casper, J., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F., & Osteen, L. (2004). Leadership identity development. *Concepts & Connections, 12*(3), 1-6.

* NOTE THAT BECAUSE THIS PUBLICATION BEGINS EACH ISSUE OF A VOLUME WITH PAGE ONE, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO PUT THE ISSUE NUMBER IN PARENTHESES NEXT TO THE VOLUME NUMBER. DO NOT PUT A SPACE BETWEEN THEM AND DO NOT PUT THE ISSUE NUMBER IN ITALICS. *

Newspaper Article:

Coughlin, E. K. (1993, March 24). Sociologists examine the complexities of racial and ethnic identity in America. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A7-A8.

Magazine Article:

Henry, W. A. (1990, April 9). Beyond the melting pot. *Time, 135*, 28-31.

Abstracted Doctoral Dissertation:

Tyree, T. M. (1998). Designing an instrument to measure the socially responsible leadership using the social change model of leadership development (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (AAT 9836493)

ELECTRONIC REFERENCE ITEMS

A key addition to APA 6th Edition is an expanded section on citing electronic sources. Central to this in a reference list is the inclusion of digital object identifiers (DOIs). These are codes assigned to many, but not all, electronically published sources that allow for the more accurate retrieval of electronic documents. They are sometimes found on the actual electronic document (e.g., PDF), but may also be listed in the retrieval system (e.g., web database listing). Any sources that are retrieved electronically and provide a DOI should list it following the model below:

> Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the roots of positive forms of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly, 16,* 315-338. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

If no doi is assigned to the online document, include the homepage URL for the periodical:

> Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the roots of positive forms of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly, 16,* 315-338. Retrieved from http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/620221/description

* NOTE THAT YOU DO NOT END THIS TYPE OF REFERENCE WITH A PERIOD. NOR SHOULD YOU LEAVE THE HYPERLINK IN THE URL. *

Three key guidelines should inform your formatting of electronic reference items:

1) You should direct the reader as closely as possible to the item you are referencing;
2) When page numbers are not available use paragraph numbers to guide the reader to the appropriate section; and
3) Provide URL addresses that work.

See the APA 6th Edition for a comprehensive listing of types and formatting for electronic sources (p. 187).