WRITING AN APA STYLE
RESEARCH REPORT

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PART I: APA STYLE CHECKLIST

General Format

_____ 1. Is everything double-spaced?

_____ 2. Is the running head at the top left-hand corner of every page and the page number at the top right-hand corner of every page?

_____ 3. Is every paragraph indented five spaces, except for the Abstract?

_____ 4. Have you avoided sexist language?

_____ 5. Have you avoided passive sentences as much as possible?

_____ 6. Did you staple the paper and **not** place it in a folder?

Title Page

_____ 1. Is there a separate title page?

_____ 2. At the top left-hand side of the page, do you have the words, "Running head:" followed by a shortened form of your paper's title in capital letters?

_____ 3. Is the title simple and to the point? Does it include the names of the relevant variables under investigation?

_____ 4. Is the title centered?

_____ 5. Is your name centered two lines below the title?

_____ 6. Is your institutional affiliation centered two lined below your name?

_____ 7. Is the Author Note presented at the bottom of the page?
Abstract

1. Does the Abstract begin on a separate page?

2. Is the heading "Abstract" centered at the top?

3. Does the text begin two lines below the word Abstract?

4. Are there between 150 to 250 words. Note: When submitting a paper for publication in a journal, follow that journal's guidelines for the abstract length.

5. Is it a single paragraph?

6. Is the paragraph not indented?

Introduction

1. Does the Introduction begin on a separate page?

2. Is the title of the paper centered at the top?

3. If you cited several references within one set of parentheses, are the references listed in alphabetical order?

4. If you referred to the authors of a paper in the sentence, did you only put the year in parentheses. For example, "Lewis and Clark (1990) argued that..." If the authors' names are not part of the sentence, put both their name and the year in parenthesis. For example, "Some have argued that... (Lewis & Clark, 1990). Also notice that an ampersand (i.e., &) was used; the word "and" was not used.

Method

1. Is the heading "Method" centered and in bold and two lines below the last line of the Introduction?

2. Is it written in past tense?

3. Are the subsections (e.g., Participants, Materials, Procedure) in bold, at the left margin, and two lines below the prior section?
4. If a sentence begins with a number (e.g., "Twenty undergraduates serves as subjects...") did you write out the number?

**Results**

1. Is the heading "Results" in bold and centered and two lines below the last line of the Method section?

2. Is it written in past tense?

3. When the results of a statistical test were reported, did you present the statistic, the degrees of freedom, the value of the statistic, and the significance level? Is the statistic (i.e., $F$, $t$, $r$, etc.) and the "$p$" in italics? The format for three tests, except for spacing, are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATISTIC</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Numerical value</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>(2,46)</td>
<td>3.85,</td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>1.43,</td>
<td>$p &gt; .25$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$r$</td>
<td></td>
<td>.71,</td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. If tables and/or figures were used, did you refer to them in the text of your paper?

5. Are all tables and figures presented at the end of the paper?

**Discussion**

1. Is the heading "Discussion" in bold, centered, and two lines below the last line of the Results section?
References

_____ 1. Does the References section begin on a separate page?

_____ 2. Is the word "References" in bold and centered at the top?

_____ 3. Is everything double-spaced?

_____ 4. Are the references presented in alphabetical order?

_____ 5. Is the first line of every reference indented?

_____ 6. Do the references follow the format indicated in the APA Publication Manual (including the doi number)?

_____ 7. Are only the references that are cited in your paper cited in the Reference section?
PART II

PREPARING AN APA STYLE REPORT
Title of Your Manuscript, Typed in Capitals
and Lower Case Letters, Centered on the Page

Your Name

Organizational Affiliation

Author Note

The first paragraph of the Author Note presents your organizational affiliation. John Doe, Department of Psychology, Western Washington University.

The second paragraph lists any changes in affiliation since conducting the study.

The third paragraph acknowledges grants or financial support for the study, colleagues who helped you conduct the study or give feedback on the manuscript, and any personal help received in conducting the study or writing the manuscript.

The fourth paragraph presents your mailing address and e-mail address (and does not end in a period). Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to John Doe, Department of Psychology, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225-9172. E-mail: jdoe@wwu.edu
Abstract

The abstract is written on a separate page immediately following the title page. The page must have the running head in the upper right corner of the page and the word "Abstract" centered on the page. The abstract is written in block form—that is, a single paragraph with no indentation. The abstract is a short, comprehensive summary of the research report. The abstract should be captivating because it is frequently the first section of the report that is read, and the reader's decision to read the entire article may be based on the abstract. The reader should be able to quickly understand the study by reading the abstract. One or two sentences should refer to each of the major sections of the report (i.e., Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion). First, present the problem that was investigated. Next, describe the essential features of the Method section. Finally, present the most important results, conclusions, and future research directions. The abstract should contain approximately 150-250 words.
The Introduction starts on the page after the Abstract. Note that the running head and the full title are presented on the top of the first page of the Introduction, but the word "Introduction" is not typed. Note that the entire text is typed without right justification.

The Introduction presents a statement of the problem studied, summarizes relevant literature, discusses how the study is related to prior work, discusses the reasons the study was conducted, and presents the hypotheses that were tested. Information should proceed from the general to the specific. **First, discuss the topic. Cite relevant literature to help the reader understand why you conducted the study.** Often it is helpful to "abstract" the studies of literature relevant to your study. That is, when discussing others' studies, present one or two sentences from each of the major sections of the report (i.e., Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion).

**Second, discuss the reasons you conducted the study. How does your study relate to previous research? What questions did the previous studies leave unanswered. Third, discuss the reasons your study is important.** Finally, present the hypotheses that were tested by the study. For example, if the study investigates the effects of noise on performance at a memory task, the results of previous experiments showing detrimental effects of noise on various kinds of performance should be presented. Then, indicate that there is no previous work on the effects of noise on performance at the memory task that you are using and that the purpose of the experiment is to extend the previous findings to the task. This logical presentation leads to the statement of the hypothesis. The hypothesis helps the reader understand what the study investigated and the expected results. **The most difficult part of writing the Introduction is to explicitly develop the logical connection between your research question, relevant literature,**
and your research design. Pay special attention to these matters as you write.

In the body of the paper, articles and books are cited by the last name(s) of the author(s) and the year of publication. For example, you might write, "Distinctions between operant and classical conditioning, originally stated by Skinner (1938), have recently been challenged (Rescorla & Wagner, 1969)." Notice that when a reference is enclosed completely within parentheses and there are two or more authors, the ampersand (&) is used instead of the word "and." In citing more than one work by an author(s) in one year, the suffixes a, b, c, etc. are added after the year. These suffixes are also used in the reference section. For instance, you might write, "Recent studies by Smith (1977, 1982, 1987a, 1987b) have supported the expectancy interpretation." If different authors are cited at the same point in the text, the citations are arranged alphabetically by the author's surnames, separated by semicolons, and enclosed in parentheses. For example, you might write, "Recent studies dispute the behaviorist position (Smith, 1983; Smith & Jones, 1984; Toffler, 1979)."

Generally, avoid footnotes and quotations. The literature that you reference should be from original work and should be your interpretation of it. Sometimes, you have no choice but to rely on secondary sources (i.e., someone else's interpretation of a piece of work). Then you might want to cite a secondary source in the text. Place the source in the text as "...Heider (1958) reported that Asch observed..." In the reference section, list Heider, not Asch, in spite of the fact that it is the work of Asch that is of interest to you.

Above all, write with clarity and do not use flowery language. For example, "The eminent American clinical psychologist, Dr. George Kelly, is credited with the first portrayal of individuals as naive scientists" could be better stated as "Kelly (1955) was the first to portray persons as naive scientists."
Method

The Method section begins with the word "Method" bold and centered. This section immediately follows the Introduction section. The Method section describes how the experiment was conducted. It tells the reader what was done and how it was done. Sufficient detail should be presented to allow the reader to duplicate the important aspects of the study. The Method section consists of subsections that describe various parts of the experiment.

Participants

Note that the subsections have capitalized headings, are in bold, and are left justified. They are called second level headings by the American Psychological Association's style guide. This subsection describes who the participants in the study were, the number of participants, and how the participants were selected. List major demographic information, including institutional affiliation, sex, and age. Report any inducements, whether monetary or otherwise, that were offered to participants.

Design

The design section presents the independent variable(s), the levels of the independent variable(s), and the dependent variable(s). It may be merged with the Participants subsection, in which case the subsection should be titled "Design and Participants."

Materials

The materials subsection describes the materials used and their function in the study. Discuss the equipment and questionnaires used. If a new device or a new questionnaire were used, you may have to discuss it in detail so that the reader can understand exactly the apparatus and/or materials.

Procedure

The procedure subsection describes each step in the execution of the study. A good
approach is to present each step chronologically. Summarize or paraphrase the instructions to participants. However, the instructions may be presented verbatim if they are part of an experimental manipulation. Discuss the formation of the groups and the experimental manipulations (if any). Describe all randomization, counterbalancing, and other control features of the research design. In general, the Method section should describe what was done and how it was done in sufficient detail to allow the reader to replicate the study.

**Results**

The Results section follows the Method section on the same page. Note that the word "Results" is in bold and centered. The Results section summarizes the data collected and the statistics used to analyze the data. "Summarize the collected data and the analysis performed on those data relevant to the discourse that is to follow. Report the data in sufficient detail to justify your conclusions. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to expectations... Discussing the implications of the results should be reserved for presentation in the Discussion section" (APA, 2010, p. 33).

When reporting tests of significance, include the name of the test (e.g., analysis of variance), the value of the statistic (e.g., if the statistic is ANOVA, present the $F$), the degrees of freedom, the significance level, the direction of the effect, and the effect size. For example, you might write, "Subjects receiving loud noise remembered fewer words than subjects receiving no noise, $F(2,46) = 3.85, p < .05, d=.32.$" *Note that the type of test, the probability level, and the effect size are presented in italics. Also, include the appropriate means with ANOVA and the t-test.* Here is an example of how to report a t-test, $t(42) = 8.43, p < .001, d=.44$. Here is an example of how to report a pearson correlation, $r = .71, p < .05$. Please refer to the APA Publication Manual for more details.

Tables and figures often are used to summarize the main findings of the study. A table
consists of numbers and should be presented systematically. Tables and figures supplement the text and are not used to communicate the entire finding. Refer the reader to the table or figure in the text, and tell the reader what to look for in the table or figure. Provide sufficient explanation for the reader to understand the numbers or figure presented. Tables and figures are printed on a separate sheet of paper and presented at the back of the report.

**Discussion**

The Discussion section immediately follows the Results section. Again, note Discussion is in bold and centered at the beginning of the section. You will evaluate and interpret the findings and discuss them in relation to your hypothesis. "Here you will examine, interpret, and quality the results and draw inferences and conclusions from them. Emphasize any theoretical or practical consequences of the results. Open the Discussion section with a clear statement of the support or nonsupport for your original hypotheses... Similarities and differences between your results and the work of others should be used to contextualize, confirm, and clarify your conclusions. Do not simply reformulate and repeat points already made; each new statement should contribute to your interpretation and to the reader's understanding of the problem.

Acknowledge the limitations of your research, and address alternative explanations of the results. Discuss the generalizability, or external validity, of the findings.... End the Discussion section with a reasoned and justifiable commentary on the importance of your findings" (APA, 2010, p. 35). "In general, be guided by these questions: What have I contributed here? How has my study helped to resolve the original problem? What conclusions and theoretical implications can I draw from my study?” (APA, 1994, p. 18-19).
References

The Reference section starts on a new page immediately after the Discussion section. The word "References" is in bold and centered. "References acknowledge the work of previous scholars and...document statements made about the literature, just as data in the manuscript support interpretations and conclusions" (APA, 2012, p. 37). All citations in the manuscript should be presented alphabetically. Below are several examples of the format required for different types of references. Further information may be obtained in the APA Publication Manual.


