

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 should not exceed 250 words. The abstract is important because many journal readers first read the abstract to determine if the entire article is worth reading. The abstract should describe all four parts of an empirical paper (i.e., Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion). Consider writing one or two sentences summarizing each part of the paper, and you will have a nice abstract. This section may not be required for your assignment.

Keywords: APA, students, sample template

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Before getting started, you will notice some things about this paper. First, everything is double-spaced. Second, margins are 1-inch wide on all sides, this is the default setting in Word and Google Docs. Third, there are several headings used throughout to separate different parts of the paper; some of the headings are in bold. Try to pay attention to all of these details as you look through this paper.

Now that those details are out of the way, you should know that this first part of the paper is called the “Introduction” section, yet it does not have a heading that says “Introduction.” Instead, the title of the paper is typed at the top of the first page (be sure to center the title, but do not put it in bold). In this section, you would often start with a topic paragraph that introduces the problem under study. The importance of the topic should be pretty clear from the first paragraph or two of the Introduction. Section 2.11 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. A literature review is often included, and is very helpful to provide a theoretical or empirical basis for the research. Try to provide the reader with enough information on the topic to be able to conclude that the research is important and that the hypotheses are reasonable. Any prior work on the topic would be useful to include here, although prior work that is most directly related to the hypotheses would be of greatest value.

The last section of the Introduction states the purpose of the research. The purpose can usually be summarized in a few sentences. Hypotheses are also included here at the end of this section. State your hypotheses as predictions (e.g., “I predicted that...”), and try to avoid using passive tense (e.g., “It was predicted that...”).

Method

The Method section is the second of four main parts of an empirical paper. Be aware that some papers are reviews of the literature and therefore would not have a separate Method section. There are typically three or four major subsections in the Method although there can be more. These subsections are separated by headings which are described in sections 2.26 and 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 female and male participants, the mean age (where “mean” is abbreviated *M*), and their ethnicity or cultural background. Any other demographic information would be included here.

Research Design

Experimental studies often have a section in the Method describing the design of the study. Typically the independent variables in the study would be described here. For example, the study might involve a 2-by-2 design with one independent variable being treatment/control conditions and the other independent variable being biological sex. It would be helpful to describe dependent variables in this subsection as well.

Measures

This section describes the tests or instruments used to collect data. It would be appropriate to describe any questionnaires that you used. For example, if you used the Marlowe- Crowne Social Desirability Scale in your research, you may 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 MCSD scores' reliability and 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). However, you would only do this for a scale-development project.

Procedure

This section describes in great detail the data-collection procedures. Describe how participants were recruited, whether they participated alone or in groups, how informed consent or assent was obtained, what they were asked to do, how they were compensated for their participation, etc. It is hard to make this section too detailed. You should describe the procedure in a way that another researcher could conduct the same study (i.e., replicate it) just by reading about the procedure.

Results

The Results section may be the most difficult to write, at least until you get a little practice with reporting statistical analyses. This is the section where the results of the data analyses are presented. It's often helpful to use tables (see Table 1) to help describe your results, especially when you have a lot of data to report, such as means and standard deviations. Table 2 provides another example of a table, this one describing correlations.

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. State what alpha level you adopted; an alpha level of .05 is the standard. Although you should be sure not to try to interpret your results here, it is appropriate to state whether or not your hypotheses were supported. Do not try to explain why the hypotheses were or were not supported; that is for the Discussion section.

Discussion

The Discussion is the fourth and 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? You may have to think about your results in a theoretically meaningful way. Also, how do your findings fit in with previous theory and literature? 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. Was the sample biased? Were the measures problematic? Think about what you would do differently next time if you conducted a similar study. Future research ideas are often discussed when limitations are discussed.

Second, describe the implications of your findings to theory and practice. Answer the question, “How does my study add to psychological theory?” Also, think about practical applications of your findings. Perhaps give some additional directions for future research. When you’ve done that, you have written a paper in APA style!

APA 7th edition allows for the use of footnotes. These can be used in order to give extra content on an idea or for copyright attribution. Although APA now allows there format it should be used sparingly.

References

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