APA Writing Style and Mechanics

Student Name

University of Phoenix

The title is in upper and lowercase letters, centered between the left and right margins and positioned in the upper half of the page (See APA, p. 296) An example is available on p. 306.

APA requires a Running Head for publication. See APA, p. 296, section 5.15.


The APA Sample Paper provided by the Center for Writing Excellence represents the consensus of several deans and other key academic officials at the University. The sample paper attempts to match APA style to the University's curriculum and academic services. Nevertheless, in advanced matters of style and formatting, there are sometimes differing interpretations of APA guidelines. While this sample paper is offered as a tool to help students with APA style, it is not a definitive or binding representation of format accepted by individual faculty members. As a result, for all unresolved style and format issues, it is essential that you consult with your faculty member before submitting your paper for a grade. You instructor is the final authority regarding acceptable format and style for all papers associated with his or her course, and the instructor’s recommendations will prevail over this sample paper in the event that there is a difference between the two.

Revised: November, 2005
Abstract

According to section 1.07 of the *APA Publication Manual* (2001), “An abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly, and like a title, it enables abstracting and information services to index and retrieve articles” (p. 12). Note that the abstract paragraph is not indented. An abstract should be no longer than 120 words and should be concise and specific (APA, 2001, p. 13). Because an abstract is not always required for student papers, please adhere to your instructor’s requirements.

An abstract is not always required for student papers. When in doubt, contact your instructor. For additional information regarding the use of abstracts refer to the *APA Publication Manual*, p. 12-15.
APA Writing Style and Mechanics

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual)* began as an article published in *Psychological Bulletin* in 1929. That article reported results of a 1928 meeting of scholars "to discuss the form of journal manuscripts and to write instructions for their preparation" (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2001, p. xix). Today the manual is in its fifth edition, and the APA format described in it is a widely recognized standard for scientific writing (i.e., scholarly or professional writing) in the social sciences. Although the stylebook is designed to prepare manuscripts for publication, many school and health care journals have adopted its use as a guide to achieve uniformity and consistency (Cuddy, 2002). Writing in the style prescribed by the *Publication Manual* can be a daunting experience for students; however, as with all new skills, “practice makes perfect” (P. Proofreader, personal communication, June 28, 2004).

In this paper, a review of APA information and writing tips most often used by the University of Phoenix undergraduate and graduate students is presented. However, this document is no substitute for the *Publication Manual* itself. While APA formatting software is available from a number of vendors, students are discouraged from purchasing it due to the inconsistency of formatting specific to University of Phoenix papers.

Format Considerations

Some of the more commonly used rules and formats from the *Publication Manual* are presented and discussed in this section. Please note, however, that some assignments may require unique formatting, and students should consult with faculty for clarification.
Correct Margins

Margins are required to be one inch on all sides or set at the word processor default. The rule is broken to avoid placing a lone heading on the last line of the page or a single line of text on the top of the next page.

Page Header

The header contains the first two or three words of the title and appears in the header/footer feature of Microsoft Word (See Appendix A for format directions for the header/footer feature). The page number is set at five spaces to the right of the text. The automatic function of a word-processing program should be used to print the headers and page numbers consecutively in the paper. Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, and so on) are used to number each page, and begin on the title page.

Reference Page

The hanging indentation (See Appendix B for format directions for hanging indents) is used for the reference page; that is, the first line of the reference, usually the author’s name, rests against the left margin, and the lines that follow are indented 5 or 7 spaces or ½ inch. The *Publication Manual* (2001) recommends setting the tab key to ½ inch (word processor default). The reference page is alphabetized by author and contains the date of publication in parentheses, directly after the author’s name. Next, the title, the place of publication, and the name of the publisher are listed. The proliferation of electronic materials has prompted the APA to create formats designed specifically for Internet and Web-based written material. Students should bookmark and frequently visit the APA Web site at www.apastyle.org for current formatting of electronic references.
Only those references that have been cited in the paper are listed on the reference page. Personal communications are cited in the text, but not on the reference page. Additional reference examples are available in Appendix C.

*In Text Citations*

**Direct quotations.** Direct quotations need to mirror exactly the original source, even if errors are contained in the original. To alert the reader that any errors are part of the original material, the word *sic*, enclosed in brackets and italicized, should follow the erroneous material. The source of information must be cited. The format of direct quotations may vary with the placement of the quoted material in the sentence. The following is an example of how one might use a direct quote from a Web site with an author: “Diversity is emerging as one of the most serious issues in the workplace today, yet most employers are not prepared to deal with it” (Copeland, 2003, Erroneous Assumptions, ¶1). The author’s last name, the year of publication, the Web site title, and the paragraph number are included in the in-text citation when no page number is available. In addition, the following is an example of how one might use a direct quote from a book with one author: Venes (2001) stated, “The types of influenza doctors must prepare for fall into three categories” (p. 106). If the author’s name is given prior to the quote, include the date of publication (in parentheses) after the author’s name, and follow the quote with the page or paragraph number. See page 121 in the *Publication Manual* for more information. Appendix C has additional examples of in-text citations when using direct quotes.

Quotations of less than 40 words are enclosed in double quotation marks. “Use single quotation marks within double quotation marks to set off material that in the
original source was enclosed in double quotation marks” (APA, 2001, p. 119). Quotations of 40 words or more are set in a block format without quotation marks. The block quote is started on a new line, indented five spaces or 1/2 inch. A sample block quote is contained in this paper.

Paraphrased material. Paraphrasing allows the writer to use the ideas of another, to represent another’s argument, and to give proper credit to the original author or authors (Lawton, Cousineau, & Hillard, 2001). Each time an author is paraphrased, the source must be cited in the text. Page or paragraph numbers are not required for paraphrased material, but the Publication Manual encourages writers to do so (APA, 2001, p. 121). For example, if one were to paraphrase information from an article located in an online database, one would format it in this way: Daniels (2004) included Garden Restaurants on his list of the 50 best companies for minorities. Or, for another example using the same article consider the following: A list of companies has been singled out as best for minority employees (Daniels, 2004). Both examples include the author’s last name and the date of publication. If the author’s name is not provided with the paraphrased text, it must be included in the in-text citation. An additional illustration for paraphrasing information comes from the University of Phoenix rEsourc page: Values and ethics are closely related but different (University of Phoenix, 2004). Appendix C has additional examples of in-text citations when paraphrasing.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism constitutes a serious academic concern. According to Lawton, Cousineau, and Hillard (2001), “academic communities demand that writers credit others for their work and that the source of their material clearly be acknowledged” (¶ 6). Internet access has resulted in an increase in plagiarism. As noted by McCabe (as
cited in Sterngold, 2004), 41% of students said they engaged in “cut-and-paste” plagiarism from online sources. The sentences and phrases we use must be original, or cited and referenced accordingly. While it may be easier to use someone else’s words, doing so only discredits the writer. When in doubt, cite.

Other Format Issues

Although the Publication Manual (2001) suggests that an abstract of an article precede the text, an abstract is not used in most papers submitted by University of Phoenix students. Faculty members may require an abstract if students are submitting very lengthy papers or project proposals. In those cases, the direction to submit an abstract will be in the assignment guidelines.

Preferred typefaces in APA style are 12-pt Times New Roman or 12-pt Courier New. Students should avoid using any software settings that reduce spacing between words or letters.

Writing Mechanics

Besides formatting, correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure are essential components of scholarly writing. Strunk (1999) emphasized the importance of being succinct:

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell. (¶1)
Grammar

Besides the provision of a standardized format for scientific writing, the Publication Manual emphasizes the importance of proper grammar. In addition to the Publication Manual, students will have another resource with the The Gregg Reference Manual. For a thorough review, Chapter 2 in the Publication Manual is particularly helpful for learning good writing mechanics. A few of the rules of grammar will be addressed here.

Subject and verb agreement. A singular noun requires a singular verb, and a plural noun requires a plural verb (APA, 2001). Words that intervene between the noun and verb do not change that basic rule.

Noun and pronoun agreement. When writers use a subject which is singular, they need to use pronouns which are singular. To avoid having to use he/she and him/her, writers may reword the sentence and use a plural subject, thereby eliminating the problem. For example, the sentence “A student applying for a job must carefully proofread his or her application” can be reworded to read, “Students applying for jobs must carefully proofread their applications.” Use of plurals also can help writers reduce sexist bias and avoid stereotypes, as well as keep them from using both singular and plural in the same sentence or paragraph.

Punctuation. Correct punctuation establishes the rhythm and readability of sentences. In APA style, only one space is used after periods, commas, colons, and semicolons. When a hyphen is used, no space appears before or after the hyphen (APA, 2001).
Correct use of commas and semicolons can be challenging for students. Writers are encouraged to proofread their papers to ensure proper use of commas (Proofreading for commas, n.d.).

Capitalization. Capitalization is used to designate a proper noun or trade name, as well as major words in titles and headings. Instances where capitalization is not used include laws, theories, models, or hypotheses, such as ethical decision-making models; names of conditions or groups in an experiment, such as experimental or control groups; or nouns that designate parts of a book, such as chapter 8 (APA, 2001). A common error in capitalization is its use with the name of a job title or department. An example is human resources versus the ACME Human Resources Department.

Seriation. Items contained in a list can help to clarify the point being made or components of a subject. APA does not permit the use of bullets. To show seriation of separate paragraphs, number each paragraph with an Arabic numeral, followed by a period but not enclosed in or followed by parentheses. To show seriation within a paragraph or sentence, use lowercase letters (not italicized) in parentheses. An example of these formats is shown in Appendix D.

Numbers. Spell numbers one through nine in the body text. Use Arabic numerals to express numbers 10 and above. However, there are many exceptions to this rule and these can be found on pages 123-128 in the Publication Manual.

Third person versus first person. Writing, “The writer instructed the patients” when “the writer” refers to yourself is ambiguous and may give the impression that you did not participate. Instead, use a personal pronoun: “I instructed the patients.” However, for the most part, reference to self (first person) is limited to reflection or opinion papers.
Conclusion

Understanding the mechanics, usage requirements, and referencing materials of APA formatting will help you improve and communicate clearly the content of your work. The intent of this paper is to help you begin to understand the different components necessary for development of scholarly papers. However, not all of the content of the Publication Manual is reviewed, and you are encouraged to refer to this excellent resource as well.

TIP: Always include a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the paper.
References


Proofreading for commas. (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2004, from Purdue University Online Writing Lab Web site:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_commaproof.html


See Appendix C for additional sample references, including University of Phoenix simulations, and other electronic sources.
Appendix A: Header/Footer Feature in MS Word

**Page Headers**

**Page Headers** (p. 288, 5.06): Identify each page with the first two or three words from the title in the upper right hand corner above or five spaces to the left of the page number. Do not use your name to identify each page. Again, use the automatic function of the word-processor as illustrated in this picture. Be sure the font type and size is the same as that used in the document.
Appendix B: Directions for a Hanging Indent

Select the text that requires a hanging indent. As shown in Picture One, use the **Indents and Spacing** tab (Format menu, Paragraph command). In the **Special** list under **Indentation**, select **Hanging**. In the **By** box, set the amount of space for the hanging indent (Picture Two).

**Picture One**

**Picture Two**
Appendix C: Additional Reference and In-Text Citation Examples

The first words of the in-text citation should mirror the first words of the source on the References page.

Remember the following

1. Never use the URL in the citation.
2. Never use the first or middle initials of the author(s) in the citation.
3. Always include the year in the citation.
4. Always use p. or pp. for page numbers or para. or ¶ for paragraph numbers with direct quotations.
5. Include the author’s name or title of the work when no author is listed, year, and page or paragraph number (for a direct quotation) within the parentheses.
6. Place the punctuation after the final parenthesis of the citation unless it is a block quote.
7. Follow the rule of punctuation for capitalization of the first title mentioned within the reference. Titles of books and articles: capitalize the first word, the first word following a colon, and proper nouns.

The following examples provide information about how to format in-text citations and the corresponding source on the reference page.

**A book with one author**

**A book with one author could be formatted in any of the following ways:**

**In-Text Citation**

- **Sample 1** According to Venes (2001), three types of influenza are spreading throughout the country.
- **Sample 2** Three types of influenza are spreading throughout the country (Venes, 2001).
- **Sample 3** Venes (2001) stated, “The types of influenza doctors must prepare for fall into three categories” (p. 106).

[Note: Page or paragraph numbers are always included with the in-text citation when direct quotations are used.]
Reference Page Citation


In-Text Citation

**Sample 4** Cleckley (1997) noted that diversity in the classroom prepared young Americans for work in a global society.

**Sample 5** Diversity in the classroom prepared young Americans for work in a global society was the idea presented by well-known scholar Bernard Cleckley (1997).

**Sample 6** “Because youth have had experience working and playing with children of other races and cultures while growing up, they will be better able to interact with those of other cultures when working within intercultural corporations” (Cleckley, 1997, p. 37).

Reference Page Citation


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**A book with two or more authors**

A book with two or more authors could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

**Sample 1** Often, people compare Caldwell and Thomason’s book (2004) to *The DaVinci Code* because of the brilliant writing and historical context.

**Sample 2** *The Book of Four* (Caldwell & Thomason, 2004) has been compared to Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code*.

**Sample 3** “An encyclopedia masquerading as a novel, *The Book of Four* is a dissertation on everything from architecture to zoology” (Caldwell & Thomason, 2004, p. 136).

Reference Page Citation

In-Text Citation

Sample 4  Mandelbrot and Hudson (2004) have combined Mandelbrot’s mathematical framework with Hudson’s knowledge of Wall Street to produce a must-read for any serious investor.

Sample 5  For the individual who manages money for a living, one of the best books on the market is *The Misbehavior of Markets* by Mandelbrot and Hudson (2004).

Sample 6  “This equilibrium market clearing price is automatically interpreted as being the mean of a normal probability distribution” (Mandelbrot & Hudson, 2004, p. 46).

Reference Page Citation


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A book with a group author

A book with a group author could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  *The 9/11 Commission Report* (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004) is one of the most important documents of this century.

Sample 2  A very clear mandate was expressed by The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks (2004).

Sample 3  “Investigate the facts and circumstance relating to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 … and other areas as determined by the Commission” (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 14).

Reference Page Citation

A journal article

A journal article could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  Walker and Schutte (2002) believed that the five areas of team building were not inclusive of all the areas needing attention.

Sample 2  Not everyone agrees with the five areas of team building (Walker & Schutte, 2002).

Sample 3  “Given sufficient time, a team should be able to surmount any and all challenges to productive activity” (Walker & Schutte, 2002, p. 52).

Reference Page Citation


A journal article from an online database

A journal article from an online database could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  Daniels (2004) included Garden Restaurants on his list of the 50 best companies for minorities.

Sample 2  A list of companies has been singled out as best for minority employees (Daniels, 2004).

Sample 3  “At the Olive Garden and Red Lobster chains, diversity efforts are encouraged from ‘boardroom to dining room’” (Daniels, 2004, para. 5).

[Note: No page number was listed in this particular article because of the way the article is written. When no page number is available, count the paragraphs and use the paragraph number, as above. In long documents, you can count the paragraphs of a particular section and indicate that within the citation: (Daniels, 2004, Methods section, para. 3).]
Reference Page Citation


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**A journal article from an online database—anonymous author**

An anonymous journal article from an online database could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

*Sample 1*  
In its “Corrections” section (2004), *Fortune* magazine did name the CEO of Rite-Aid who is currently in prison for fraud.

*Sample 2*  
*Fortune* magazine did name the CEO of Rite-Aid who is currently in prison for fraud (“Corrections,” 2004).

Reference Page Citation


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**A newspaper article**

A newspaper article could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

*Sample 1*  
Herron and Miles (1987) addressed the recent Supreme Court decision regarding promotions based on race.

*Sample 2*  
Efforts have been made regarding racial parity (Herron & Miles, 1987).

*Sample 3*  
The Supreme Court declared, “a company may decide to promote an employee on the basis of race under certain circumstances” (Herron & Miles, 1987, p. 32).

Reference Page Citation

A Web site with no author

A Web site with no author could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

*Sample 1* The Web site for the National Osteoporosis Foundation (2004) has many interesting facts about this debilitating disease.

*Sample 2* Osteoporosis is a highly preventable disease (National Osteoporosis Foundation, 2004).


Reference Page Citation


In-Text Citation

*Sample 4* Subaru (2004) makes it easy to compare its Outback with similar cars.

*Sample 5* Subaru currently has five models in its lineup (Subaru, 2004).

*Sample 6* “All Subaru Outback models blend the rugged versatility of an SUV with the driving performance and comfort of a passenger car” (Subaru, 2004, ¶1).

Reference Page Citation


A Web site with an author

A Web site with an author could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

*Sample 1* According to Copeland (2003), the adaptation required when minorities enter the workplace is a two-way street.
Sample 2  Diversity is a positive thing in the workforce (Copeland, 2003).

Sample 3  “Diversity is emerging as one of the most serious issues in the workplace today, yet most employers are not prepared to deal with it” (Copeland, 2003, Managing a Multicultural Workforce, ¶1).

[In a long online document with no page numbers, you can list the title of the section and the paragraph number within that section (see above).]

Reference Page Citation


In-Text Citation

Sample 4  According to Nix (2004), no definitive national Christmas tree exists.

Sample 5  Apparently, four trees could be the national Christmas tree in the United States (Nix, 2004).

Sample 6  “Four trees touted to be the nation’s Christmas tree” (Nix, 2004, para. 1).

Reference Page Citation


University of Phoenix e-text authored by individuals

A University of Phoenix e-text authored by individuals could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  If we create our experience (Paul & Elder, 2002), then we are responsible for our lives.

Sample 2  We can control our experience (Paul & Elder, 2002).

Sample 3  Paul and Elder (2002) stated, “For most people, experience is understood as something that ‘happens to them,’ not something they create for themselves” (Chap. 8, p. 131).
[Note: In the e-text, you may need to include the chapter or week to clarify the source.]

**Reference Page Citation**


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**University of Phoenix e-text that is a compilation of pieces of other works edited by University of Phoenix as a completely new book.**

**A University of Phoenix e-text that is a compilation of other works could be formatted in any of the following ways:**

**In-Text Citation**

**Sample 1** According to the University of Phoenix text (2002), educators need to pay attention to the environment in which learning takes place.

**Sample 2** Environment can be an important factor in the learning process (University of Phoenix, 2002).

**Sample 3** “As you can see, social learning theorists stress the role of environmental factors in learning, but they acknowledge the importance of cognitive factors as well” (University of Phoenix, 2002, Section 3, p. 358).

**Reference Page Citation**

University of Phoenix rEsource Material

Documents listed in rEsource could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  According to the University of Phoenix Week Two Overview (2004), we cannot judge other people; we can only judge ourselves.

Sample 2  Values and ethics are closely related but different (University of Phoenix, 2004).

Sample 3  “Values or morals can only be judged from within. That is, we cannot look at someone and judge that person’s morals (University of Phoenix, 2004, Values and Ethics, ¶ 2).

Reference Page Citation


A University of Phoenix simulation

A University of Phoenix simulation could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  In the University of Phoenix simulation (2004), students are allowed to apply theory to practice.

Sample 2  A situation providing a dilemma regarding confidentiality allows us to apply theory to practice (University of Phoenix, 2004).

Sample 3  “The three possible candidates all have strengths and weaknesses for this position” (University of Phoenix, 2004, para. 10).

Reference Page Citation

Software

[Note: Reference entries are not needed for off-the-shelf software and programming languages. In text, give the proper name of the software and the version number.]

Do provide reference entries for specialized software or computer programs with limited distribution.

Software could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  The strength of ACI (2002) as a real estate appraising software program is its ease of use.

Sample 2  Because it is user friendly, many more real estate appraisers are using ACI (2002).

Reference Page Citation


Television Series

A television series could be formatted in any of the following ways:

In-Text Citation

Sample 1  The Seinfeld series (Ackerman, 1989) presented a major, creative breakthrough in evening sit-coms.

Sample 2  The four main characters in Seinfeld represent people whom we all know (Ackerman, 1989).

Sample 3  One of George’s famous sayings to Jerry is, “On some level, I have always been handicapped” (Ackerman, 1989).

Reference Page Citation
Appendix D: Seriation

Seriation (lists) (p. 292, 5.12):

To show seriation (lists) within a paragraph or sentence, use lowercase letters (not italicized) in parentheses:

Job satisfaction is increased when nurses are provided with (a) therapeutic massage, (b) relaxation therapy, and (c) music therapy.

To show seriation of separate paragraphs, number each paragraph with an Arabic numeral, followed by a period but not enclosed in or followed by parentheses. APA does not allow the use of bullet points.

Berk (2001) suggests that parents determine suitability of books for children by using the following criteria:

1. Books are made from durable material…(paragraph continues)
2. Books are action-oriented…. (paragraph continues)