



School of Liberal Arts

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## ***Structuring an APA Style Research Paper***

*The American Psychological Association (APA) offers a set of guidelines about how to cite sources in text and how to organize papers. This handout summarizes the recommendations the APA makes about how to organize research papers. If you are asked to organize a paper in APA style, you should check with your instructor about how closely he or she would like you to follow this format. If you also need to document sources in the text of your paper using APA format, please see the writing center's handout, "APA Documentation."*

**Abstract** (75-120 words)

### **What it is:**

- A brief comprehensive summary of the paper which allows the reader to survey the contents of the paper quickly.

### **The abstract will be:**

- *Accurate:* correctly reflect the purpose and content of the manuscript
- *Self-contained:* stand on its own to reflect the contents of the paper.
  - Make sure to define all abbreviations, acronyms, and unique terms; spell out names of tests and drugs; include names of authors and dates of publication etc.
- *Concise and Specific:* make sentences as informative and as brief as possible.
- *Non-evaluative:* report information objectively.

### **Introduction**

- *Introduce the problem:* present the specific problem under study and describe the research strategy.
- *Develop the background:* discuss previous research completed on the subject but in most cases do not give a complete presentation of it. Assume that the audience already has some general knowledge of the field of study.
- *State the purpose and rationale:* state the hypothesis and explain the purpose and rationale behind the hypothesis.

## Method

- *Describe the research and include all details on how the study was conducted.*
- *Identify subsections:* participants, measures and procedure. Each section should be labeled appropriately and placed in bold face at the left-hand side of the page.
  - *Participants:* describe the number and demographics of the participants. Also be sure to identify the source of the subject population.
  - *Measures:* explain tests or surveys used for assessment. Cite the source of each measure used and describe the measure completely.
  - *Procedure:* give details on the way the assessment was conducted. Be very clear and concise so that another researcher would know exactly what to do in order to replicate the study and obtain similar results.

## Results

- *Objectively inform the reader of the data collected and the statistical treatment of them.*
- Include all pertinent tables and/or figures to further describe data collected.
- Do not include an evaluation or analysis of the data.

## Discussion

- *Discuss the results of the experiment.*
- Analyze the data and interpret the implications of the data with respect to the original hypothesis.
- Compare the results of the current study to the work of the previous research that was discussed in the introduction.
- Recommend what should be done next in regard to future research related to the subject of the research.

## References

- Generally, the references page will list only sources actually cited in the paper
- If the professor or review committee has asked for a list of all sources read, these can be listed, and the page is then called bibliography.

## Appendixes

- If requested, an appendix is the place to put a copy of the research instrument, signed consent forms or sign-up sheets, or statistical calculations.

**Source:** *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2001). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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