APA Style Student Paper Checklist

Use this checklist to help you write a beginner-friendly student paper in seventh edition APA Style, consisting of a title page, text, and reference list. For questions about specific assignment guidelines, check with your instructor.

General Format

☐ Use the same font and font size throughout your paper. Any legible and accessible font is acceptable, including the default font of your word-processing program (e.g., 11- or 12-point Calibri, Arial, or Times New Roman).

☐ Double-space the entire paper, including the references. Do not add extra lines before or after headings or between paragraphs of text.

☐ Set margins to 1 in. on all sides, which is usually the default.

☐ Insert page numbers in the top right of every page (including the title page, which is page 1) using the automatic page-numbering function of your word-processing program.

☐ Place pages in the order of title page, text, and references. Start the text on a new page after the title page. Start references on a new page after the text.

☐ Affiliation: Provide the department of your course and the name of your school, centered on their own line after your name (e.g., Department of Psychology, Williams College).

☐ Course: Provide the name and number of the course, centered on its own line after the affiliation. Match the format given on course materials.

☐ Instructor: Provide the instructor's name, centered on a new line after the course information.

☐ Due Date: Include the month, day, and year in the date format used in your country (e.g., September 20, 2023), centered on a new line after the instructor's name. Spell out the month and write the full year.

Title Page

☐ Title: Write the title in the upper half of the title page (three or four lines from the top margin), centered and in bold. Ensure it captures the main point of your work. Capitalize the title in the title case (Most Words Capitalized). Add a blank line after the title and before your name.

☐ Author: Write your full name, centered on its own line, after the blank line and title.

Text Format

☐ Repeat the paper title on the first line of the first page of text (page 2), centered and in bold.

Modified from American Psychological Association. (2023). Student paper checklist (beginner's version). https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/beginner-student-paper-checklist.pdf

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☐ Begin the text immediately after the repeated title. Use left-justified paragraphs, with the first line of every paragraph indented.

☐ Use headings to divide the text into sections as needed. Short student papers may not require any headings. Do not use the heading "Introduction"; just start the paper. (Ask your instructor if necessary.)

Writing Style and Grammar

☐ Eliminate wordiness, redundancy, evasiveness, and circumlocution (i.e., writing in circles).

☐ Vary sentence length. Break up paragraphs longer than one double-spaced page into shorter paragraphs.

☐ Use transitions to smoothly connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas.

☐ Use a professional tone and professional language. Do not use jargon, contractions, colloquialisms, or creative literary devices.

☐ Use verb tenses consistently across sentences and paragraphs. Describe past research in the past or present perfect tense (e.g., "Researchers found" or "Researchers have found," not "Researchers find").

☐ Use the active voice as much as possible to make your writing more direct. The passive voice is allowed when you need to focus on the recipient of an action, but don't overdo it.

☐ Ensure verbs agree in number with their subjects.

☐ Use first-person pronouns to describe your work and personal reactions. Use "I" for a solo paper; use "we" for a group paper.

☐ Use the singular "they" to refer to a hypothetical person or when gender is unknown; otherwise, use a person's self-identified pronouns.

☐ Double-check for grammar and punctuation errors.

In-Text Citations

☐ Cite only works you read and ideas you incorporated into your paper.

☐ Include all sources cited in the text in the reference list (except cite personal communications in the text only).

☐ Match the spelling of author names and the publication year in the in-text citations to the corresponding reference list entries.

☐ Paraphrase sources in your own words whenever possible.

☐ Avoid plagiarism by citing the words and ideas of others. However, do not repeat the same citation in every sentence when the source and topic do not change; this is over-citation.

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☐ Write author-date citations using either the narrative or parenthetical citation format:

- Parenthetical format: (Beatty, 2023)

- Narrative format: Beatty (2023) stated...

☐ Format author names according to how many authors the work has:

- One author: (Kim, 2023) or Kim (2023).

- Two authors: (Guirrez & Castillo, 2020) or Guirrez and Castillo (2020). Use an ampersand in the parenthetical format; use "and" in the narrative format.

- Three or more authors: (Zheng et al., 2023) or Zheng et al. (2023).

☐ When citing multiple works in parentheses, place the citations in alphabetical order and separate them with semicolons: (Davis, 2023; Joo et al., 2017; Swann & Gould, 2021).

☐ When multiple parenthetical citations have the same author(s), order the years chronologically and separate them with commas: (Coutlee, 2019, 2020).

☐ Limit the use of direct quotations. It is better to paraphrase.

☐ For quotation citations include the author, year, and page number or other location information (e.g., section name, time stamp from a video).

☐ Use the short quotation format for quotations of less than 40 words. Ensure the citation appears before the period that ends the sentence:

- Sentence "quotation" (Author, year, p. X or pp. X). Author (year) stated "quotation" (p. X or pp. X).

☐ Use the block quotation format for quotations of 40 words or more.

☐ Use signal phrases to introduce a quote as you see necessary.

References

☐ Start the reference list on a new page after the text.

☐ Write the label "References" at the top of the page, centered and in bold.

☐ Double-space all references, both within and between entries and apply a hanging indent (first line flush left, subsequent lines indented by 0.5 in.). Use the paragraph-formatting function of the word-processing program to achieve the hanging indent.

☐ Ensure all reference entries have a corresponding in-text citation. If they do not, add citations or delete references.

☐ Follow the reference examples for the type of work being cited, such as a journal article, book, or webpage. Adapt reference format if there is missing information.

☐ Put references in alphabetical order.

☐ Double-check the format of authors, dates, titles, sources, DOIs, and URLs.

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