

Format and Style of RDA 1 Papers

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Abstract

Two papers addressing your research are required in PSY 245. The papers should adhere to the editorial style guidelines of the American Psychological Association. The writing style must be clear, concise, and grammatical, and the work that you turn in must be your own. This paper provides information about the basics of APA style, including the requisite sections and formatting. This paper conforms to the guidelines that you should follow; use it as an example. This is the Abstract - a brief summary of the entire paper, typed as a single, non-indented paragraph.

Format and Style of RDA 1 Papers

As stated on the course syllabus, two papers addressing research are required in this course. Their purpose is to allow you to gain experience with the standard way of writing in psychology, and to allow you to conduct some research of your own. This handout provides information regarding format, style, and other “mechanical” aspects of the paper.

Scientific writing usually follows a strict stylistic format. This allows the reader to focus on the content of the paper rather than on how the material is presented. Your paper is no exception. The paper should adhere to the editorial style of the American Psychological Association, as outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, (6th edition, 2010). This book is required for this class, is in the library, and is available in the bookstore. The following list summarizes some of the major requirements of APA style.

1. Type all parts of the manuscript double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font. Use only one side of the paper. Do not right-justify the text.

2. In the top left corner of Page 1 provide the label “Running head:” followed by the actual running head (a shortened version of the title, not exceeding 50 characters), in all caps. On all subsequent pages provide the running head (without the label “Running head:”) in all caps. The page number should appear in the upper right corner of every page.

3. Page 1 should be a numbered title page, giving the title (no more than 12 words), author’s name, and author’s affiliation (in this case, Albion College). Author Note, if necessary, appears below the author’s affiliation.

4. Page 2 should consist of an abstract providing a brief overview of your paper. It should be labeled “Abstract,” and should not exceed 250 words. The abstract should be typed as a single, non-indented paragraph.

5. The body of the paper follows, beginning on Page 3. The body of the paper will consist of these sections: Introduction (not labeled), Method, Results, and Discussion. The

content of each of these will be discussed in the relevant section below.

6. You will rely on papers written by other people to inform your writing. You will cite this source material whenever you refer to it. Citations of source material in the body of the text should take the form of the name(s) of the author(s) followed by the date of publication; for example, Authorone (1968), Authorone and Authortwo (1984). When there are three, four, or five authors, the names of all authors are required only at the first citation (Firstauthor, Secondauthor, Thirdauthor, & Fourthauthor, 1982); subsequent citations should be shortened (Firstauthor et al., 1982). If there are more than five authors, shorten the citation always, even the first time, to the first author's last name and "et al." Citation information that is not part of the sentence is placed within parentheses: "In 1984, Authorone and Authortwo replicated the important early finding by Authorone (1968) that chocolate facilitates migratory behavior in yaks; others (Firstauthor et al., 1982) have demonstrated this as well."

7. Following the body of the text, and starting on a separate page, come the References. This is not a bibliography. It should contain only those papers to which you refer in the body of the text, not everything you have read. Arrange the references alphabetically by first author's last name, and chronologically when two or more papers have the same authors in the same order (unless the papers are identified as parts of a series, in which case use the series order). List all authors' last names and initials if there are up to seven authors. If there are eight or more authors, include the names of the first six, an ellipsis, and the last author's name. The format required for various types of reference materials appears in the Reference section of this paper. Be sure to include all of the papers that you cite. Accuracy in citing your references is crucial! NOTE: This deviates from APA style, but you must provide a photocopy of the first page of every paper that you cite. This provides some assurance that you had the opportunity to read the papers, rather than relying on someone else's description of the research (see discussion of primary sources, below). There is an automatic loss of 5% of the total possible value of the

paper for each instance in which a photocopy is not provided. Please append the photocopies to the end of the paper.

8. Any Tables or Figures appear after the References. Tables come immediately after the References, and should be double spaced. Figures come last; a figure caption should appear under each figure on the same page.

The paper should be long enough to tell your story well. Consult the APA Publication Manual regarding the desired style for items not discussed above, such as numbers, abbreviations, seriation, etc. Your grade will reflect in part the degree to which you comply with APA style guidelines.

The section above was the Introduction of this paper. Note that it is not labeled; the section immediately after the Abstract is assumed to be the Introduction.

Method

The Method section should describe very clearly what you have done. It must be explicit enough so that anyone who wants to repeat your study can do it the same way that you did. It is broken down into the following sections.

Participants (or Subjects)

This is where you indicate who was studied. Use the label “Participants” if you studied humans, otherwise use “Subjects.” Tell how many participants there were (expressing the number in digits, not in words), how they were obtained, and if they were remunerated. Provide summary demographic information here: age, sex, and any other relevant demographics. For nonhuman animal subjects, indicate how many, their species and sex, where they were obtained, how they were housed, and what happened to them at the conclusion of the study.

Materials (or Apparatus)

Provide information about any items that you used in collecting data. Any commercially available products should be identified in such a way that someone could obtain the same item (e.g., product name or model number, manufacturer, etc.). Materials manufactured or produced by you must be described in sufficient detail that someone else could duplicate them. Standard items such as pens and pencils, paper, stopwatches, etc., do not need to be listed in detail. All numbers representing units of measurement, here and elsewhere in the paper, should use digits, not words. Scientific writing should use metric measurements, and standard metric units do not use periods after their abbreviations.

Procedure

Everything that happened to your participants must be described in a manner that will allow someone else to do the same thing. What is most important is that the experience for the participant or subject can be duplicated. For example, the color of the outside of an operant chamber where a rat is studied is not important, but the color of the interior (experienced by the animal) must be described.

Analysis

Sometimes there is value in including a section describing how the data were analyzed. This is not necessary if standard statistical procedures are used; if something unusual is done, or if the data must be manipulated extensively during the analysis, then include this section.

Results

Summarize the results in this section. Typically you would present means (with some indication of the variability) if you have conducted a simple study with only two or three groups. You might instead present the results in the form of one or more figures. Be

concise and complete, and not redundant. If your Method section described a measure that was taken, the results of that measure must appear in the Results section. Include the results of any inferential statistical tests in this section (*t*-test, ANOVA, etc.). Be sure to consult the *APA Style Manual* for the proper formatting of statistical text.

Discussion

Briefly restate the main findings of your study, and discuss their importance. Was your hypothesis supported or not? Did anything surprising or unexpected happen? The Discussion section is where you address these kinds of things. Typically the early part of the Discussion is focused on what you found and what it means. Be sure to indicate how the findings fit with your hypothesis, and to address alternate explanations for the results (if they exist). Later you can address any problems that might need to be overcome if the study were to be done again. It is also typical to suggest studies that could be done to follow up on your findings.

This format suggested by the APA facilitates the communication of scientific findings. Anyone reading the APA-style paper can instantly find the section where information of interest resides. The reader can safely skip over the detailed Method section if it is not of immediate interest, knowing that there is no risk of missing a result.

Your first paper should be the report of an observational study. Choose a behavior that interests you, and that can be observed in people who are in a public place with no expectation of privacy. Observe the behavior in at least 20 people, and ask a question about the behavior. For example, is there a difference in the frequency of this behavior in males vs females? . . . in people in Vulgamore vs Olin? . . . in professors vs students? This must be a behavior that occurs naturally—you may not manipulate the situation in any way. Present your results in the form of an APA-style paper, and share the results with the class in the form of a brief oral report.

Your second paper is more elaborate. For this paper you will conduct a survey

addressing some psychological trait or behavior (kindness, trustworthiness, creativity, intelligence, religiosity, conservatism, . . .) and asking if the trait is correlated with some other characteristic (male/female, socioeconomic class, or even one of the other traits already suggested). You need to have a sound theoretical basis for hypothesizing the relationship, so you will need to read the literature related to the topics of interest. Because you will survey participants, you need to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting any data. This study will require at least 40 participants. Report the results in the form of an APA-style paper, and a poster to be presented during our scheduled final exam time.

The purpose of the projects that you will conduct and the papers that you will write is to help you to learn the skills that will set you apart as psychologists rather than psychology students. Learning about our discipline is great, but doing psychology is better. Your project might allow you to know something that nobody else knows, at least until you report your findings. This is a great feeling; enjoy it!

References

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