

The Basics of APA Formatting: Explanations and Examples

Jane C. Smith

West Hills Community College Library

Abstract

The abstract is a self-contained summary of the most important elements of the paper. It is written in block format, no indentation of first line, and begins on the line following the Abstract heading. It is 1 paragraph long and should not exceed 120 words. All numbers in the abstract (except those beginning a sentence) should be typed as digits rather than words. All sections of an APA paper are double-spaced, including Title Page, Abstract, Body, References, Etc. The following paper explains many elements of APA formatting while at the same time trying keep it simple. Instructions on where to go for more information and help are given in the paper.

The Basics of APA Formatting: Explanations and Examples

The body of the paper begins on a new page, this will be page 3. The title of the paper is centered and written with standard capitalization rules (capitalize the first letter of important words). Use page breaks after Title Page, Abstract, Body, Reference, etc. Subsections, which are sections under headings and subheadings, are not forced onto new pages with page breaks (although they might end up on a new page by coincidence). This paper can be printed out and stapled together to be used both as a reference and a visual.

This short sample paper is only meant to give an example of what an APA paper will generally look like. However, some instructors will have different requirements than those in the APA Publication Manual (American Psychological Association, 2010). If an instructor's rules differ from others, it is always advised to follow the instructor's rules first. It is the job of the student to understand and follow instructor guidelines.

For those new to APA formatting, it is highly recommended to do some research before attempting to write a paper. There are many rules and style expectations in APA formatting that differ greatly from other formats such as MLA and Chicago. On the West Hills College Coalinga: Library and Learning Resource Center website, under Writing Resources, there are many helpful links specifically chosen for those new to APA formatting (2009). These can easily be printed out for reference and used as visual guides.

In a true APA paper, the conclusion should not be a simple summary. It should draw connections between major ideas and then reiterate the focus of the paper rather than merely relisting every major point.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the american psychological association, sixth edition*. Washington DC: Author.

West Hills College Coalinga: Library and Learning Resource Center. (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.westhillscollge.com/coalinga/academics/library/index.asp>