APA Style Formatting – A Quick Guide

APA (American Psychological Association) style is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences and in many core science disciplines. This guide offers up a general set of rules to follow for the APA format or research papers. Specifically it will help you produce in-text citations, and the reference page, as well as several other general guidelines.

**General Format and Style**

The text should be written in a reasonably sized font that is east to read. In this class we will always use Times New Roman, size 12 font. The lines should be double spaced like this document.

General Style

The general style of the paper should be a formal report. The use of personal pronouns should be avoided. For example;

“We conducted an experiment…”

“The authors conducted an experiment…”

The language should be clear, concise and plain. Descriptions and explanations should be specific and condensed where possible. The language should be simple and unambiguous. Avoid figurative language when possible. This may require some editing as it is common that students laps into an informal prose.

Title

The title should be Times New Roman, size 12 font. It should be centered and NOT bolded. Avoid the temptation of changing the title. Whilst there are formats that may seem more attractive the APA format is an accepted style that is easy to read. The title should also be repeated in the header as a running title, along with the page number. The cover page should be page number 1.

Headings

The main headings should be written in the normal font and SHOULD be bolded and centered.

Sub Headings

Sub headings should be typed in the regular font and aligned to the left hand side of the page. The subheadings should NOT be in bold face type.

**Citations and Reference Section**

Citations

To cite a source in the body of the text the author’s family name should be stated along with the year of publication. For example Butler and Kraut (2002) give several examples of APA formatting. If there are more than two authors the following convention should be used; Butler et al (2002) outline the rules for APA formatting. Sometimes a sentence or a general idea may have been borrowed from a source and the entire reference will be placed in parentheses. For example. APA formatting has many rules, several authors have outlined these rules (Butler et al, 2002). Alternatively it is acceptable to cite a source from the reference section by number. APA formatting has many rules (1). The “(1)” refers to the corresponding citation in the reference section. Every time you enter a new citation it should be given a new number. If you use a source twice refer to it by the number it was originally assigned. Please note that some professors and teachers may not approve the numbering system. Technically it is not part of the APA system. However it is commonly used in class and will be acceptable in this course. If you use the numbering system you need to be consistent with it throughout the document. Don’t start using the authors name and year of publication, then switch to the number system.

Reference Section

The reference page should be completely separate from the body of the text on a new page. The following format should be used (again Times New Roman, size 12 font).

**References**

Journal entries:

Cummings, J. N., Butler, B., & Kraut, R. (2002). The quality of online social

relationships. *Communications of the ACM, 45*(7), 103-108.

Websites:

Gray, T. (2015) Periodictable.com: Carbon. Retrieved on Nov 16th, 2015, from: <http://periodictable.com/Elements/006/index.html>

Textbooks

Horton, P., McCarthy, T., Werwa, E., Zike, D. (2008) The Nature of Matter, Behavior of Fluids, Ch. 1, Sec. 3, p54-61. Glencoe, McGraw-Hill, Columbus, OH.

Notice that the second line is indented one inch (2.5 cm). This makes the reference easier to locate and when someone is reading your paper they can quickly look up references. If you have used a numbering system for your citations then all the references should be correctly numbered.

To reference a website the above style should be used when possible. This may mean that you need to research who the editor or author was. If a website has not listed this information then it is probably not a suitable source to use. Sometimes you may need to contact a website to obtain this information. In addition to the above information the date that the website was accessed should be provided. Often websites will be updated and information changed. It is actually a very simple task to find out what a website looked like on any given day. Anything on the internet truly stays on the internet forever!

**Conclusions**

Although the APA format may seem boring the conventions are designed to aid the reader. You will not lose marks for following these conventions even if other conventions may seem more visually striking. Do not be tempted to break from the outlined format, even if the end product may seem more attractive.

For a comprehensive review of APA formatting please refer to the following website;

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>