APA Style Basics

Basic Information (Publication Manual, section 8.03)

- Margins are to be one inch (1”) from the top, bottom, and sides.
- Double space everything, including block quotes and citations.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font. (This is not the default in Microsoft Word 2007, so decrease the font size.)
- Text is flush with the left margin. Do not justify lines.
- Indent the beginning of each paragraph using one tab space. Do not leave extra space between paragraphs, except for the abstract.
- Use two spaces after a period at the end of a sentence and one space after periods in a reference citation.
- Check the *Publication Manual* for setting up charts, tables, and graphs.

Writing Style (Publication Manual, sections 3.05 -3.11)

- Be consistent with the tense of your paper- avoid tense shifts. Using the past tense (*Smith showed*) and present perfect (*researchers have shown*) is okay for literature reviews. Use the past tense to describe results. The present tense is used to discuss the implications of the results and to present conclusions.
- Consider the paper’s *audience* when determining the *tone* of your writing; write as if you are trying to educate and/or persuade your audience not as if your giving orders or talking down to your audience in a condescending manner.
- Avoid wordiness and redundancy. Here are some common phrases that can be stated more succinctly: “based on the fact that” (because), “at the present time” (now), “for the purpose of” (“for” or “to”), “the present study” (this study).
- Avoid “to be” constructions in your writing. For example: “There were several students who completed the study” would be better stated as “several students completed the study”.
- Also avoid using vague pronouns and the editorial “we.”
- Read your paper aloud to catch mistakes or awkward wording.
- APA recommends that you have someone proofread your paper.
Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation (Publication Manual, sections 3.18-3.23)

Consult the Publication Manual for information on topics such as agreement of subject and verb, use of adverbs and pronouns, and parallel construction. Use the active voice, rather than the passive voice. Example: “Researchers selected the individuals at random,” rather than “The individuals were selected at random.”

Sections 4.01-4.11 discuss punctuation. Note that APA style now recommends using two spaces, rather than one, after a period at the end of a sentence.

Plagiarism (Publication Manual, section 1.10 and sections 6.01-6.10)

Plagiarism is defined as using someone else’s work and submitting it as your own, failing to give appropriate acknowledgement when directly quoting or paraphrasing another, or presenting another’s line of thinking without giving credit. Do not repeat the author’s key words or sentence structure when paraphrasing.

Commonly-known or understood material, such as a scientific truth or historical dates, do not have to be documented, nor do proverbs, sayings, and clichés.

When writing, keep the following in mind:
- Differentiate between paraphrase or summary and directly-quoted material.
- Do not copy and paste material directly from a source without citing it.
- Memorable or key phrases must be reworded unless directly quoted.
- Document or cite all lines of argument or reasoning.

Abbreviations (Publication Manual, sections 4.22-4.30)

Use abbreviations only if they will make your paper easier to read. Unless the abbreviation is one that is accepted as a word, such as IQ, ESP, and AIDS, you need to write it out completely the first time you use it and follow it immediately with the abbreviation in parentheses. For example:

To test this prediction, we used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Write out abbreviations for units of measurement, unless they are accompanied by numeric values. Examples: several centimeters, measured in millimeters, 15-20 cm, 45 mm

Refer to Table 4.4 on page 109 in the Publication Manual for a list of common abbreviations for units of measurement.

Use of Numbers (Publication Manual, sections 4.31-4.40)

See the Publication Manual for additional examples and exceptions to the following.
- Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.
- Use numerals for numbers preceding units of measurement (15 mg, 7 cm).
- Do not begin a sentence with a numeral – spell it out.
- Use numerals for numbers representing mathematical or statistical functions, percentages, ratios, and percentiles (divided by 2, 11%, a ratio of 22:1, the 10th percentile).
- Write out page numbers in full, such as 186-197.
- Use commas to separate groups of three digits, except for page numbers.

Copies of APA Publication Manual (6th ed.) are available for 2hr check out at the Information Commons Desk! (Revised 7/11/13)