

(Title) How to Complete an APA Style Research Paper:

A Student Guide for an Argumentative Paper

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List Course Name and Quarter, as well as any grant, funding, and correspondence address

Abstract

Your abstract is a brief summary of what the paper is about, including a description and the intentions that you, as author, have for the project. Please note the lack of paragraph indentations. The abstract has very specific guidelines that must be adhered to. First, you should synthesize the basic themes, findings, and conclusions of your work in the abstract. The abstract is not an introduction to the paper, but rather a brief explanation of the paper. The abstract therefore serves as a type of invitation to read the research paper. Second, the abstract must be accurately formatted. This abstract should be no more than one paragraph (usually about 150 - 250 words). Below the abstract you should list any and all keywords that would help someone find your paper in a database.

Keywords: sample APA style, writing guide, research paper, argumentative

(Title) How to Complete an APA Style Research Paper: A Student Guide

This document is designed to guide students through the process of writing a rhetorical or argumentative research paper in APA format. It is important to realize that the format here does not match the majority of sample papers in APA style that you will find on the web. While citation formats and overall text format remains the same as standard APA papers, argumentative papers are not structured the same way as scientific or “analytical” papers—the papers that are written in the field of psychology. In Communication Studies we do those analytical papers, but we also write rhetorical papers and therefore have to adapt the overall structure or parts of the paper to those needs.

Introduction

This sample APA style paper simplifies the necessary information available in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Sixth Edition, 2010.

First, it is important to recognize the standard format of all APA style papers. APA papers are always double-spaced and left-justified. APA papers should always be written in a standard 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman 12. There are one-inch margins on all sides of each page. All paragraphs (excepting the abstract) should be indented. Each page has a header and page number. And the paper is divided into very specific sections.

You begin with an introduction to the research paper. This introduction should be 1½ to 2 pages long, with standard paragraph indentations. The introduction should do the following: 1) introduce the topic; 2) introduce (preview) what is to come in the paper, highlighting the main body points that support the central claim of your argument; and 3) preview the themes/results/main body points of the topic. When writing basic research paper

centered around a rhetorical argument, you will focus on your thesis statement. This is the claim and warrant of Toulmin's (1958) model.

In a standard analytical APA paper, and in many of the articles you will research for your own paper, the introduction is followed by a literature review, a methods section, a results section, and a discussion. These papers are designed to explain how a researcher examines a research question. For more information on that format, consult the APA style manual, or contact your instructor. In adapting APA to a rhetorical paper, we use different sections built around argumentative logic: taking a position on an issue and supporting that argument with solid data. These papers are designed to explain how the researcher supports a claim. The sections of this type of paper are the introduction, the body (usually in three sub-sections) and the conclusion.

Body of Paper

The body of your argumentative research paper is a discussion of the theories and methods you are using to analyze your topic. The length of this section can vary, dependent on the paper size, but the total section should be about two-thirds of the full document. In this section you identify the resources you use in your analysis, and do the bulk of the analysis. Remember that your goal here is to reflect your central thesis statement and support your argument.

This section usually contains the bulk of the research about your topic. This may be a historical discussion of your topic, a listing of other research done on this topic (with the holes left—areas needing further research to justify why your study is valuable), and/or a narrative description of the particular topic or event you are studying, as supported by other research done of that or similar events. This is also where you will be

incorporating citations into your argument...using the data, backing, and any necessary qualifiers as explained by Toulmin (1958).

Body Section A

This section contains the first main point you are outlining, following the five-point essay model. This section should include multiple citations referencing your primary and scholarly sources as backing for the overall argumentative claim. To cite a resource in the text of your paper you use a parenthetical citation (Lastname, date). When there is more than one author, list them with commas after each name. This includes the comma before the ampersand symbol. (Lastname, Lastname2, & Lastname3, date). Note that the citation goes in parentheses before the period at the end of the sentence. If you are using a direct quote, you should “cite the page number as well” (Lastname, date, p. 72).

You can also incorporate the author’s name into the text of your paper directly if you feel the need to emphasize the point: Lastname and Lastname2 (date) explain that students should “cite the page number as well” (p. 72). Note that when naming the authors directly in the text and not in the parentheses you should write out “and” rather than using the ampersand. Note also that the date stays with the author’s last name, and the period on the sentence always comes after the citation and at the end of the quote.

Body Section B

This section will cover the information and resources for your second main body point. As in the first body section, the central theme of this section is a sub-claim that supports the central claim of your argument. Once again, supporting data and backing is necessary in this section as it is the means you are using to justify your argument through

forensic data and evidence. Therefore, citations, examples, and quotes are valuable means of reinforcing your claim.

You may also need to use a longer or block quotation in any of these body sections. Block quotations should be used when your quote is 40 words or longer. Blocking the quotation involves indenting the left-hand side of the quote. In this case you don't use the quotation marks and start after a colon. As Lastname2 (date): explains

Students are often challenged by the logic of APA style. One of the more challenging things for students is understanding why it is important to cite sources throughout the paper. We must do this in order that the reader knows where the information is coming from as it is being read. By using parenthetical citations, we can let the reader know the source of the information. (p. 199)

You'll note in the block quote above this is the exception to the period at the end of the citation rule. In block quotes the punctuation stays with the quote itself. You'll also note that the paragraph continues after the quote, without indentation. While this is not always the case, it is common to use the block quote mid-paragraph.

Body Section C

Following the five-point essay standard, you should follow Body Sections A and B with a third main point that supports the central argument. Once again, this should be backed by forensic data and scholarly testimony, with citations, quotes, and examples. It is incredibly important to back your own credibility with well-cited sources and clarity of what those sources are. First, this helps reinforce your own argument by showing that it is reflective of other research in the topic area. Second, it shows that you are aware of proper citation rules and guidelines, and are not plagiarizing or stealing other people's ideas.

Failing to give proper credit to the sources you use, either by quoting directly or paraphrasing, is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of academic theft and is taken seriously within the academy. In this course, you will fail the assignment and possibly the course itself if you plagiarize.

Conclusion

The discussion or conclusion section is used in both argumentative and analytical papers. In both cases you should briefly summarize and then talk about the implications of your research. In other words, answer the question “Who Cares?” In the analytical discussion section you reiterate your hypotheses and research questions or your thesis statement. Then, you analyze the results of your study as a reflection of your theoretical perspective. In an analytical paper this is where you explain the significance of the study, and illustrate how your study was both valid and reliable. In an argumentative paper this is where you reinforce your argument, and clear up any possible counter-claims. You also reinforce the significance of your argument in this section. Make sure your reader is taking something away from the paper with them.

In this section you should also point out any shortcomings of your study—what it could not explain and why. Then you make suggestions for future research that should be done on your topic. From this section, your reader should know exactly why this study is important, and what the implications are for the field of study.

This section is followed by the **reference page** or **reference section**. The reference page should start on a new page—after a “page break” in your word processing software. Do not be confused—the reference page is usually several pages long. Your references will be listed double-spaced, using proper APA style. All sources are alphabetically arranged by

author, or by title if no author is known. Please note that in APA style these are formatted using a **hanging indent**.

References

Your references go here, double-spaced, using the citation style that you have chosen for the paper. Please note that in APA style these are formatted using a hanging indent. This is also the style used for MLA citations.

Also note that Authors' first names are removed from the author line. This is done in an attempt to avoid gender bias in readership.

Citations on the Reference page should be alphabetical by author's last name, or corporate author name. If no author is listed use the title.

For electronically located periodicals, including newspapers, newsletters, journals, and magazines, include any assigned the **digital object identifier** (DOI). If not, list the web location of the article.

A few of the citation styles are listed below. For more information we recommend the APA style guide at Purdue University's OWL (Online Writing Lab) site.

Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Below are several examples of source types, with correct formatting. These are the types of sources you will most likely use in your research paper.

Lastname, F. M. (date). *Book title without capitalizations excepting first word and proper names*. Location: Publisher.

Lastname, F. M. (date). *Book title without capitalizations excepting first word and proper names: Web format or e-book*. Retrieved from <http://web.address.for.source>

Lastname, F. M., Lastname2, F. M., & Lastname3, F. (date). Title of a chapter in an edited book. In F. Lastname (Ed.). *Title of book with only first word capitalized*, (pp. xxx-xxxx).

Lastname, F. M., Lastname2, F. M., & Lastname3, F. (date). Title of a chapter in an online edited book. In F. Lastname, F. Lastname2, & F. Lastname3 (Eds.). *Title of book with only first word capitalized*, (pp. xxx-xxxx). Retrieved from <http://web.address.for.source>

Lastname, F. M., Lastname2, F. M., & Lastname3, F. (date). Title of a chapter in a book with a digital object identifier. In F. Lastname, F. Lastname2, & F. Lastname3 (Eds.). *Title of book with only first word capitalized*, (pp. xxx-xxxx).
Doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx

Lastname, F. M., Lastname2, F. M., & Lastname3, F. (date). Title of the article in an academic journal. *Journal Name with Capitalizations*, volume number, issue number, page-page. Doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx

Lastname, F. M., (date). Title of the article in an academic journal with no digital object identifier. *Journal Name with Capitalizations*, volume number, issue number, page-page. <http://web.address.for.source>

Lastname, F. M., & Lastname2, F. (Last edited date). Title of online resource.
Retrieved from <http://web.address.for.source>

Lastname, F. M. (Producer), & Lastname, F. (Director). (date). *Title of motion picture without capitalizations* [Motion picture]. Country of Origin: Studio.

Toulmin, S. (1969). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.