

What is APA and why do we use it?

APA stands for “American Psychological Association” and is a standardized formatting style for academic writing in the social sciences. In the mid-20th century, the APA committee published the first *APA Publication Manual*. Since then, the APA style guide has received 7 updates—the most recent 7th edition of APA was published in 2019.

The goal of the APA style guide is to centralize and unify the academic writing styles in fields like Psychology, Linguistics, Sociology, Economics, Criminology, and others. In the classroom, student papers are organized, precise, and plagiarism-free when they follow the APA style guide.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a central form of academic dishonesty. Essentially, it is the **process of taking the writing and ideas of others without giving them credit**. Think of it as a form of intellectual theft, which will result in disciplinary action (see Rule 11 of MCCTC’s Student Code of Conduct). The only way not to plagiarize is to properly cite (both in-text and in a reference page) all the materials you have taken from sources other than yourself.

Another form of plagiarism is called **patchwriting**. Patchwriting is when a writer copies the writing from another, but changes a few words or parts of its grammatical or syntactical structures. The best way not to patchwrite is to simply properly quote and cite the materials you have taken from a source. Another method you can use to avoid patchwriting is to fully rewrite source materials with your own words and voice.

Lastly, having someone else or an AI write your paper for you is also plagiarism. Instructors are highly trained in determining writing patterns in students and how those patterns deviate from person to person. An instructor can easily determine when your writing style has unnaturally changed. Additionally, many AI writing detectors exist and can identify AI writing with high accuracy. The only way to avoid this form of plagiarism is to simply write your papers yourself.

APA 7th Edition Rules

Structurally, APA papers contain four components in this order: **Title Page, Abstract, Main Body, and References**. Each page, besides the title page, should have a running head. A running head is your paper's title fully capitalized. In Microsoft Word, you may add a running head by clicking "Insert," then "Header," then selecting the first "Blank" option. From there, you will type in your title in all caps. For example: "APA 7th EDITION RULES."

Title Page

Format your title page as follows:

APA 7th Edition Rules

John Smith

Adult Career Center, Mahoning County Career and Technical Center

Career Readiness

Instructor's name

Date, formatted as: May 18, 2023

Abstract

Your abstract roughly summarizes your paper. According to Purdue OWL, your abstract should contain “at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions” (n.d., para. 13). It is unlikely you will be conducting research, so the **participants, methods, results, and data analysis sections** will probably not be included. However, if you are gathering sources, explain how, why, and where you found your sources. Also, an abstract is an appropriate place to describe a broader analysis of the sources you found.

Main Body

The main body of your paper is essentially the essay itself. Your main body should contain the following aspects: introductory paragraph, thesis statement (typically as the final sentence of your intro paragraph), multiple body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

Introductory Paragraph

Your introductory should contain 2-4 sentences on the background of your research topic. Then, the final sentence should be your thesis statement. A **thesis statement** should clearly and precisely lay out each point you will be examining. Your paper should examine 3-6 points depending on its required length and instructor preferences. Typically, a thesis statement also contains an argument. For example: **Automotive Technology is a worthwhile field to enter because there is proven job market growth, jobs have fair wages, and the skills learned in the field are useful outside of work.**

Because the thesis statement above has three main points, it would be expected that your body paragraphs dive deep into those points, in the order which you list them, and give examples that prove your point to be true (this is called evidence.)

Body Paragraphs

How to structure a paragraph

As you begin to write your body paragraphs, it is important to understand how a paragraph is structured. Paragraphs typically contain 3-5 sentences. Sentence 1 acts as an introduction to the paragraph. Sentence 2 reemphasizes the claim or point being made. Sentence 3 is a quote from a reputable source that proves the claim true. Sentence 4 is your commentary on the source and the claim together, reemphasizing that the claim being made is proven true because of the source information (evidence). Lastly, sentence 5 may be a conclusion to the paragraph or a sentence that helps transition from the current paragraph to the next paragraph.

APA In-text Citations

APA in-text citations are fairly easy to follow. Just remember that three pieces of information are required for an APA in-text citation: **the author(s) name, the date, and the page number**. By including this information, you insure that you are not plagiarizing the writing of others and allows your reader to easily find your source material.

There are many times when one or more of those pieces of information is missing. Here are the solutions for when information is missing:

No author “Source Article Title”

No date n.d. (stands for no date)

No page number para. (abbreviation for paragraph, count paragraphs instead)

So, when there is no discernable author, the article's title in quotation marks will stand in for the author. When there is no discernable date, n.d. will stand in for a date. When there are no discernable page numbers, count the paragraphs and use para. instead.

Here are some examples of full APA in-text citations:

According to Johnson, "The Automotive Technology field is expected to grow by 5,000 jobs in 2024" (2023, p. 25).

According to studies in the Automotive Technology field, "[jobs are] expected to grow by 5,000 in 2024" (Johnson, 2023, p. 25).

According to Smith, "Automotive Technology allows for workers to become handymen at home" (n.d., para. 19).

Studies show "Automotive Technology fields are among the highest paid skilled trades" ("U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Study," 2021, p. 5).

Overall, make sure the three basic pieces of information (author(s), date, and page number) are present in your citation. If a piece of information is missing, substitute it by following the directions above.

Concluding Paragraph

A conclusion typically achieves two main objectives. It restates the topic and thesis, emphasizing why the research in this paper is important, and it ends a paper with an answer to “why does this matter?” Your conclusion paragraph may end with a call-to-action statement directed towards the reader or it may make a large claim about the importance of the topic/research.

Reference Page

When creating an APA citation, there are a series of rules that must be followed. Citations are organized **alphabetically** inside the reference page. Each reference requires a “hanging indent,” as seen in the examples below.

The information required within a citation varies depending on the source itself. For example, a website and a newspaper will have slightly different rules. For a full guide of the rules for every source type, go to [APA Style](#). Generally, citations will look like this:

Bologna, C. (2019, October 31). *Why some people with anxiety love watching horror movies*. HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/anxiety-love-watching-horror-movies_1_5d277587e4b02a5a5d57b59e

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). *General Format*. Purdue University. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Roberts, N. (2020, June 10). *Trayvon Martin’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, qualifies to run for elected office*. BET News. <https://www.bet.com/news/national/2020/06/10/trayvon-martin-mother-sybrina-fulton-qualifies-for-office-florid.html>

Toner, K. (2020, September 24). *When Covid-19 hit, he turned his newspaper route into a lifeline for senior citizens*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/04/us/coronavirus-newspaper-deliveryman-groceries-senior-citizens-cnnheroes-trnd/index.html>

An APA citation for websites will follow this organizational structure:

Last Name, First Initial. (Date). *Title of article*. Institution's Name. Website Link.

Roughly, this will be how most APA citations are organizationally structured. However, more information may be necessary for sources like books, book chapters, print periodicals, etc.

Again, follow the [APA Style](#) guide for further direction.