

**APA-style Overview Handout**

- Formatting is important, but the content of the paper is what is going to determine your score on the papers. Pay attention to what information goes into each section of the paper (including the hourglass shape of APA-style papers) - missing and/or out of place information will lead to a poor score.

- **Title page**
  - Title should be 10-12 words, including your variables of interest and appropriate to the level of claim that was tested
  - Short title should be 2-3 words (all in CAPS in top left margin following “Running Head:“)
  - “Running head” only appears on title page, but short title should appear in all CAPS on the top left margin header of all following pages

- **Abstract**
  - No more than 150 words summarizing paper (1-2 sentences from each section of the paper ; *hint:* write the abstract last after you complete the other sections of the paper)
  - Should include: purpose/problem; participants; method; findings; conclusion and implications
  - No citations in the abstract!

- **Introduction** -- telling a story in APA-style; hourglass shape – general → specific; *hint:* write last paragraph first, then write 1st paragraph, then figure out what kind of story you can tell based on your references that will lead to the last paragraph about your study
  - Opening statement should be general statement about people (behavior) – not research!
  - Use examples
  - Literature review (summarize current knowledge in this area specific to your study; should lead to and justify your hypothesis; do not use direct quotes, paraphrase then cite the source)
  - End with overview of your study (what you are investigating and expecting to find; i.e., hypothesis)

- **Method**
  - Design: specify the research design (variables, and how operationalized)
  - Participants: describe your sample (age/sex/education/number); sampling procedure;
  - Materials: in separate sub-sections (i.e., paragraphs) describe all measures you used (including scales and creation of any scales); can also include copy of any novel questionnaire in appendix
  - Procedure: describe exact procedure followed (e.g., order of measures)

- **Results**
  - Restate hypothesis
  - Describe statistical tests conducted (e.g., ANOVA) specifying independent and dependent variables
  - Report findings (refer to the APA Publication Manual and Appendix A and Appendix C of the Lab Manual posted on Moodle) – this should be an objective description of your findings (stats, mean/SDs, p-values, etc.) NO INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS HERE!
  - Refer to tables and figures (as applicable) – these come at the end of the paper following the References section (see APA manual and/or text for how to format these)

- **Discussion**
  - Begin with specifics about your hypothesis – was it supported or not? Why or why not? (i.e., interpret your findings)
  - What are the implications of your findings?
How do your findings compare to research you cited in the Introduction? (i.e., are your findings consistent with previous research? Why or why not?)

What are limitations of your study? (this may help you explain any inconsistent findings)

What are future directions (i.e., how could you improve on your study given the limitations? Were any new questions raised by your study or questions left unanswered?)

End with broad general conclusion statement

- References
  - List references in alphabetical order by first author’s last name in APA format
  - For multiple references from same first author(s), list chronologically (oldest first)
  - Only cite references found in paper!

- General comments
  - The abstract should be on a separate page with the Introduction starting on a new page (pg. 3)
    - Method, Results, and Discussion sections do not start on new page
    - References/Tables/Figures start on a new page
  - Citations
    - Again, avoid using direct quotes – paraphrase, then cite the author(s)
    - Within parentheses use the ampersand (&) and use last names only
    - Within a sentence, cite as: Hehman and Bugental (2008) suggest that ageism....
    - For 3-5 authors, cite all the authors by last name (e.g., Hehman, German, & Klein, 2005) the first time, then first author et al., any time after that (e.g., Hehman et al., 2005)
    - For 6+ authors, cite (last name of first author et al., date)
    - NOTE: For articles with 2 authors, you always use both authors’ last names
    - If you have multiple citations for one sentence, separate by a semi-colon (e.g., Hehman & Bugental, 2008; Salmon, 2001)
  - Writing a research paper is a process, requiring revisions and rewriting
    - Use the paper writing checklist
    - Don’t get too attached to things you write the first time through – revision means rewriting which often entails restructuring of your paper and/or deleting sentences/paragraphs
    - Sometimes editing our own papers can be hard – we tend to be blind to our mistakes and/or get attached to ways we first wrote something; TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL REVISION = read your paper aloud to yourself and/or ask a friend/family member to read the paper for coherency
    - You should write your paper in past tense
    - Avoid common mistakes – see lab manual appendix B
      - For example:
        o Data (plural) vs. Datum (singular)
        o Affect vs. Effect