APA Style
Academic Tip Sheet

This academic tip sheet:

- questions whether you should be using APA style;
- reviews the use of punctuation;
- examines the heading types used;
- discusses how to format quotations;
- looks at a range of stylistic conventions (punctuation, footnotes, capitalisation, abbreviations, numbers metrication, decimal fractions and italics); and
- shows how to display graphs and tables.

Should you use APA style?

In setting out formal work you need to be clear about the distinction between the essay and report style.

Essay Style: This is characterised by continuous prose, marked only by the divisions into the paragraphs and chapters characteristic of literary writing. Essays are not formatted according to APA style.

Report Style: This is characterised by the use of headings and by the use of Arabic or Roman numerals or letters of the alphabet to indicate the levels of importance on the text.

Reports are often written using the APA style but you should **check with your lecturer or tutor** to see how they require reports to be formatted in their unit.

Note: *Academic tip sheets do not use APA style.*

Levels of Headings

The APA style recommends up to five levels of headings; however, the five levels are used only in reports that contain a great amount of content and detail. The five levels of headings recommended by the APA style are:

CENTRED UPPERCASE HEADING	Level 5
Centred Uppercase and Lowercase Heading	Level 1
Centred. Italicised. Uppercase and Lowercase Heading	Level 2
Flush Left. Italicised. Uppercase and Lowercase Side Heading	Level 3
Indented, italicised, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.	Level 4

Example (5 levels);

PILOT STUDY	Level 5
Standardisation of Attitude towards Mathematics Scale	Level 1
Method	Level 2
Primary School Subjects	Level 3
Year 4 students.	Level 4

A small article may only need one level of heading - use Level 1.

Example:

Attitude towards Mathematics	Level 1

A slightly longer article may require two levels of headings - use Level 1 and Level 3,

Example:

Attitude towards Mathematics	Level 1
Primary School Subjects	Level 3

Other articles may need three levels of headings - use Level 1, Level 3 and Level 4.

Example:

Attitude towards Mathematics	Level 1
Primary School Subjects	Level 3
Year 4 students.	Level 4

Other articles may require four headings - use Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4.

Example:

Standardisation of Attitude towards Mathematics Scale	Level 1
Method	Level 2
Primary School Subjects	Level 3
Year 4 students.	Level 4

Punctuation

Commas

Use one space after all punctuation, including:

- after commas, colons, semi-colons;
- after punctuation marks at the end of sentences;
- after periods that separate parts of a reference citation; and
- after periods of the initials in personal names.

Example:

(eg., J. R. Zhang) (APA, 2001, p. 290).

Punctuation affects the meaning of what you write and reflects the intonation patterns which make spoken language clear.

For example, note the difference between the use of two commas (like brackets) and no commas in the following sentences:

The students who worked hard did well.

Here 'who worked hard' *defines* which students did well.

The students, who worked hard, did well.

Here all the students did well.

Note: *The use of a pair of commas makes 'who worked hard' an additional comment, not a defining one*

Dashes

A dash (-) is used for hyphenation and negative values. An en dash (–) is used between words of equal weight in compound adjectives.

Example:

Chicago–London flight

An em dash) (—) can be used to indicate a sudden interruption in the continuity of a sentence.

Example:

These authors pointed out that particular aspects of the problem-solving exercise—such as the strategy adopted and task perseverance—could be related to the student's understanding of the problem.

Note: *There are no spaces before or after an em dash.*

Quotations

All material quoted from another author's work or from one's own previously published work should be reproduced word for word.

Short quotations (less than 40 words) must be incorporated into the text and enclosed within double quotation marks. Use single quote marks to show words/phrases that were presented within quote marks in the original.

Longer quotations (40 words or more in length) must be displayed in block format without the use of quote marks. The quote should start on a new line and be indented about 1.3 cm or 5 spaces from the left margin. The entire quotation (in the block format) should be similar to the rest of the document. Do not change the font size or use italics. Use double quote marks to show words/phrases that were presented within quotation marks in the original.

Note: *All quotations need to be correctly in-text and end-text referenced.*

Footnotes

There are two types of footnotes:

1. Content footnote

Only use a content footnote if it contains important supplementary or amplifying information. If the note is complicated or long, it should be included in the body of the text, or as an appendix if major support material is required.

2. Copyright permission footnote

If you have specific permission to include copyright material it must be acknowledged, either in the reference list or in a footnote. Generally these are used for tables or figures.

Number footnotes consecutively with Arabic superscript numerals. A second or subsequent reference to the same footnote is put in brackets.

Example:

... produced the same error (see Footnote 2).

Capitalisation

Capitalise major words and all other words of four letters or more, in headings, titles, and subtitles outside reference lists, for example, "A Study of No-Win Strategies."

Capitalise nouns before numbers, but not before variables. Do not capitalise names of laws, theories, and hypotheses.

Examples:

Trial 2

trial x

chapter 6

row 3

page v

Abbreviations

Explain what an abbreviation means the first time it occurs: American Psychological Association (APA). If an abbreviation is commonly used as a word, it does not require explanation (IQ, LSD, AIDS, ESP). Approved abbreviations include:

- e.g.,   for example,
- , etc.   , and so forth
- cf.   compare
- i.e.   that is
- viz.,   namely,
- vs.   versus

Numbers expressed in figures

Generally in APA style, numbers below 10 are expressed as words whereas those 10 and above are expressed as figures.

Examples:

the fourth attempt

the 12th trial

Where numbers form part of a list then numbers below 10 are listed as figures.

Examples:

4 of 25 samples

3rd and 14th lines

Where the numbers form part of different lists then they should be treated separately.

Example:

15 characteristics found in four separate lists

Note: *The characteristics and lists are separate items.*

Use numbers to precede a measurement.

Examples:

10.4 cm

6 g

Use numbers when representing statistical or mathematical functions, time, samples.

Example:

in about 4 years

at 12.45 p.m.

9 samples

January 12, 2007

a ration of 3:1

0.45 of the

less than 5% of the mixture

the 4th percentile

multiplied by 3

were paid $4 each

1 hr 20 min

Metrication

Use the standard metric symbol to express a metric unit. Generally these are written in lower case. One exception to this rule is to use the symbol L for litre as a lower case symbol could be misinterpreted as the numeral one. Normally there is a space between the symbol and the number it is associated with (degrees, minutes and seconds are exceptions).

Examples:

12 °C

0.4 mg/L

5 ng/dl

35° angle

Do not make symbols of units plural.

Example:

4 cm **not** 4 cms

Do not use a full stop after a symbol unless it is at the end of a sentence.

Decimal fractions

Use a zero before the decimal point when numbers are less than 1.

Example:

0.25 cm

Italics

Use italics for:

1. Scientific names

Note: In scientific names, the Genus takes a capital letter and the species a small letter. Such names are also italicised.

Examples:

Eucalyptus griffithsii

The generic name may be abbreviated to the initial capital after the first use of the name.

Example:

E. griffithsii

2. Emphasis

Specific words, parts of words or single letters that need special emphasis or could be misread are indicated by italicising.

Example:

The use of *a* or *the* in this case is obligatory.

3. Letters used as statistical symbols or algebraic variables

Examples:

$F(1,53) = 10.03$

t test

$a/b = c/d$

SD

Do not use italics for:

1. Foreign words and phrases

Foreign words and phrases should **not** be italicised.

Examples:

ad hoc, fait accompli, coup d'etat apartheid, prima facie, naive, espresso

2. Chemical terms

Examples:

$NaCl$, KOH, H_2O

3. Trigonometric terms

Examples:

sin, log, cosine

4. Greek letters

Examples:

α, β

Tables

Tables can present both quantitative data and words. The recommended format for tables is:

Table 9

Mean Numbers of Correct Responses by Children With and Without Pretraining

Group	n^a	Grade level	
		3	6
Girls			
With	20(18)	280	319
Without	20(19)	240	263
Boys			
With	20(19)	281	317
Without	20(20)	232	262

Note. maximum score = 320
a Numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of children who completed all tests.

Note:

- Table number in Arabic numerals, flush left, not italicised.
- Tables should be numbered in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.
- Table title under the table number and above the table, flush left, italicised, upper and lower case.
- Titles should be brief and clear.
- Heading of columns have capital for first letter of first word only.
- Use horizontal rule lines only. Do not use vertical lines.
- General notes to a table are indicated under the table in a smaller point size as *Note.*
- Specific notes are indicated by superscript lowercase letters.
- Extremely detailed tables should be presented in an appendix.

Figures

In APA style any type of illustration that is not a table (graphs, charts, drawings, maps and photographs) is called a figure. Good figures should be simple and clear.

Graphs

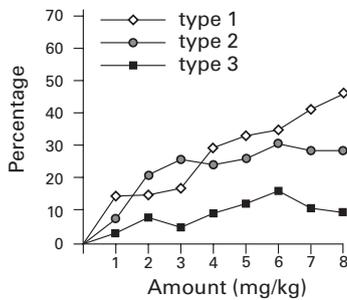The recommended format for graphs is:

Line graphs

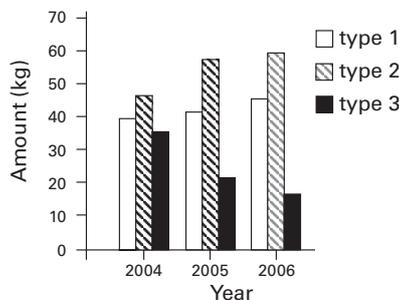*Figure 1*. Proportion of strains in Sydney

Bar graphs

Figure 2. Amount of disinfectant used

Note:

- Figure numbers are in Arabic numerals, flush left, italicised, below the figure.
- Figure title in sentence format follows the figure number on the same line. Capitalise only the first word and any proper nouns.
- Axis labels use capitalisation of important words and a san serif typeface (e.g., Arial, Helvetica).
- Vertical axis labels use vertically aligned text.
- Legends are contained within the borders of the graph.
- The zero point is placed on the ordinate (y) axis.
- Lines and points should be clear and sharp.
- Bars use different fill patterns to make them easy to distinguish.
- Units of measurement are specified.

Appendixes

If there is only one appendix, label it Appendix; if there is more than one appendix, label each one with a capital letter (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) in the order in which it is mentioned in the main text. Each appendix must have a title.

APA style checklist

- **Have you checked with your lecturer or tutor as to how your report is to be styled?**
- **Did you decide on how many heading levels you need to use?**
- **Have you checked your punctuation?**
- **If you are using footnotes, are they appropriate?**
- **Have you used italics correctly?**
- **Are all the tables and figures clear and formatted correctly?**
- **Are all tables and figures mentioned in the text?**

References

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Acknowledgements