Useful APA Tips

Why do we use APA?

- APA style, which is the format developed by the American Psychological Association, is expected if you are writing in disciplines such as psychology, criminal justice, biology or education.
- APA style focuses on current research by emphasizing the publication dates of cited sources.
- By using only surnames and initials, APA attempts to remove as much potential bias as possible.
- Using one format creates consistency across research-oriented fields.

Keep track of sources.

- Print sources out and keep them in a single folder, or make a special folder on your computer.
- Make note of DOI’s (universal reference codes found on online academic articles) for sources you plan to cite in your paper, so you do not have to hunt them down later.
- Make your references page as you go; this strategy will save you a lot of time down the road.

Include the year of publication.

- All in-text citations should be accompanied by the year of publication, for example:
  Lori Friesen (2009) explains in her article “Exploring Animal-Assisted Programs with Children in School and Therapeutic Contexts” that the concept of Animal-Assisted Therapy originated from Boris Levinson’s early work, and due to his innovation in the field he is often revered as the “pioneer of AAT with children” (p. 262).

Use examples for references page citations.

- If citing an academic article, the reference list citation will always use the format:

Feel free to copy this template, and rewrite each section of the template with the appropriate citation.

Avoid negative framing when presenting results.

- Don’t write: “The results did not support the hypothesis.”
- Do write: “The results failed to support the hypothesis.”

Put the cause before the effect.

- Don’t write: “Men demonstrated more aggression after eating churros.”
- Do write: “After eating churros, men demonstrated more aggression.”

Use the active voice.

- Don’t write: “Less pain is often experienced by patients in hospice than patients in treatment.”
- Do write: “Patients in hospice often experience less pain than patients in treatment.”

Complete comparisons.

- Don’t write: “Dogs tended to score higher on positive affect.”
- Do write: “Dogs tended to score higher than cats on positive affect.”

Avoid overusing pronouns.

- Don’t write: “We determined that there was no significant difference between the two groups.”
- Do write: “Researchers of the current study determined that there was no significant difference between the two groups.”

Single digit numbers are written as words, whereas two digit numbers are written as numerals.

- Don’t write: “Researchers found 9 wolves spread out across fourteen acres of land.”
- Do write: “Researchers found nine wolves spread out across 14 acres of land.”

Use available resources when you need help.

- Handbooks are available for reference in the Writing Center
- Library Citation Style Guides at https://www.xavier.edu/library/students/citation-style-guides
- Xavier’s Librarians https://xavier.edu/library/ask-a-librarian

Courtesy of the James A. Glenn Writing Center at Xavier University, Fall 2017
Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab https://owl.english.purdue.edu