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Introduction to APA Publication
Style for Research Reports in Psychology

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe and model APA-style of writing for research reports. Each section of an APA-style paper is described and is written according to the APA-style guidelines to allow you to use it as a model. The Abstract summarizes the main points of the paper in 120 or fewer words. The Introduction should describe the research topic and hypotheses and the support for these hypotheses. The Methods section is written in subsections: Participants, Design, Materials, and Procedure. The Results section should be described in enough detail to replicate it. The Results section describes the data and any statistical tests used. The Discussion restates the hypotheses, giving evidence if they are supported.

Introduction to APA Publication

Style for Research Reports in Psychology

This paper is designed to help you understand the formatting and organization of an APA style research report. Each section of the report is described in its appropriate location within the report.

The first section of the main text of the report is the Introduction. The purpose of the Introduction is to (a) describe the purpose of the study, (b) place the study in the context of previous research on the topic, and (c) justify your hypotheses (Smith, 2006). Each paragraph of the Introduction should bring the reader closer to understanding why the study was done and what hypotheses you are making.

The first paragraph of the Introduction should introduce a general topic of the study. Do not begin too generally (e.g., discussing all of psychology), but do not begin too specifically either (e.g., by stating the hypothesis). Be sure to define any terms you are using that are specific to the field of study. Indicate what your operational definitions are.

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In subsequent paragraphs, you should be building a case for your study. Explain what has been found in previous research on this topic, describe what gap exists in this literature, and explain how your study will fill the gap (i.e., provide a unique study that will contribute new knowledge in the area).

Toward the end of your Introduction, you should briefly describe the design of your study in such a way that it connects to the justification you've given for the purpose of the study and leads to your hypotheses. Be sure to briefly review the justification for your hypotheses. Do not simply state your hypotheses and assume the reader will know why you are making them.

APA STYLE FOR RESEARCH REPORTS

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In the Method section, you should describe the details of how the study was conducted. You should provide the reader with enough information to be able to replicate your study. Details that are not important for replication should not be included (e.g., what type of pencils the participants used, etc.). The reader should also be able to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods for the hypothesis you made. Method sections may vary in the number of sections the authors include, but the most common sections are described below. The entire Method section should be written in past verb tense.

Participants

Describe who participated in your study. How many participants were in the study and how were they selected/recruited? In what way were the participants compensated for running in the study? Were any data sets deleted? If so, why were they deleted? Describe any demographics of the participants that important to the study. If you've conducted an experiment, indicate how many participants were assigned to each condition.

Design

The design may appear separately in a journal article or it may be combined with another section (e.g., Materials section). Either way, it is important to explain the design of the study. What variables were manipulated and/or measured? How were they

manipulated/measured? If there are independent variables in the study, indicate the levels of each variable and whether each variable was manipulated within- or between-subjects.

Materials

Describe the materials used in the study. What were the stimuli? How were they developed? If appropriate, provide examples of the stimuli. Provide citations if the stimuli have been used in previous research. If there are questionnaires or surveys, describe them and relevant reliability and validity statistics.

Procedure

Describe the procedure of the study in chronological order. Explain what the participants did in the order they did them. Summarize the instructions. What tasks did they perform? In what order did they perform them? If different participants were exposed to different conditions, explain the differences in the conditions.

Results

You should begin your Results section with a statement of your dependent measure. In addition, in your results section you should describe the analysis conducted on your data. Also report the outcome of the analyses (e.g., means, standard deviations, t values, F values, etc.). Know the correct format for reporting statistics. Tables and figures may accompany your results section. Use tables or figures when they more clearly display results. Never include the same data in both a table and a figure (McBride &

Wagman, 1999).

Discussion

The first part of your discussion should review the hypotheses you stated in the introduction and you should state which hypotheses were supported by the data. State which results provided the support for a particular hypothesis.

In the second part of the discussion section you should compare your results to past studies, particularly studies discussed in the introduction. If the results are not the same, discuss possible reasons for the difference.

Lastly, in your discussion section you should discuss the validity of your study. Were there any possible confounding variables that could have affected your results? If so, what were they and how did they specifically affect your study? You may also want to propose future research.

The discussion section is less rigid than the other sections in format. You have more freedom here to discuss any relevant issues pertaining to your study. Be sure to end your Discussion section with a paragraph summarizing the contribution of your study. See the Appendix for some additional APA-style writings tips.

References

McBride, D. M., & Wagman, J. B. (1997). Rules for reporting statistics in papers.

Journal of APA Style Rules, 105, 55-67.

Smith, K. C. (2006). How to write an APA-style paper in psychology, *Journal of APA*

Style Rules, 114, 23-34.

Watermark text.

Appendix

Additional APA-style Writing Tips

8 1/2 X 11 inch good quality paper

Use 1 inch margins

All text double-spaced

Start References on new page

No low resolution printers

No handwritten corrections

Indent paragraphs five letter spaces (this can be more than five space bar strikes on a word processor program)

No hyphenated broken words

Left margin justification for body of text

Do not right justify - leave right margin broken

Number all pages except figures in upper right margin with short title (see Appendix A)

Don't forget to include a running head on the Title Page

Include a separate page for figure captions

Correctly present numbers, including statistical copy

Use the metric system for all measurements

Use past tense to describe aspects of the study

Avoid sexist language

Spell check your work

Appendix (continued)

Maintain correct subject-verb agreement

Do not underline words for emphasis (italicize them)

Know the proper procedure for citations

Carefully reference every work used in your paper

Watermark text.