

# **Mini-Dissertation Write-up Guide**

## **Part 01 - General Overview**

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### **Embracing the Dissertation Process**

Welcome to the exciting journey of dissertation writing in psychology! This chapter serves as your compass, guiding you through the critical aspects of dissertation writing, post-data collection. Our focus here is not just on the technicalities but on empowering you with the tools and mindset needed to navigate this journey successfully, both this year, and next!

You have a word limit of 2,500 words for the Year 2 Mini-Dissertation, which may seem like a lot at this point in time. However, you have a great deal of complicated information to convey in a rigorous structure, and so you'll never do a good job if you try to do it all at once. The best advice I can give you is to plan the work ahead of you, and deal with each section individually and expect to write multiple drafts.

### **The Rationale for APA 7 Formatting**

American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition formatting isn't just about adhering to needless conventions; it's about clarity, consistency, and presenting information in a way that is technically proficient and accessible to intelligent readers, whether psychologists or not! I'll delve into the essentials of APA 7, highlighting its guiding principles and how it underpins the structure and presentation of your research.

Although the structure and format of an APA 7 dissertation may seem restrictive and somewhat artificial, it's designed to be consistent across journal articles and dissertations. There's a huge amount of support available online to which I point to you below where you can look for information on stylistic elements and tone of voice.

On the topic of tone of voice, the biggest mistake that we see every year is people trying to adopt an overly complex or unnatural tone of voice. This is not the goal of APA style. Your goal should be to speak in a technically advanced manner but that is accessible to an intelligent reader. This will be primarily in the third person, so not using 'I' or 'my'. The only

exception to this will be in the *reflective account* that comes after your references and is NOT included in the word-count. So spend some time thinking about how best to phrase any of the key terms in your dissertation (Variables, Conditions, Concepts etc) and stick to it. Be consistent, find the best way of saying it and use that rather than varying your terminology for the sake of variety.

Please review the comprehensive information on APA conventions and grammar/style at APASite.org - from the horse's mouth, so to speak... [APA Format and Grammar Guidelines](#)

## **Dissertation Structure Overview**

Your dissertation needs to share all the hard work you have done this year, and each section plays a crucial role. I'll provide an overview of these sections in gratuitous detail, from the introduction to the discussion, tailored for both the Mini-Dissertation, but also, entirely relevant to your final year dissertation next year! You're welcome.

### **Mini-Dissertation requirements**

- **Title:** Concise and informative.
- **Abstract:** Brief summary of the study.
- **Introduction:** Background information and purpose.
- **Method:** Details of the procedure.
- **Participants**
- **Materials**
- **Procedure**
- **Results:** Findings with statistical analysis.
- **Discussion:** Interpretation of results.

### **AND - Compulsory but NOT included in the word count**

- **References:** Cited works.
- **Reflective Account:**
- **Open Data:** Attachment -
- **Open Materials:** Attachment -

## Time Management and Technical Tools

Time is a valuable ally in your dissertation process. I'll share strategies to manage it effectively, including tips on utilizing Zotero for reference management, leveraging library resources, and the importance of regularly saving your work on OneDrive.

### Warning

Technical difficulties, such as losing drafts of your written work, will NOT be acceptable grounds for extenuating circumstances. Please save regularly and submit on time!

## Leveraging Resources

- **APA 7 Word Template:** Access the APA 7 Word Template provided by Gordon on the VLE page, a tool designed to simplify formatting. Why start from scratch?
- **Examples and Rubrics:** Draw insights from the provided examples of previous work and a detailed marking rubric to understand expectations and standards.
- **Open Data and Materials:** Embrace the principles of open data and materials for a transparent and reproducible research process. Examples will be provided this term, but this is an opportunity to show off your hard work!
- **Reflective Account:** A reflective account is a critical part of your dissertation, allowing you to introspect and document your research journey. It is not part of the word count, and if you do not submit this element, your Mini-Dissertation is not complete.

## Moving Forward with Confidence

This chapter is just the beginning. As you progress, remember that your dissertation is more than an academic requirement; it's a testament to your growth as a researcher and psychologist. Embrace each step with curiosity and determination, and you'll find the journey as rewarding as the destination.

## **A reminder of APA format sections**

 It's just a slightly bigger lab report!

Please refer back to any guidance that you received in first year on lab report writing, because it will be relevant entirely to the mini dissertation. This also applies to any feedback you received for any of the submissions.

Here's an overview of the main sections of an APA dissertation, including brief summaries and advice for each section:

Certainly! Here's the adapted overview with the inclusion of the Abstract section, following APA headings:

### **Abstract**

- **Summary:** Provides a concise summary of your dissertation, including the research problem, methodology, results, and conclusions.
- **Advice:** Keep it brief and informative, typically between 150 to 250 words. The abstract should give readers a quick overview of your study's content and significance.

### **1. Introduction**

- **Summary:** Sets the stage for your research, introducing the problem, research questions, and objectives. Your introduction should finish with your hypotheses. Remember, you should have an hypothesis for each main effect and potentially the interaction effect too!
- **Advice:** Start with a general description, then move to specifics. Synchronize your introduction with your conclusion to ensure coherence and alignment with your findings.

### **n.b. Introduction - Critical Evaluation of Previous Literature & Theory**

- **Summary:** Provides an overview of existing research related to your topic, identifying gaps and justifying your study. It is important to introduce any theoretical perspectives that exist.
- **Advice:** Focus on the most relevant studies and integrate them into a cohesive narrative, sharing key information about the studies, results, and methods. This chapter often accounts for a significant portion of your dissertation.

## **2. Method Section**

- **Summary:** Describes the research design, participants, materials, and procedures used in your study.
- **Advice:** Ensure clarity and detail for replicability. Clearly define your methods and justify your choices.

## **3. Results**

- **Summary:** Presents the findings of your research without interpretation. Includes statistical analyses, tables, and figures.
- **Advice:** Be concise and precise. Use appropriate statistical tools and clearly present your data.

## **4. Discussion**

- **Summary:** Interprets the results, discusses their implications, and relates them to existing literature.
- **Advice:** Offer a critical analysis of your findings and their significance. Discuss limitations and suggest areas for future research.

### **n.b. Discussion (Final Paragraph ~ Conclusion)**

- **Summary:** Summarizes the main findings, their implications, and the contribution of your research to the field.
- **Advice:** Be succinct and reflective. Highlight the significance of your work and its potential impact.

## **5. References**

- **Summary:** Lists all sources cited in your dissertation following APA 7 guidelines.
- **Advice:** Ensure accuracy and consistency in your citations. Regularly update your references throughout the writing process.

## **6. Open Data & Open Materials**

- **Summary:** Contains your data set and all the 'materials' required to replicate your study. These elements need to be 'curated', meaning that you take some time to make them user-friendly and hard-working. Remember that this is a mark-winning opportunity. And you've put in such a great deal of effort... Show it off!!
- **Advice:** Use appendices for detailed tables, questionnaires, or additional data that support your research.

## **7. Reflective Account**

- **Important:** This does not count towards your word count. If you do not include this, your submission will be considered incomplete. It can be a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs, but please make it genuine. We will provide prompts in due course, but you can start writing this now!

This structure provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to dissertation writing, ensuring each section contributes meaningfully to the overall research narrative.

## **Technical and Time Management Tips**

- Utilize Zotero for efficient reference management.
- Regularly back up your work on OneDrive.
- Follow the APA 7 Word Template for formatting ease. Simple.
- Review examples of previous work and the detailed marking rubric for guidance.

## **Closing**

Remember, your dissertation is more than a series of chapters; it's a cohesive narrative that showcases your research journey. Embrace open data and materials principles for transparency and keep a reflective account of your process. This is a dry-run for the Final Year Dissertation, and all efforts towards monitoring the process now will pay dividend then.