Accessible Use of Color in Figures

Color can serve both communicative and decorative uses in figures (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/figures) .

Students preparing a figure for a course assignment may use color provided that the assignment will be delivered in a format that supports it.

Authors seeking publication should avoid the use of color except when it is necessary for understanding the material because of the relatively high cost of color reproduction (https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/manuscript-submission-guidelines) for printed materials. If color representation is not crucial for understanding and the article is to be published both in print and online, convert the figure to grayscale or consider placing the figure online as supplemental material. Some journals offer the option to publish a figure in color online and in grayscale in print at no cost; when using this option, ensure that the figure can still be understood even when it is printed in grayscale. Authors submitting a manuscript to an online-only journal may use color more liberally (e.g., colored bars rather than gray and white bars in a bar graph).

Learn more

Color in figures is covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Section 7.26 and the Concise Guide (/products/concise-guide) Section 7.26

This guidance is **new** to the 7th edition.

Selecting colors for a figure

When selecting colors for a figure, ensure that there is plenty of contrast so that people living with a color-vision deficiency (often referred to as “color blindness”) or people who do not see color in a typical way can understand the information and tell the colors apart.

Best practice is to use a contrast checker such as the free Color Contrast Analyser (https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser) to evaluate the contrast ratio and confirm that your content passes the standards for WCAG 2.0 Level AA (https://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/visual-audio-contrast-contrast.html) or later. Adequate contrast ratios ensure that the figure is not only accessible to readers with color-deficient vision but also understandable by all readers if the figure is printed or photocopied in grayscale.

Another strategy to achieve adequate contrast is to use a pattern in combination with color so that the differentiation of elements does not rely on color alone (e.g., in a line graph, different lines may be in different colors and also of different styles, such as solid, dashed, and dotted).

When many colors must be used and it is not possible to achieve high contrast among all of them, label colored areas directly in the image or use lines to connect the object to its label rather than placing the label in a legend, if possible. When you use this strategy, readers do not have to match colors in the figure to colors in the legend and the figure can be made more accessible.

Sample figures to illustrate color-vision deficiencies

The following figures show examples of how people with a certain color-vision deficiency see color and how the colors used in figures can be adjusted to accommodate them to make the figures accessible. The type of color-vision deficiency demonstrated here is called *deuteranomaly* (https://www.color-blindness.com/deuteranopia-red-green-color-blindness/) , which is a reduction in sensitivity to the green area of the spectrum. It is the most common kind of color-vision deficiency. Note that the data in the graphs are for illustrative purposes only; they do not reflect real participant information.

This material on color contrast was prepared with the assistance of accessibility experts at David

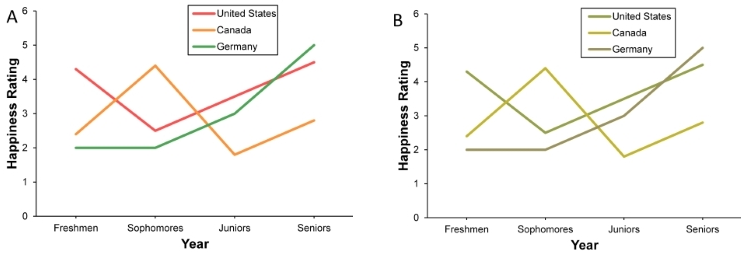
Berman Communications (https://davidberman.com/) .

1. Figure without adequate contrast

This figure does not have adequate color contrast. Panel A may look acceptable to someone with color vision but cannot be easily read by someone living with color-deficient vision. Panel B shows what Panel A would look like to a person with color-deficient vision. Someone living with color-deficient vision would find it difficult to tell from the legend which line represents the United States and which line represents Germany when looking at Panel A.

Figure 1

Student Happiness Ratings as a Function of Year and Country of Origin

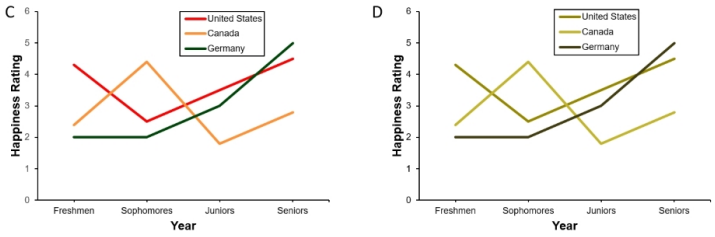


2. Figure with adequate contrast

The colors in the original figure have been adjusted to provide adequate contrast. Panel C shows how the figure would look to someone with color vision. Panel D shows what Panel C would look like to a person with color-deficient vision. This figure has used color accessibly because it has adequate contrast. There are now distinct light, medium, and dark colors.

Figure 2

Student Happiness Ratings as a Function of Year and Country of Origin

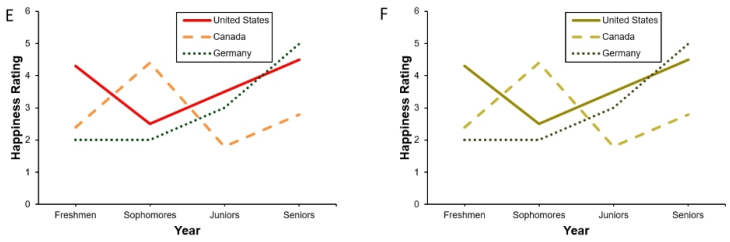


3. Figure with a combination of color and line styles

The figure now incorporates both adequate color contrast and line styles. Lines styles should not replace proper color contrast but can be used in addition to proper color contrast to further enhance accessibility. Panel E shows how the figure would look to someone with color vision. Panel F shows what Panel E would look like to a person with color-deficient vision. Although the color contrast alone is adequate to make the figure accessible, the distinct line styles make the figure even more accessible.

Figure 3

Student Happiness Ratings as a Function of Year and Country of Origin



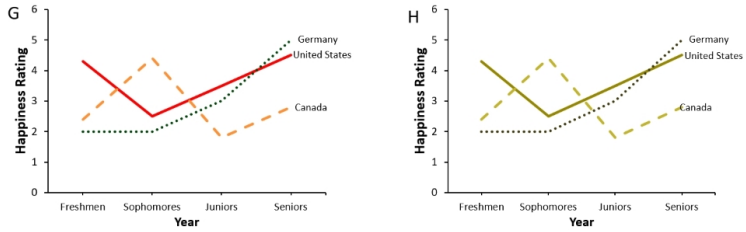
4. Figure with labeled lines instead of a legend

The figure now has labels next to the lines instead of in a legend. Panel G shows how the figure would look to someone with color vision. Panel H shows what Panel G would look like to a person

with color-deficient vision. Labels are helpful for people with cognitive disabilities and those with low vision who may zoom in on the graphic and might have difficulty associating the legend labels with the lines. Labels can also be used in conjunction with a legend depending on available space. Labels do not replace proper color contrast or line styles but can provide even more accessibility.

Figure 4

Student Happiness Ratings as a Function of Year and Country of Origin



From the APA Style blog

Why titles have sentence case capitalization in APA Style references

Why are article titles and book titles in APA Style references in sentence case? The answer takes us back to the 1929 origins of APA Style and a guideline that continues to have practical advantages today.

(/blog/sentence-case-titles-references)

Hear, hear! It's finally here!

Over the years, you've asked many illuminating questions, and we've paid close attention.

(/blog/new-edition-here)

Last updated: July 2022 Date created: 2019

Figure Setup

All types of visual displays other than tables are considered figures (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/tables) in APA Style. Common types of figures include line graphs, bar graphs, charts (e.g., flowcharts, pie charts), drawings, maps, plots (e.g., scatterplots), photographs, infographics, and other illustrations.

This page addresses the basics of figure setup, including figure components, principles of figure construction, and placement of figures in a paper. Note that tables and figures have the same overall setup.

View the sample figures (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures) to see these guidelines in action. Information is also available on how to use color to create accessible figures (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/colors) .

Figure components

APA Style figures have these basic components:

- **number:** The figure number (e.g., Figure 1) appears above the figure title and image in bold font. Number figures in the order in which they are mentioned in your paper.
- **title:** The figure title appears one double-spaced line below the figure number. Give each figure a brief but descriptive title, and capitalize the figure title in italic title case (/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/title-case) .
- **image:** The image portion of the figure is the graph, chart, photograph, drawing, or other illustration itself. If text appears in the image of the figure (e.g., axis labels), use a sans serif font between 8 and 14 points (/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/font) .
- **legend:** A figure legend, or key, if present, should be positioned within the borders of the figure and explains any symbols used in the figure image. Capitalize words in the figure legend in title case (/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/title-case) .
- **note:** Three types of notes (general, specific, and probability) can appear below the figure to describe contents of the figure that cannot be understood from the figure title, image, and/or legend alone (e.g., definitions of abbreviations, copyright attribution, explanations of asterisks use to indicate *p* values). Include figure notes only as needed.

This diagram illustrates the basic figure components.

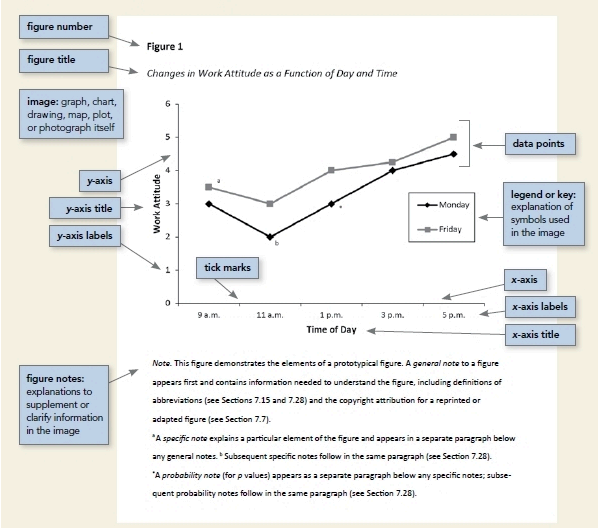
Learn more

Figures are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Sections 7.22 to 7.36 and the Concise Guide (/products/concise-guide) Sections 7.22 to 7.32

This guidance has been **revised** from the 6th edition.

Related handout

- **Student Paper Setup Guide (PDF, 1MB)** (/instructional-aids/student-paper-setup-guide.pdf)



Principles of figure creation

The most important principle to follow when creating a figure is to present information in a way that is easy for readers to understand. Provide sufficient information in the figure itself so that readers do not need to read the text to understand it.

When creating a figure, ensure you meet the following standards:

- images are clear
- lines are smooth and sharp
- font is legible and simple (/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/font)
- units of measurement are provided
- axes are clearly labeled
- elements within the figure are clearly labeled or explained

Use graphics software to create figures in APA Style papers. For example, use the built-in graphics features of your word-processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word or Excel) or dedicated programs such as Photoshop or Inkscape.

Placement of figures in a paper

There are two options for the placement of figures (and tables) in a paper. The first is to embed figures in the text after each is first mentioned (or “called out”); the second is to place each figure on a separate page after the reference list.

An embedded figure may take up an entire page; if the figure is short, however, text may appear on the same page as the figure. In that case, place the figure at either the top or bottom of the page rather than in the middle. Also add one blank double-spaced line between the figure and any text to improve the visual presentation.

View the sample figures (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures) for more information on figures.

Last updated: December 2021 Date created: 2019

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TDD/TTY: (202) 336-6123

Sample Figures

These sample figures illustrate how to set up figures in APA Style. Note that any kind of visual display that is not a table is considered a figure.

There many ways to make a figure, and the samples shown on this page represent only some of the possibilities. The samples show the following options:

- The sample bar graph (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures#bar) and the sample line graph (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures#line) show how to use color in combination with pattern and shape to make an attractive and accessible figure (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/colors) .
- The sample line graph (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures#line) shows how to include a copyright attribution in a figure note when you have reprinted or adapted a copyrighted figure from a scholarly work such as a journal article (the format of the copyright attribution will vary depending on the source of the figure).
- The CONSORT flowchart (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures#flowchart) demonstrates how to describe the flow of participants through a study. Further information and a template for the flowchart are available on the CONSORT website (https://www.consort-spirit.org) .
- The sample map (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures#map) shows how to include a copyright attribution in a figure note when you have reprinted or adapted a figure from a work in the public domain (in the example, U.S. Census Bureau data).

Use these links to go directly to the sample figures:

These sample figures are also available as a downloadable Word file (DOCX, 37KB) (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-figures.docx) . For more sample figures, see the *Publication Manual* as well as published articles in your field.

Learn more

Sample figures are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Section 7.36 and the Concise Guide (/products/concise-guide) Section 7.32

This guidance has been **expanded** from the 6th edition.

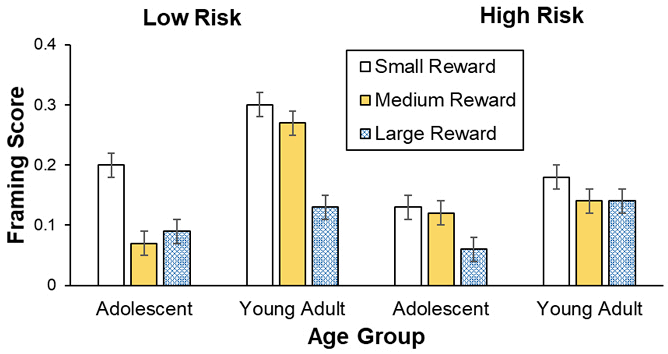
Related handout

- **Student Paper Setup Guide (PDF, 1MB) (/instructional-aids/student-paper-setup-guide.pdf)**

Sample bar graph

Figure 1

Framing Scores for Different Reward Sizes

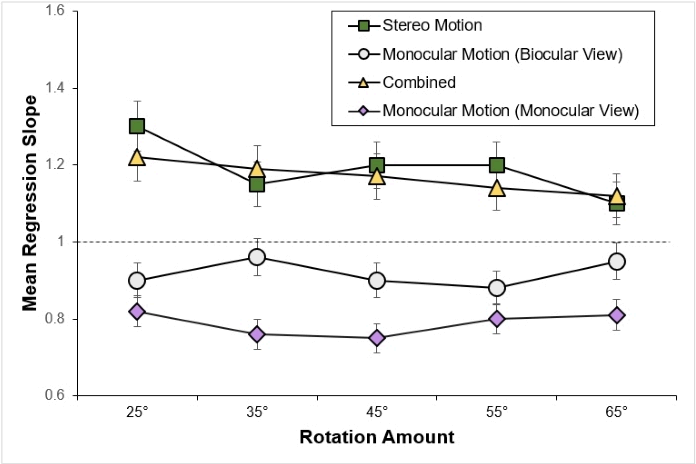


Note. Framing scores of adolescents and young adults are shown for low and high risks and for small, medium, and large rewards (error bars show standard errors).

Sample line graph

Figure 3

Mean Regression Slopes in Experiment 1

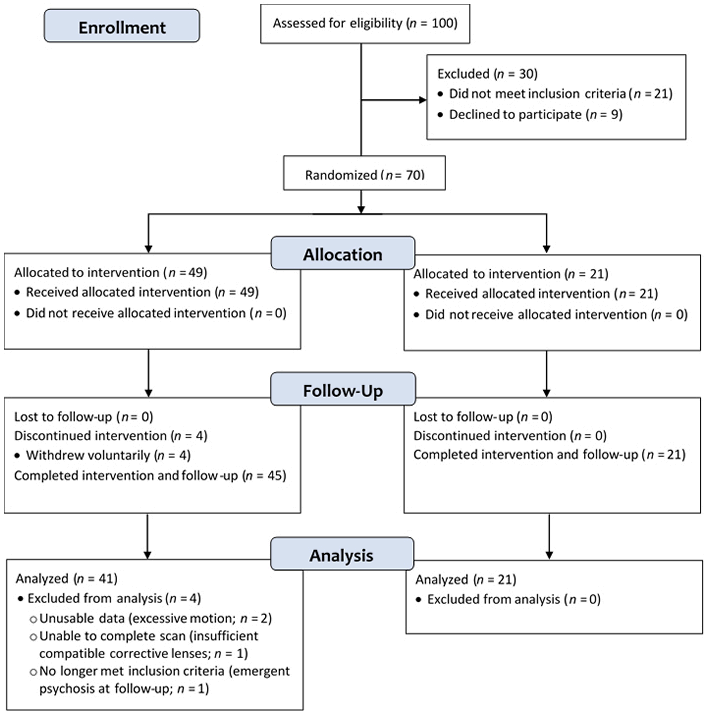


Note. Mean regression slopes in Experiment 1 are shown for the stereo motion, biocularly viewed monocular motion, combined, and monocularly viewed monocular motion conditions, plotted by rotation amount. Error bars represent standard errors. From “Large Continuous Perspective Change With Noncoplanar Points Enables Accurate Slant Perception,” by X. M. Wang, M. Lind, and G. P. Bingham, 2018, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, *44*(10), p. 1513 (https://doi.org/10.1037/xhp0000553 (https://doi.org/10.1037/xhp0000553)). Copyright 2018 by the American Psychological Association.

Sample CONSORT flowchart

Figure 2

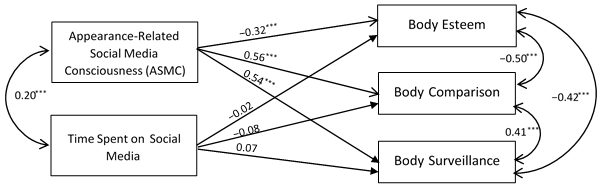
CONSORT Flowchart of Participants



Sample path model

Figure 1

Path Analysis Model of Associations Between ASMC and Body-Related Constructs

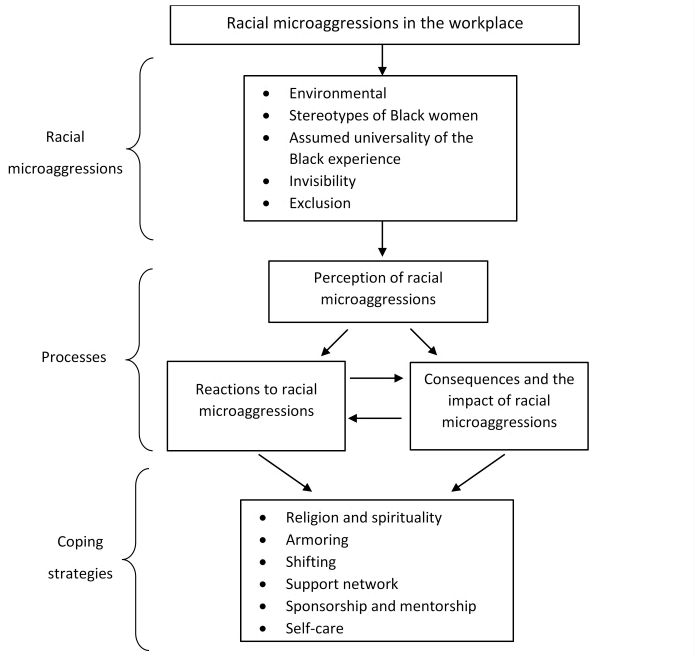


Note. The path analysis shows associations between ASMC and endogenous body-related variables (body esteem, body comparison, and body surveillance), controlling for time spent on social media. Coefficients presented are standardized linear regression coefficients.
***$p < .001$.

Sample qualitative research figure

Figure 1

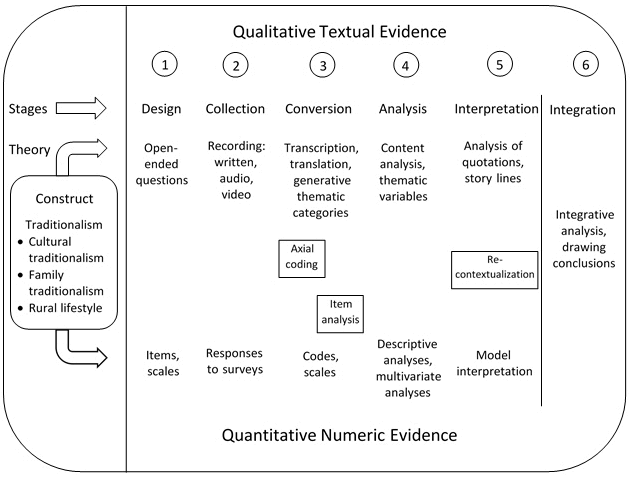
Organizational Framework for Racial Microaggressions in the Workplace



Sample mixed methods research figure

Figure 1

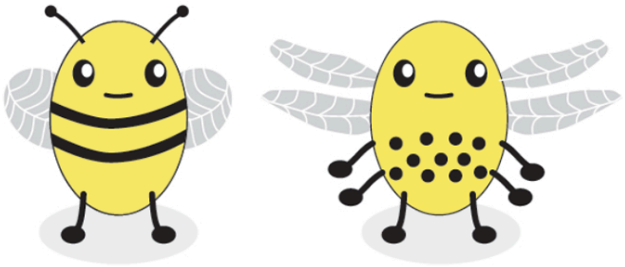
A Multistage Paradigm for Integrative Mixed Methods Research



Sample illustration of experimental stimuli

Figure 4

Examples of Stimuli Used in Experiment 1

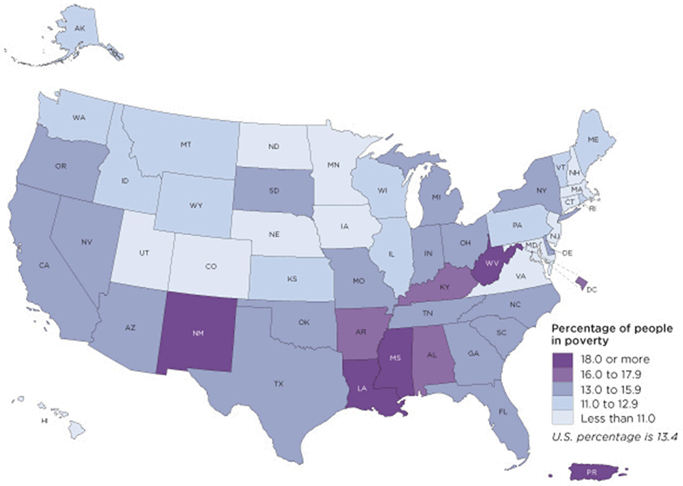


Note. Stimuli were computer-generated cartoon bees that varied on four binary dimensions, for a total of 16 unique stimuli. They had two or six legs, a striped or spotted body, single or double wings, and antennae or no antennae. The two stimuli shown here demonstrate the use of opposite values on all four binary dimensions.

Sample map

Figure 1

Poverty Rate in the United States, 2017



Note. The map does not include data for Puerto Rico. Adapted from *2017 Poverty Rate in the United States*, by U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 (https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/acs-poverty-map.html (https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/acs-poverty-map.html)). In the public domain.

Last updated: December 2021 Date created: 2019

Sample Tables

These sample tables illustrate how to set up tables in APA Style (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/tables) . When possible, use a canonical, or standard, format for a table rather than inventing your own format. The use of standard formats helps readers know where to look for information.

There are many ways to make a table, and the samples shown on this page represent only some of the possibilities. The samples show the following options:

- The sample factor analysis table (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables#factor) shows how to include a copyright attribution in a table note when you have reprinted or adapted a copyrighted table from a scholarly work such as a journal article (the format of the copyright attribution will vary depending on the source of the table).
- The sample regression table (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables#regression) shows how to include confidence intervals in separate columns; it is also possible to place confidence intervals in square brackets in a single column (an example of this is provided in the *Publication Manual*).
- The sample qualitative table (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables#qualitative) and the sample mixed methods table (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables#mixed) demonstrate how to use left alignment within the table body to improve readability when the table contains lots of text.

Use these links to go directly to the sample tables:

These sample tables are also available as a downloadable Word file (DOCX, 37KB) (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables.docx) . For more sample tables, see the *Publication Manual* (7th ed.) as well as published articles in your field.

Learn more

Sample tables are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Section 7.21 and the Concise Guide (/products/concise-guide) Section 7.21

This guidance has been **expanded** from the 6th edition.

Related handout

- **Student Paper Setup Guide (PDF, 1MB) (/instructional-aids/student-paper-setup-guide.pdf)**

Sample demographic characteristics table

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline

Baseline characteristic	Guided self-help		Unguided self-help		Wait-list control		Full sample	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender								

Female	25	50	20	40	23	46	68	45
Male	25	50	30	60	27	54	82	55
Marital status								
Single	13	26	11	22	17	34	41	27
Married/partnered	35	70	38	76	28	56	101	67
Divorced/widowed	1	2	1	2	4	8	6	4
Other	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	1
Children [a]	26	52	26	52	22	44	74	49
Cohabitating	37	74	36	72	26	52	99	66
Highest educational level								
Middle school	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	1
High school/some college	22	44	17	34	13	26	52	35
University or postgraduate degree	28	56	32	64	36	72	96	64
Employment								
Unemployed	3	6	5	10	2	4	10	7
Student	8	16	7	14	3	6	18	12
Employed	30	60	29	58	40	80	99	66
Self-employed	9	18	7	14	5	10	21	14
Retired	0	0	2	4	0	0	2	1
Previous psychological treatment [a]	17	34	18	36	24	48	59	39
Previous psychotropic medication [a]	6	12	13	26	11	22	30	20

Note. $N = 150$ ($n = 50$ for each condition). Participants were on average 39.5 years old ($SD = 10.1$), and participant age did not differ by condition.

[a] Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering “yes” to this question.

Sample results of several *t* tests table

Table 2

Results of Curve-Fitting Analysis Examining the Time Course of Fixations to the Target

Logistic parameter	9-year-olds		16-year-olds		*t*(40)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Maximum asymptote, proportion	.843	.135	.877	.082	0.951	.347	0.302
Crossover, in ms	759	87	694	42	2.877	.006	0.840
Slope, as change in proportion per ms	.001	.0002	.002	.0002	2.635	.012	2.078

Note. For each subject, the logistic function was fit to target fixations separately. The maximum asymptote is the asymptotic degree of looking at the end of the time course of fixations. The crossover point is the point in time the function crosses the midway point between peak and baseline. The slope represents the rate of change in the function measured at the crossover. Mean parameter values for each of the analyses are shown for the 9-year-olds ($n = 24$) and 16-

year-olds (*n* = 18), as well as the results of *t* tests (assuming unequal variance) comparing the parameter estimates between the two ages.

Sample correlation table

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Internal–external status [a]	3,697	0.43	0.49	—						
2. Manager job performance	2,134	3.14	0.62	−.08**	—					
3. Starting salary [b]	3,697	1.01	0.27	.45**	−.01	—				
4. Subsequent promotion	3,697	0.33	0.47	.08**	.07**	.04*	—			
5. Organizational tenure	3,697	6.45	6.62	−.29**	.09**	.01	.09**	—		
6. Unit service performance [c]	3,505	85.00	6.98	−.25**	−.39**	.24**	.08**	.01	—	
7. Unit financial performance [c]	694	42.61	5.86	.00	−.03	.12*	−.07	−.02	.16**	—

[a] 0 = internal hires and 1 = external hires.

[b] A linear transformation was performed on the starting salary values to maintain pay practice confidentiality. The standard deviation (0.27) can be interpreted as 27% of the average starting salary for all managers. Thus, ±1 *SD* includes a range of starting salaries from 73% (i.e., 1.00 – 0.27) to 127% (i.e., 1.00 + 0.27) of the average starting salaries for all managers.

[c] Values reflect the average across 3 years of data.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Sample analysis of variance (ANOVA) table

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analyses of Variance in Psychological and Social Resources and Cognitive Appraisals

Measure	Urban		Rural		*F*(1, 294)	η^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Self-esteem	2.91	0.49	3.35	0.35	68.87***	.19
Social support	4.22	1.50	5.56	1.20	62.60***	.17
Cognitive appraisals						
Threat	2.78	0.87	1.99	0.88	56.35***	.20
Challenge	2.48	0.88	2.83	1.20	7.87***	.03
Self-efficacy	2.65	0.79	3.53	0.92	56.35***	.16

***$p < .001$.

Sample factor analysis table

Table 1

Results From a Factor Analysis of the Parental Care and Tenderness (PCAT) Questionnaire

PCAT item	Factor loading		
	1	2	3
Factor 1: Tenderness—Positive			
20. You make a baby laugh over and over again by making silly faces.	**.86**	.04	.01
22. A child blows you kisses to say goodbye.	**.85**	−.02	−.01
16. A newborn baby curls its hand around your finger.	**.84**	−.06	.00
19. You watch as a toddler takes their first step and tumbles gently back down.	**.77**	.05	−.07
25. You see a father tossing his giggling baby up into the air as a game.	**.70**	.10	−.03
Factor 2: Liking			
5. I think that kids are annoying (R)	−.01	**.95**	.06
8. I can't stand how children whine all the time (R)	−.12	**.83**	−.03
2. When I hear a child crying, my first thought is "shut up!" (R)	.04	**.72**	.01
11. I don't like to be around babies. (R)	.11	**.70**	−.01
14. If I could, I would hire a nanny to take care of my children. (R)	.08	**.58**	−.02
Factor 3: Protection			
7. I would hurt anyone who was a threat to a child.	−.13	−.02	**.95**
12. I would show no mercy to someone who was a danger to a child.	.00	−.05	**.74**
15. I would use any means necessary to protect a child, even if I had to hurt others.	.06	.08	**.72**
4. I would feel compelled to punish anyone who tried to harm a child.	.07	.03	**.68**
9. I would sooner go to bed hungry than let a child go without food.	.46	−.03	**.36**

Note. $N = 307$. The extraction method was principal axis factoring with an oblique (Promax with Kaiser Normalization) rotation. Factor loadings above .30 are in bold. Reverse-scored items are denoted with an (R). Adapted from "Individual Differences in Activation of the Parental Care Motivational System: Assessment, Prediction, and Implications," by E. E. Buckels, A. T. Beall, M. K. Hofer, E. Y. Lin, Z. Zhou, and M. Schaller, 2015, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *108*(3), p. 501 (https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000023 (https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000023)).

Sample regression table

Table 3

Moderator Analysis: Types of Measurement and Study Year

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Fixed effects					
Intercept	.119	.040	.041	.198	.003
Creativity measurement [a]	.097	.028	.042	.153	.001
Academic achievement measurement [b]	−.039	.018	−.074	−.004	.03
Study year [c]	.0002	.001	−.001	.002	.76
Goal [d]	−.003	.029	−.060	.054	.91
Published [e]	.054	.030	−.005	.114	.07
Random effects					

Within-study variance	.009	.001	.008	.011	<.001
Between-study variance	.018	.003	.012	.023	<.001

Note. Number of studies = 120, number of effects = 782, total *N* = 52,578. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

[a] 0 = self-report, 1 = test. [b] 0 = test, 1 = grade point average. [c] Study year was grand centered. [d] 0 = other, 1 = yes. [e] 0 = no, 1 = yes.

Sample qualitative table with variable descriptions

Table 2

Master Narrative Voices: Struggle and Success and Emancipation

Discourse and dimension	Example quote
Struggle and success [a]	
Self-actualization as member of a larger gay community is the end goal of healthy sexual identity development, or "coming out"	"My path of gayness ... going from denial to saying, well this is it, and then the process of coming out, and the process of just sort of, looking around and seeing, well where do I stand in the world, and sort of having, uh, political feelings." (Carl, age 50)
Maintaining healthy sexual identity entails vigilance against internalization of societal discrimination	"When I'm like thinking of criticisms of more mainstream gay culture, I try to ... make sure it's coming from an appropriate place and not like a place of self-loathing." (Patrick, age 20)
Emancipation [b]	
Open exploration of an individually fluid sexual self is the goal of healthy sexual identity development	"[For heterosexuals] the man penetrates the female, whereas with gay people, I feel like there is this potential for really playing around with that model a lot, you know, and just experimenting and exploring." (Orion, age 31)
Questioning discrete, monolithic categories of sexual identity	"LGBTQI, you know, and added on so many letters. Um, and it does start to raise the question about what the terms mean and whether ... any term can adequately be descriptive." (Bill, age 50)

[a] The struggle and success master narrative states that same-sex desire/behavior is a natural if relatively uncommon developmental variant distinguishable from heterosexuality. Healthy sexual development entails "coming out" as well as joining a larger gay community in a shared struggle to overcome societal discrimination and be socially recognized as normal.

[b] The emancipation master narrative states that discrete, monolithic, and mutually exclusive categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality are social constructions, conceptually suspect in their ability to fully capture the idiosyncrasies of sexual subjectivities, desires, and behaviors. This circumscription of sexual self within culturally contingent and hegemonic sexual identity categories must be resisted.

Sample mixed methods table

Table 3

Integrated Results Matrix for the Effect of Topic Familiarity on Reliance on Author Expertise

Quantitative results	Qualitative results	Example quote
When the topic was more familiar (climate change) and cards were more relevant, participants placed less value on author expertise.	When an assertion was considered to be more familiar and considered to be general knowledge, participants perceived less need to rely on author expertise.	Participant 144: "I feel that I know more about climate and there are several things on the climate cards that are obvious, and that if I sort of know it already, then the source is not so critical ... whereas with nuclear energy, I don't know so much so then I'm maybe more interested in who says what."
When the topic was less familiar (nuclear power) and cards were more relevant, participants placed more value on authors with higher expertise.	When an assertion was considered to be less familiar and not general knowledge, participants perceived more need to rely on author expertise.	Participant 3: "[Nuclear power], which I know much, much less about, I would back up my arguments more with what I trust from the professors."

Note. We integrated quantitative data (whether students selected a card about nuclear power or about climate change) and qualitative data (interviews with students) to provide a more comprehensive description of students' card selections between the two topics.

Last updated: June 2024 Date created: 2019

Table Setup

Tables are visual displays composed of columns and rows in which numbers, text, or a combination of numbers and text are presented. There are many common kinds of tables, including demographic characteristics tables, correlation tables, factor analysis tables, analysis of variance tables, and regression tables.

This page addresses the basics of table setup, including table components, principles of table construction (including the use of borders and how to handle long or wide tables), and placement of tables in the paper. Note that tables and figures have the same overall setup.

View the sample tables (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables) to see these guidelines in action.

Learn more

Tables are covered in the seventh edition APA Style manuals in the Publication Manual (/products/publication-manual-7th-edition) Sections 7.8 to 7.21 and the Concise Guide (/products/concise-guide) Sections 7.8 to 7.21

This guidance is the **same** as in the 6th edition.

Related handout

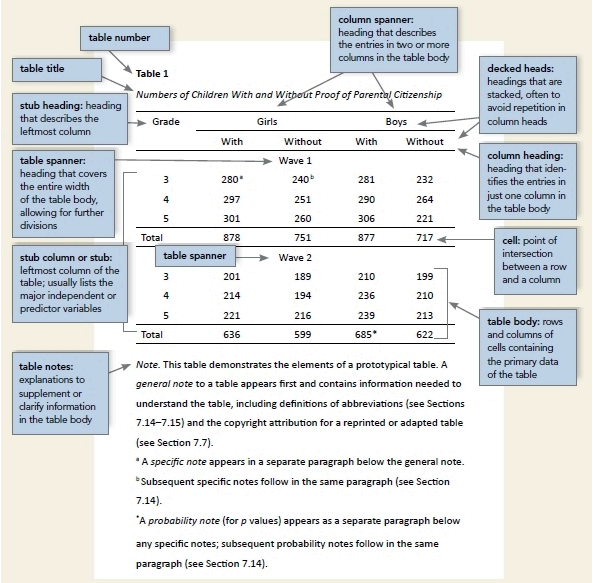
- **Student Paper Setup Guide (PDF, 1MB) (/instructional-aids/student-paper-setup-guide.pdf)**

Table components

APA Style tables have the following basic components:

- **number:** The table number (e.g., Table 1) appears above the table title and body in bold font. Number tables in the order in which they are mentioned in your paper.
- **title:** The table title appears one double-spaced line below the table number. Give each table a brief but descriptive title, and capitalize the table title in italic title case (/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/title-case) .
- **headings:** Tables may include a variety of headings depending on the nature and arrangement of the data. All tables should include column headings, including a *stub heading* (heading for the leftmost, or stub, column). The heading "Variable" is often used for the stub column if no other heading is suitable. Some tables also include column spanners, decked heads, and table spanners; these are described in the *Publication Manual*. Center column headings and capitalize them in sentence case (/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/sentence-case) .
- **body:** The table body includes all the rows and columns of a table (including the headings row). A *cell* is the point of intersection between a row and a column.
    a. The table body may be single-spaced, one-and-a-half-spaced, or double-spaced.
    b. Left-align the information in the leftmost column or stub column of the table body (but center the heading).
    c. In general, center information in all other cells of the table. However, left-align the information if doing so would improve readability, particularly when cells contain lots of text.
- **note:** Three types of notes (general, specific, and probability) appear below the table as needed to describe contents of the table that cannot be understood from the table title or body alone (e.g., definitions of abbreviations, copyright attribution, explanations of asterisks used to indicate *p* values). Include table notes only as needed.

This diagram is an illustration of the basic table components.



Principles of table construction

The most important principle to follow when creating a table is to present information in a way that is easy for readers to understand. Provide sufficient information in the table itself so that readers do not need to read the text to understand it.

When creating a table, place entries that are to be compared next to each other. In general, place different indices (e.g., means and standard deviations) in different columns rather than in the same column. Use the same font in tables (/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/font) as in the rest of your paper.

Use the tables feature of your word-processing program to create tables in APA Style papers. Do not use the tab key or space bar to manually create the look of a table.

Table borders

Limit the use of borders or lines in a table to those needed for clarity. In general, use a border at the top and bottom of the table, beneath column headings (including decked heads), and above column spanners. You may also use a border to separate a row containing totals or other summary information from other rows in the table.

Do not use vertical borders to separate data, and do not use borders around every cell in a table. Use spacing between columns and rows and strict alignment to clarify relations among the elements in a table.

Long or wide tables

If a table is longer than one page, use the tables feature of your word-processing program to make the headings row repeat on the second and any subsequent pages. No other adjustments are necessary. If a table is too wide to fit on one page, use landscape orientation on the page with the wide table. It does not matter if the page header also moves when switching to landscape orientation.

Placement of tables in a paper

There are two options for the placement of tables (and figures) in a paper. The first is to embed tables in the text after each is first mentioned (or “called out”); the second is to place each table on a separate page after the reference list.

An embedded table may take up an entire page; if the table is short, however, text may appear on the same page as the table. In that case, place the table at either the top or bottom of the page

rather than in the middle. Also add one blank double-spaced line between the table and any text to improve the visual presentation.

View the sample tables (/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/sample-tables) for more information on tables.

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