APA Basics Checklist: Citations, Reference List, and Style

By the Walden University Writing Center

Writing Center staff created this APA checklist to help students remember the basics of APA citations, reference lists, and style. It is not meant to be comprehensive, but students should use it as a reminder of the various APA rules that academic papers follow. If students are not sure what a particular item in the checklist refers to or entails, they should follow the link for more information. Additionally, the Writing Center can always help with APA questions at writingsupport@waldenu.edu.

Citations

- ☐ Citations are included in each sentence a source is used
- ☐ Sources used and cited in the paper are included in the reference list
- ☐ The abbreviation "et al." is punctuated appropriately
- Parenthetical citations:
  - ☐ Author(s) and publication year are always included
  - ☐ Page or paragraph number is included for all quoted material, using the appropriate abbreviation: (p. xx) or (para. xx)
  - ☐ Citation is included *within* the ending punctuation for the sentence
- In-text citations
  - ☐ Author(s) is included within the sentence
  - ☐ Publication year is included in parentheses immediately *after* the author(s)' name
  - ☐ Publication rule is followed: publication years are included the *first* time a source is used in a paragraph; all subsequent uses of that same source does *not* include the publication year (**Note:** Rule starts over with a new paragraph)

Reference List

- ☐ Title of the list is centered but *not* bolded
- ☐ Sources listed in the reference list are used at least once in the paper
  - Reference entries:
    - ☐ Each entry has an *automatically formatted* hanging indent
    - ☐ Each entry has the basic information (as available): author(s), publication year, title, and retrieval information
    - ☐ Each entry has been compared against the common reference entries and reference entries FAQs on the Writing Center website, checking for:
      - ☐ Punctuation: periods and commas
      - ☐ Formatting: italics is used only when needed
      - ☐ Parentheses and brackets: used only when needed
      - ☐ Appropriate electronic information is included

APA Style

- ☐ [Past tense](#) is used whenever literature or sources are talked about (i.e., Smith discussed)
- ☐ [Serial commas](#) are used for all lists of three or more items (i.e., lions, tigers, and bears)
- ☐ [Hyphens](#) are:
- ☐ Used to join words that work together to modify another word (i.e., evidenced-based practice)
- ☐ Used to join "self" compounds (i.e., self-esteem)
- ☐ *Not* used with prefixes such as non, semi, pre, post, anti, multi, and inter
- ☐ Block quotes (of 40 or more words) are formatted as such
- ☐ [Headings](#) follow proper APA style (i.e., level 1 headings are centered and bolded)
- ☐ [Numbers](#):
    - ☐ 10 and above are expressed using numerals
    - ☐ Nine and below are expressed using words
    - ☐ Expressing specific numbers and time use numerals
    - ☐ Expressing approximate time use words
- ☐ Complex lists of items follow [seriation rules](#) (using letters within the list)
- ☐ [Bulleted and numbered lists](#) are used for specific reasons
- ☐ The [third person editorial *we*](#) is avoided (including *us, our,* and *you*)
- ☐ [Capitalization rules](#) are followed (i.e., names of models and theories are not capitalized)
- ☐ Formatting:
    - ☐ [Template](#) is used
    - ☐ [Running head](#) is inserted properly
    - ☐ Title page follows the template
    - ☐ [Double spacing](#) is used throughout the paper (including the reference list)
    - ☐ Two spaces (and consistently *only* two spaces) is used between sentences