Using APA Style in Counselor Education

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Abstract

Within the field of counselor education, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, [APA], 2010) provides authors a unified, systematic approach to writing style. The APA manual presents explicit style requirements for manuscript format, structure, and content. Specific information on citations, headings, and tables are part of these requirements. The current edition is the 6th edition of this manual. This guide is not intended to replace the APA manual.
Using APA Style in Counselor Education

**Length, Headings, Tone, and Presentation**

1. Determine length before you begin
   - Be concise; avoid bringing in material that is extraneous to your main point

2. Headings help the reader understand the organization of the paper
   - Decide on main headings before you begin to help you organize the paper and keep you on track

3. The tone should be scientific, not literary
   - Avoid first-person narratives
   - Avoid overly colorful/stylistic writing
   - Present findings and ideas directly and in a professional manner

4. Sentences, paragraphs, and headings must follow a logical and orderly pattern
   - Use transition words (then, next)
   - Use cause-effect links (therefore, consequently)
   - Use contrast links (however, nevertheless, although)

**Strategies to Improve Writing Style**

1. Write from an outline
   - Helps identify main ideas and subordinate ideas
   - Disciplines your writing
   - Maintains continuity and pacing
   - Discourages tangential excursions
   - Points out omissions

2. Reread your own copy after setting it aside for a few days
   - Enables you to see faults and errors in logic
   - Reading it aloud enables you to hear problems

3. Ask a colleague to criticize the draft for you
   - Gets the perspective of another person
   - Helps identify errors in logic or assumptions

**Guide for Specific Style Requirements**

Grammar

Verbs

1. Use the active voice.
   
   Poor:   The experiment was designed by Gould (1970).

2. Use the past tense.
   Incorrect:  Ramirez (1980) shows the same results.
   Correct:  Ramirez (1980) showed the same results.

3. Use the subjunctive to describe only conditions that are contrary to fact or improbable; do not use subjunctive to describe simple conditions or contingencies.

   Incorrect: If the experiment was not designed this way, the subjects' performance would suffer.
   Correct: If the experiment were not designed this way, the subjects' performance would suffer.

   Incorrect: If the subject was finished answering questions, the data are complete.
   Correct: If the subject is finished answering questions, the data are complete.

Agreement of Subject and Verb

1. A verb and subject must agree (i.e., singular or plural) despite intervening phrases

   Incorrect: The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increase with practice.
   Correct: The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increases with practice

2. Certain words may appear singular, but are not (e.g., data is actually the plural form of datum).

   Correct: The data indicate a link between ADD and diet.

Other words which follow this pattern include:
   criterion (criteria)
   curriculum (curricula)
   phenomenon (phenomena)
   thesis (theses)
3. Context sometimes indicates whether to use a singular or plural verb.
   • Singular in context:
     • The number of people in the state is growing.
     • A pair of animals was in each cage.
   • Plural in context:
     • A number of people are watching.
     • A pair of animals were then yoked.

Wordiness and Redundancy

1. Watch for wordy phrases in your writing that can easily be changed without compromising clarity or understanding.

   The following phrases can often be eliminated:
   • Based on the fact that...
   • At the present time...
   • For the purpose of...
   • On account of...

2. Can you identify the redundant words in the following phrases?

   One and the same
   They were both alike
   A total of 66 subjects
   Four different groups watched
   Small in size

   Just exactly
   Period of time
   The reason is because
   Summarize briefly
   Absolutely essential
Guidelines for Nonsexist Language

Problems of Designation

1. When you refer to a person or persons, choose words that are clear, accurate, and free of bias.
   
   Incorrect: The client is usually the best judge of the value of his counseling
   
   Correct: The client is usually the best judge of the value of counseling. The client is usually the best judge of the value of his or her counseling. Clients are usually the best judges of the value of the counseling they receive. The best judge of the value of counseling is usually the client.

2. The word "one" can be substituted for the pronouns he or his.
   
   Correct: One can attribute the cause to one's own arousal.

3. Use congruent terms: women/men; boys/girls; males/females.

4. Avoid stereotyping and making assumptions.
   
   Incorrect: Research scientists often neglect their wives and children.
   
   Correct: Research scientists often neglect their spouses and children.

Problems of Evaluation

1. Avoid phrases which might imply an unequal relationship.
   
   Incorrect: man and wife
   
   Correct: husband and wife, or man and woman

2. Avoid stereotyping and making assumptions.
   
   Incorrect: The client's behavior was typically feminine.
   
   Correct: The client's behavior was (specify).

3. Some adjectives, depending on the gender of the person, connote bias.
   
   Incorrect: Ambitious men and aggressive women Cautious men and timid women
   
   Correct: Aggressive men and women; ambitious men and women Cautious men and women; cautious people
Parts of a Manuscript

Title Page

- the name of the manuscript (no more than 12-15 words)
- the name of the author (usually first, middle initial, last) - omit all titles & degrees
- the institution or affiliation
- the date (usually month and year) - optional
- the running head, which is flush left at the top (maximum of 50 characters) – appears on all pages of the manuscript – use “header” option on word processing
- page number – flush right – same line as running head – title page is #1

Abstract

- contains a brief (50-100 word) comprehensive summary of the contents of the paper
- required in all APA journals
- is sometimes optional for classroom use (check with individual professor)
- considered page two of the manuscript

Body of the Manuscript

- reprint the title at the top of the first text page
- introduction (no separate heading necessary for introduction)
- subsections of the body
- conclusion section summarizing all the important findings, as well as limitations

References

- lists all citations referred to in the body of the manuscript
Editorial Style

Headings

Headings indicate organization and establish the importance of each topic. Many manuscripts have only one level of headings. Level One Headings should be centered, boldface, uppercase and lowercase.

This is a Level One Heading

Double space between headings as you would between all text. Do not underline.

If two levels of headings are required:

This is a Level Two Heading

This is the type of heading that should be used for the third level. See that it is bold, lower case (except first letter of first word), indented, ends with a period, and is on the same line as the first line of the paragraph. If more than three types of headings are needed, see the APA manual for details.

Margins

Uniform margins of one inch at top, bottom, left, and right

Spacing

Double space between all lines of the manuscript.

At the beginning of paragraphs, indent five spaces.

After punctuation as follows:
• after commas and semicolons - one space
• after colons - two spaces
  exceptions: no space after the colon in ratios (6:1), one space after the colon in two part titles (Using APA: A quick reference), one space after the colon that follows the publisher location in the reference list (New York: Academic Press)
• after punctuation marks at the ends of sentences - two spaces
• after the periods of the initials in a person’s name - one space (J. R. Jones)
Quotations

All material quoted from another author's work must be referenced to that author.

- less than 40 words - incorporate within text and enclose in double quotation marks
- more than 40 words - display in a free-standing block of typewritten lines and omit the quotation marks. Start the block quotation on a new line, with all lines from the quotation indented five spaces from the left margin. When quoting, always provide the author, year, and specific page citation in the text and include a complete reference in the reference list.

1. He stated, "The placebo effect disappeared when the behaviors were studied" (Smith, 1982, p. 276).

2. Smith (1982) found that "the placebo effect disappeared when the behaviors were studied" (p. 276).

3. Smith (1982) found the following:
The placebo effect disappeared when the behaviors were studied. Furthermore, the behaviors were never exhibited again, even when real drugs were administered. Earlier studies were clearly premature in attributing the results to the placebo effect. (p. 276)

Direct quotes must be accurate. If inserting words that are not the original authors, usually for clarity, use brackets. Place periods and commas within closing quotation marks.
References

Reference must be cited in the text as well as at the end of the paper. *All ideas taken from another author must be referenced in your paper.*

Reference Citations in the Text

The surname of the author and the year of publication are inserted in the text.

- Smith (1983) compared reaction times
- In a landmark study on reaction times (Smith, 1983)
- In 1983, Smith compared...

When the citation appears in parentheses at the end of a sentence, the period is after.

- Reaction times are directly related to placebo effects (Smith, 1983).

When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in the text.

When a work has more than two authors, cite all the authors the first time the reference occurs; in subsequent citations include only the surname of the first author followed by et al. and the year.

- First time: (Smith, Glass, & Turner, 1983)
- Subsequent times: (Smith et al., 1983)

Reference List

The reference list at the end of a journal article documents the article and provides the information necessary to identify and retrieve each source. References cited in the text must appear in the reference list; conversely, each entry in the reference list must be cited in the text.

The word Reference should be centered at the top of the first reference page in bold. Do not underline or put it in all caps.
• References should be double-spaced.

• First lines of all references are flush left. Subsequent lines are indented five spaces (called a “hanging indent”).

• The reference list is alphabetized by the last name of the first author

• Alphabetize letter by letter; remember that "nothing precedes something"

  Brown, J. R. precedes Browning, A. R.

• Several works by same author are arranged by year of publication

• Invert all authors' names (last name and initials), regardless of number of authors

• Use commas to separate authors and to separate last names and initials; with two or more authors, use an ampersand (&) before the last author

• In reference to a work with no author, move the title to the author position.

• Give the year the work was copyrighted, enclosed in parenthesis

• For articles: capitalize only the first word of the title and of the subtitle

• For journal titles: give the journal title in full, in uppercase and lowercase letters, italicized.

• give volume number and italicize it; do not use "Vol." before the number

• give inclusive page numbers

• For edited books, use editors' names in the author position and include Ed or Eds.

• For books, capitalize only the first word of the title or subtitle and italicize

• For books, give the city and, if not well known or if it could be confused, use state
Examples of References

1. **Journal article, one author**
   

2. **Journal article, two authors**
   

3. **Journal article, more than two authors**
   

4. **Reference to an entire book**
   

5. **Edited book**
   

6. **An article or chapter in an edited book**
   

7. **An article from an electronic source (see APA manual for more details)**
   
Final Tips

1. Spell out words - do not use contractions.

2. Use an "and" in the body of the text and "&" when citing authors in parentheses.

3. Do not divide words. Better to make a line short than to divide a word.

4. Left justify only - do not right justify

5. If a new heading begins at the last line of a page, begin a new page instead.

6. Use abbreviations sparingly. Always spell out the entire term the first time it appears.

7. Use figures to express numbers 10 and above and words to express numbers below 8.

Do not place papers in binders, etc. Simply staple in upper left-hand corner.

8. Double check your references. The first line of each should be flush left; subsequent lines should be indented.

9. Remember: much of what you write can be additive to the field. If you are interested in pursuing publication, work with a professor to submit your class papers to a journal or to ERIC. Good luck!

Finally, please recall that this is a general guide only and intended to assist with your writing. It cannot replace the APA Manual, which is a requirement for all students in the OSU Counselor Education program.