

APA Style as a Modern and Accurate

Writing Style for the Sciences

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The American Psychological Association's (APA) Style enhances an author's accuracy and allows for the incorporation of more modern sources in his or her research. With its focus on research writing, APA citations provide a means of enforcing the ethics of integrity in the sciences by providing a means for authors to build upon the works of others and properly credit their sources. The APA style has several features in its referencing schema that allow authors to cite more modern works than other styles. Additionally, the APA style enhances the authors' accuracy while promoting his or her cultural sensitivity in providing guidelines for how to refer to genders and ethnic groups.

"Principle C: Integrity" of the APA's Ethic's Code states, "Psychologists seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practices of psychology (2003)." While this statement targets the field of psychology specifically, these ethics of "accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness" apply to the broader scope of science and education in general. Part of the peer review process for publishing journal articles involves reviewing the authors' citations and ensuring proper credit has been given to the work of other researchers (Macrina, 2000). According to the DocStyles website, the APA style is uniquely suited for research writing in the sciences and academia:

The *APA Manual* is the only style guide focused solely on the essential product of modern research in the sciences, education, and psychology--the research paper. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* is an effective counterpart in the humanities. Everything else--the *Chicago Manual of Style*, *Turabian's Handbook for Writers*, the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*, and the *Council of Science Editors' Scientific Style and Format*--all lack this singular focus. This helps explain the popularity of APA style, and the inevitable need for you to become familiar with it. (Scribe, 2009)

Scribe compares the APA Style to several others used in the humanities, medical writing, and popular print writing. It might therefore illustrate how APA enables research writing by noting its differences to other writing styles. Fortunately, the B. Davis Schwartz Memorial Library, located on the campus of Long Island University, has a website providing the ability to compare the citation styles of APA, MLA, Turabian, AMA, and Chicago Manual of Style. From it, we find that APA is a very forward-thinking and cutting-edge writing style. It is the only style that allows utilizing the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), a database identifier used by online journals to identify articles, instead of the article's web address in the references list. This is a particularly prescient aspect of the style, as web addresses can change with time, as when an article moves from the Journal's front page to its archives, but the database keys are much less mercurial. APA Style also takes a more modern approach in providing for the capability to cite Wikis and PowerPoint presentations found online (Delaney, 2009).

Although most websites and other sources tend to focus on the proper use of citations, APA style is about more than reference lists. It also provides guidance on proper language and terminology. For instance, the style stresses "sensitivity to labels," indicating that authors should avoid using words that stereotype ethnic groups and genders. For instance, the term "Hispanic" could include people in North and South America, and Spain, many of who would prefer the terms "Latino" or "Chicano" to describe their ethnicity, while the terms "Cuban American" or "Mexican" refer to very specific ethnic groups (Dewey, 2003). Not only does being cognizant of such terms make for more sensitive writing, it also enhances the author's verbal acuity as well.

In referring to his own accomplishments, Galileo Galilei famously said, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Citation lists provide a tool for authors to build upon the works of others and for peer reviewers to verify the work in the context of its research. The APA Style specifically enables authors to include the latest media in their research by providing for the use of DOIs, online PowerPoint presentations, and Wikis. APA Style also increases the authors’ accuracy in speech by emphasizing the use of culturally sensitive terminology over generalizations and stereotypes. For all of these reasons APA Style is an innovative, modern, and accurate writing style, making it perfect for authoring in the sciences and academia.

References

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