

APA Frequently Asked Questions...

1. Do I actually have to write the words “Running head” on the first page of my paper?

Yes. The words “Running head” appear exactly as written on the first line of text in the Word document (one inch from the top). Immediately after those words, put a colon, and then in all caps, an abbreviated form of your complete title (i.e. Running head: SKIN CANCER). Whatever phrase you select as your running head will appear in the header of the document on every page with the page number.

2. Do I have to use a specific font for APA papers?

Yes. You should use 12 pt. Times New Roman for all papers.

3. Do I always need an abstract?

While APA insists upon an abstract for all papers, many professors do not require an abstract for shorter papers (i.e. one or two pages). If your professor does not specify the requirements for an abstract, ask if one is required or write an abstract.

4. What is the difference between the abstract and the introduction?

An abstract is a brief, 120 words or fewer, summary of the entire paper. It should stand on its own; a reader should not have to read the abstract in order to understand the rest of the paper. Instead, an abstract should provide a summary of the for to five main points of the paper without using any cited material or personal pronouns (i.e. I and We).

On the other hand, an introduction is the first paragraph of the body of your paper. It provides the necessary background of your topic to the reader and by the end provides a thesis statement which will direct the flow of the entire paper. The introduction moves from the general to the specific, providing the necessary information the reader needs to follow the paper.

5. How many spaces should there be after a period?

For all writing styles, only one space follows a period.

6. How do I cite a quote that I found in another source?

When referring to a quote cited by one of your sources, you need to cite both the original author and the author of the source you are using. In other words, if you are using an article written by Jones, and in that article, Jones references Smith, you will need to include both names in your citation. The citation would appear as follows: (Smith, 1997, as cited in Jones, 2002). You can also break the citation up so that the original source is put into the sentence (i.e. Smith (1997) believes the matter was inevitable (as cited in Jones, 2002). Either way, both authors' names are needed for proper citation.

7. Do I need the date every time I cite a source?

No, unless the date is needed to avoid any confusion when you have multiple sources by the same author. Otherwise, the date is only needed once per paragraph per source.

8. Do I need multiple citations if I am using the same source throughout the paragraph?

Yes. Every sentence that contains information that is not ENTIRELY your own words or thoughts needs to contain the citation for the source from which it came. Even if this means citing almost every sentence of a paragraph, it must be done. You can, however, build citations into your sentence throughout the paragraph to avoid an excess of parenthetical documentation at the end of each sentence. Please see a writing tutor to discuss the best ways to vary your sentences to incorporate the citation.

9. What do I do if I have more than three authors for a source? More than six?

When you have three to five authors, you should reference all of the authors for the first reference and then abbreviate them to the first author's last name, followed by et al. for all later reference to the source. In other words, if you were citing an article written in 2006 by Jones, Smith, and Thomas, the first reference would be (Jones, Smith, & Thomas, 2006). Any additional reference to the source would be (Jones, et al., 2006). If you have six or more authors, you will abbreviate to the first author and et al. immediately. You do not need to list all of the authors for the first citation of a source with six or more authors.

10. What do I do if the source I am citing does not list an author?

If no author is listed, you should replace the author with the title. If the title is really long, you can abbreviate to the first word or the first few words. This will apply both in the text and on the reference page.

11. Are heading levels required for all APA papers?

No; however, you may find them really helpful once you get the hang of them. While it can be very confusing to determine the appropriate level of heading, they serve as a sort of outline for your paper and provide a clear and decisive organization for the topics. Please see a writing tutor to go over the ways in which headings can be useful to you in writing your papers.

12. What do I do if there is no date listed for the source I am citing?

When no date is listed, you must use the abbreviation (n.d.) wherever a date would appear. In other words, if an article by Smith listed no date, your citation would appear (Smith, n.d.). The same is true for the reference page. Wherever a date would be required, you must write n.d.