Getting Started with Sixth Edition APA Style

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Abstract

The abstract, according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010), "is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly and, like a title, it enables persons interested in the document to retrieve it from abstracting and indexing databases" (p. 25). It should also indicate the importance of the article—what makes it worth reading. Abstract length depends on the word limit of the journal to which you would like to submit your paper, so APA suggests "a range of 150-250 words" (p. 27). As shown above, the word "Abstract" is centered above the abstract text, and the entire text is double-spaced. Note that the first sentence is not indented, but begins flush left. Remember that key words from the abstract are used as index words for library search programs. The main concerns of this "Getting Started" sample are providing samples of paper basics, demonstrating the best way to set up the two running heads in Microsoft Word, and presenting an overview of the contents of the new edition of APA.

Getting Started with Sixth Edition APA Style

The sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010) presents a style almost as clunky as those of the preceding editions, but on the plus side, some of its sections (particularly those on grammar) have been reduced, other sections have been reorganized, and new formatting features make it easier to read. This paper provides examples of manuscript title page, abstract page, first text page, running heads, and citation and reference style, as well as an overview of the new APA manual as a whole. It also provides, in the first section, clear-cut instructions for how to deliver proper new APA style when working in Microsoft Word (both pre-2007 and 2007 versions).

Setting Up the Two Running Heads in Word

One important change to APA concerns where to place the two running heads, and, because placing running heads in Word can be tricky, this first section of the paper is dedicated to making that process as painless as possible. You could, of course, simply use this document (the one you're reading now) as a template for your own paper (and save yourself the work of reading through what follows), but you may be better off in the long run, for the sake of your work in other projects, if you read and work through the instructions. (If you do decide to go the template route, be sure to use the Save As/97-2003 option—see number 7, below, for details.)

Setting up the required running heads in Word can be tricky because it involves both left and right alignment on a single line (for title text and page number, respectively), because two running heads are required instead of just one (thanks to the "Running head" that needs to be included in one of them!), and because, perhaps counter-intuitively, the main body running head is set up first, before the actual title-page running head.

To set up the running heads, proceed as follows (the instructions for Word 2007 are given first, with those for pre-2007 versions of Word following in italics):

1. In your Word document, click **Insert**, select **Header**, and choose **Blank** (the first option), then, in the left margin, type your running head title (do *not* include the words "Running head" in this header). *For pre-2007 versions of Word: in View, select Header and Footer, and type your title.*

2. Next, with your cursor still inside your header, and still working within the **Design** tab, under **Header & Footer Tools**, click **Insert Alignment Tab** and then select **Right** (because the page numbers go on the right margin), and click **OK**. Then click **Page Number**, then **Current Position**, and select the **Plain Number** window to have the page numbers inserted. You should now have a header with your running head (on left) and page number (on right). *For pre-2007 versions of Word: in Insert, select Page Numbers, then, in the alignment window, and select Right (and make sure the "Show number on first page" box is checked).*

3. At this point you should click somewhere outside the header (get your cursor into the body of your paper) and finish formatting the rest of your title page (your name and institution).

4. To set up the second header (for your title page), you should type something (just a few words, for now) on your second page.

5. After you have text on your second page, return to your title page and double-click inside the header that you just made.

6. In the **Header & Footer Tools**, in the **Design** tab, select **Different First Page**. Your original header and page number will go away, but don't panic. Simply type the words

"Running head:" (with the colon, but without the quotation marks) and then add your title. Set up alignment (right alignment) as you did before and enter the page number (as you did in #2 above). Your title page running head is now set (with the words "Running head"), and your second and subsequent pages will also (still) be set (same as the title page running head, but without the words "Running head"!). *For pre-2007 versions of Word: in File, select Page Setup and check "Different First Page," then set up running head and page number as before.*

7. Avoid causing difficulties for others who may be using pre-2007 versions of Word. When you save your document, use the **Save As** and **Word 97-2003** options to get general compatibility. You will need to do this each time you save a new document. If you prefer to make compatibility a default setting, follow these steps: Click the **Office** button (the multi-colored circle in the upper-left corner of the window), then click **Word Options**, then, in the option bar, click **Save**, and finally, in the window bar beside **Save files in this format**, select **Word 97-2003**. Then click **OK**.

Overview of the New Edition

The new sixth edition of the APA guide contains good treatments of the following issues (all of which are easy to find, thanks to a good index and table of contents):

- Genres and standards within the behavioral and social sciences

- Manuscript structure and content (title page, etc.)

- Writing clearly and concisely

- Mechanics of style (i.e., grammar)

- Tables and figures (much improved)

- Crediting sources

- Reference examples

- The publication process

Within these chapters, issues of particular interest might include the following:

- Capitalization

- Citations (primary, secondary, and presentation in the reference list)

- Style (verb tense, active voice, no personal pronouns, abbreviations, how to write numbers, quotations, plagiarism, presenting the works of others, etc.)

- Citing sources from the Internet

In any case, here's hoping this paper sample, with its guide to running heads, title page abstract, and citation and reference style, will get you off on the right foot!

References

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