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SFU Psychology Department:

American Psychological Association Style for Undergraduate Papers

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Student number, PSYC ###; section #.##, TA's name, instructor's name, due date.

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The purpose of this document¹ is to help Simon Fraser University (SFU) Psychology Department undergraduate students format their papers for the psychology courses in which they are registered at SFU. The aim of a psychology research report is to clearly and succinctly communicate the method, results, and significance of a psychological study.

Psychologists generally report their research findings in a format that is outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001). The APA manual is available in the SFU library (3rd-floor reference desk) and bookstore, and students planning on attending graduate school are advised to purchase a copy. Undergraduate students are reminded to consult the manual regarding details that are not covered here, such as heading/subheading levels, series numbering/lettering, tables and figures, when to include the city's state or country in references, and so forth.

In general, psychology research reports consist of several sections. Students need to be aware that, in APA, all sections are double-spaced and the title page, abstract, introduction, references, and footnotes begin on new pages. Other sections (method, results, and discussion) begin directly below the preceding section. Though appendices may occasionally be included in a research report, they are not appropriate in a typical student paper. (Appendices include materials such as a mathematical proof or an unpublished test.) Along with these conventions, only one space is used after a period.

This document has been created to inform students of general APA style rules therefore, to accomplish this objective, formatting information has been included in the Method section.

Method

Title Page

A title page includes the paper/study title, the author's name and affiliation, a short title and page number (located on the top-right; the first two to three words of the title, 5 spaces, and page number), statement of running head (placed on the top-left). The student number, course number, TA name, instructor name, and due date are added as if they were an *author's note*.

Abstract

An abstract is a 100- to 150-word summary of the report. Some courses require an abstract for student papers, so check your assignment instructions to know whether you need to include one—or not. An abstract appears on its own page immediately after the title page.

The Text or Body: Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion

The beginning of a paper is referred to as the introduction. It starts with the title of the paper and explains the purpose of the study, summarizes the theoretical importance and previous research in the area, and includes a clear statement of the research hypotheses or goals.

The method describes the study in enough detail to permit another investigator to replicate it. It is divided into three subsections: participants, apparatus (if necessary), and procedure. The results and discussion sections are discussed within their own sections later in this paper.

Quotations

A direct quotation that is taken from another reference is used “to identify a[nother] person’s” writing (Bunn & Rush, 1980, p. 42), and entered as an example of a direct quotation. The APA manual (APA, 2001) states:

Direct quotations must be accurate. Except as noted in sections 3.37 and 3.38, the quotation must follow the wording, spelling, and interior punctuation of the

original sources, even if the source is incorrect. (p. 118)

However, there are three things to note here as well.

1. The square bracketed word within the quote is something I, as the author of this paper, added to the original quote.

2. If double-quotes had been present in the excerpt from the original text that I entered above, I would have included these as single quotation marks. This is because, in my document, the quote already has double quotations around it. As the manual says: "Use single quotation marks within double quotation marks to set off material that in the original source was enclosed in double quotation marks" (APA, 2001, p. 119).

3. Also worth mentioning, as well for block quotations and quotations within a paragraph, students need to pay attention to the differences in the accompanying punctuation when citing references and listing references.

Citing Other Works

In a research report, all references to previous research are accompanied by a citation of the original author's work. Note how citations have been included throughout this document. Citations of authors within a sentence take the form of "Freud (1928) contended that..." Note that, in this example, the year appears in parentheses. In sentences where the author's name is not mentioned, include the entire citation in parentheses as follows: "...according to social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1962)." Both of the previous examples are used when paraphrasing someone else's ideas. (Quotation marks have been used here only to indicate the examples to you.) Consequently, each work cited must also be listed in the reference section by author(s) and year. Start a new page with a "References" heading and list each reference in (ascending) alphanumeric order by author(s) and year, double-spaced with a hanging indent. Use italics for

journal names, volumes, and book titles only; do not use underlining or bold. Journal articles, chapters, and book titles appear *sentence-cased*. Except for proper names, names of organizations and titles of tests, only the first letter of the first word and the first letter after a colon are capitalised.

Reference List Examples

The general formats for various types of references are shown below, and examples of each kind of reference have been provided in the reference section. Though I have indicated these references by prefacing them with the word “see”, students are reminded that this is not typically done in citations (see citations on previous pages). It serves only to direct you to the correct examples in the references.

Periodical references. Periodical references include items published on a regular basis: journals, magazines, scholarly newsletters, and so forth. The format is as follows: Author, A. A. (YEAR). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, Vol.#, ###-### (the latter are the page numbers, refer to Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1971; Barlow, 1991). A reminder to end with a period.

Nonperiodical references. Nonperiodical references are book references. Refer to the APA (2001) manual’s section regarding state, province, country, abbreviations, and punctuation, etcetera. The format is as follows: Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (YEAR). *Title of work*. City, State: Publisher. When referencing Canadian publishers, include the city, province, country (see Shaffer, Wood, & Wolloughby, 2005) and, for other countries, the city and country. Compare the different examples, here and in the references, and note other features that have not been discussed in this paper (see Southwell & Feldman, 1969; Bandura & Huston, 1967; Shaffer et al., 2005; Barash, 1977).

Internet sources. Like journal articles, APA divides internet sources into periodical and

non-periodical categories. A periodical comes from a print source, but accessed online via PsycInfo (or another online journal). These are referenced the same as a print source journal article with one exception: They include 'Electronic version' in square brackets (see Ogloff, 1999). For a non-periodical, the URL address to the specific document being referenced is included (see Wolfe, 2007). Internet sources that end with a web address are the only references that do not end with a period.

Results

The results section summarizes the data and the statistical treatment of them. Figures (graphs) and tables should be included if they make the results more comprehensible. Tables and figures go at the end of the paper, after References and Footnotes, one per page. See the APA (2001) manual for more information.

Discussion

The discussion contains the evaluation and implications of the research, including how the results support, or do not support, the hypotheses; comparisons of the results with previous research; and any problems with the research.

References

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- Atkinson, R. C., & Shiffrin, R. M. (1971). The control of term memory. *Scientific American*, 225, 82-90.
- Bandura, A., & Huston, A. C. (1967). Identification as a process of incidental learning. In G. R. Medinnus (Ed.), *Readings in the psychology of parent-child relations* (pp. 259-272). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Barash, D. P. (1977). *Sociobiology and behavior*. New York: Elsevier.
- Barlow, D. H. (Ed.). (1991). Diagnoses, dimensions, and DSM-IV: The science of classification [Special issue]. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 100(3). [Note. Though page numbers are not necessary for a *special issue*, an issue number is required (in brackets after the volume number). For a *special section*, include page numbers.²]
- Ogloff, J. R. P. (1999). Law and human behavior: Reflecting back and looking forward [Electronic version]. *Law and Human Behavior*, 23, 1-7.
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- Southwell, E. A., & Feldman, H. (Eds.). (1969). *Abnormal psychology: Readings in theory and research*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
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Footnotes

¹ Footnotes are actually endnotes. To create footnotes in Microsoft Word, insert them as endnotes and be sure you change the numbering's style. (This document was revised April 3, 2007 and printed/posted April 11, 2007; o:\ugrads\other handouts\apa-style.doc.)

² This is an example of where APA can seem a bit difficult to grasp, so the general rule would apply here. When in doubt, include as much information as possible. You might not be using correct APA, but it's easier to take details out than have to go back to the source at a later date for the missing details. More importantly, the reader can find a reference more easily with more information than not enough.