

Grammar Guide for APA 7th Ed.

This document is adapted from the Concise Guide to APA Style, 7th Ed. (2019). For more details about spelling and grammar in APA style, please refer to the Concise Guide to APA Style, 7th Ed. For more information about citations, reference lists, and writing a paper in APA style, please refer to the Psychology APA-Style (7th Ed.) Writing guide (available [here](#)) the [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th ed.](#), or the [Concise Guide to APA Style, 7th Ed.](#)

Glossary:

- Clause: a string of words that include a subject and a verb.
- Compound adjective: a single adjective made up of one or more word (i.e. free-range eggs)
- Compound predicate: when two or more verbs share the same subject
- Conjunction: words used to connect words, clauses, or phrases (e.g. and, but, yet, although, where, while)
- Subject: the person or thing doing the action described
- Verb: an action word

Punctuation

Spacing

Use a single space after:

- periods or other punctuation at the end of a sentence (Note: if your instructor requests two spaces after punctuation at the end of a sentence, follow their instructions)
- commas, colons and semi-colons
- periods that separate parts of a reference list
- periods following initials in a name (J. K. Rowling)

Do *not* insert a space:

- after internal periods in abbreviations (e.g., a.m., i.e., U.S.)
- after periods in identity-concealing labels for study participants (H.M.)
- around colons in ratios (1:4)

Period

Use a period:

- to end a complete sentence
- with initials in names (J. K. Rowling)

- in the abbreviations for the “United States” and “United Kingdom” when they are used as adjectives (U.S. Navy, U.K. culture). *Tip: If you are unsure if the United States or the United Kingdom is being used as an adjective, try swapping it out with either “Canada” or “Canadian.” If using the word “Canadian” is grammatically correct, the country is being used as an adjective.*
- with identity-concealing labels for study participant (H.M.)
- in Latin abbreviations (a.m., p.m., e.g., i.e., vs.)
- with abbreviations in a reference section (Vol. 1, 2nd ed., p. 6)
- in era designations (B.C.E., C.E., B.C., A.D.)
- to end each element of a reference (except DOIs and URLs which should not end with a period)

Do *not* use a period:

- within abbreviations of the names of states, provinces and territories (NY; BC; ON; Washington, DC)
- in capital letter abbreviations and acronyms (APA, IQ, WHO)
- in abbreviations for academic degrees (PhD, PsyD, MA, RN, MD, MSW)
- in abbreviations of measurement units (hr, min, cm, kg, ml) *Note: Use a period for the abbreviation of inch (In.) so it is not misread.*
- after URLs in text. Either include the URL in the middle of a sentence or in brackets.
- after DOIs and URLs in the reference list

Commas

Use a comma:

- between elements in a series of three or more items, including before the final item; this last comma is called a serial comma or Oxford comma.
 - Correct:* The study compared each student’s age, family income, intended major, and grade point average.
 - Incorrect:* The study compared each student’s age, family income, intended major and grade point average.
- after an introductory phrase. However, if the introductory phrase is short, the comma is optional.
 - Correct:* After the nurses administrated the medication, patients rated their pain.
 - Incorrect:* After the nurses administrated the medication patients rated their pain.
 - Correct:* In this section, we discuss...
 - Correct:* In this section we discuss...
- to offset a nonessential or non-restrictive clause – that is a clause that embellishes a sentence but if removed would leave the grammatical structure and meaning of the sentence intact
 - Correct:* Strong fearful faces, which are rarely seen in everyday life, convey intense expression of negative emotions.
 - Incorrect:* Strong fearful faces which are rarely seen in everyday life convey intense expression of negative emotions.

- to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction
Example: Facial expressions were presented, and different photo models were chosen randomly.
- to off-set the year the year in exact dates; however, when only a month and year appear in the text, do not use a comma.
Correct: On April 4th, 2020...
Correct: In April 2020...

Do *not* use a comma:

- before an essential or restrictive clause because removing such a clause from the sentence would alter the intended meaning
Correct: Adolescents who spent a small amount of time on electronic communication activities were happier than those who spent no time on such activities.
Incorrect: Adolescents, who spent a small amount of time on electronic communication activities, were happier than those who spent no time on such activities.
- between the two parts of a compound predicate
Correct: Participants rated the items and completed a demographic questionnaire.
Incorrect: Participants rated the items, and completed a demographic questionnaire.
- to separate parts of a measurement
Correct: 7 years 7 months
2 min 35 s
5 ft 6 in
Incorrect: 7 years, 7 months
2 min, 35 s
5 ft, 6 in

Semicolon

Use a semicolon:

- to separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction
Example: Students received course credit for participation; community members received \$10.
- to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunctive adverb such as “however,” “therefore,” or “nevertheless.”
Example: The children studied the vocabulary words; however, they had difficulties with recall.
- To separate items in a list that already contain commas:
Example: The colour groups were red, yellow, and blue; orange, green, and purple; or black, gray, and brown.
- To separate multiple parenthetical citations
Example: (Gladdis, 2018; Lai et al., 2016; Williams & Peng, 2019)

Colon

Use a colon:

- between a grammatically complete introductory clause (one that could stand alone as a sentence) and a final phrase or clause that illustrates, extends or amplifies the preceding though. *Note: If the clause following the colon is a complete sentence, begin it with a capital letter.*
Example: There are three main patterns of mother-infant attachment: secure, avoidant and resistant/ambivalent (Ainsworth et al., 1978).
Example: Yag et al. (2019) confirmed the finding: Test performance depended on preparation.
- In ratios and proportions
Example: The proportion of salt to water was 1:8.

Do *not* use a colon:

- after an introduction that is not an independent clause or complete sentence.
Correct: Target behaviours included eating, sleeping, and socializing.
Incorrect: Target behaviours included: eating, sleeping, and socializing.

Dash

- *Em Dash (long dash).* Use an em dash to set off an element added to amplify or digress from the main clause. Use sparingly; overuse of the em dash weakens the flow of materials. Word-processing programs can be set to automatically convert two back-to-back hyphens to an em dash.
Example: Social adjustment—but not academic adjustment—was associated with extraversion.
- *En Dash (midsized dash).* An en dash is longer and thinner than a hyphen but shorter than an em dash. Use an en dash between words of equal weight in a compound adjective and to indicate a numerical range, such as a page or date range. Word-processing programs have options for inserting an en dash.
Example: Author–date citation
Example: Sydney–Los Angeles flight
Example: Pp. 4–7
Example: 50%–60%

Hyphen

- Used in an abbreviation that contains dashes, such as the abbreviation for a test or scale (e.g. MMPI-2) or a diagnostic manual (*DSM-5*).
- Used with many—but not all—compound words. Refer to the *Concise Guide to APA Style*, 7th ed. for examples.

Quotation Marks

Note: For information on using quotation marks for direct quotes, see the Psychology APA-Style (7th Ed.) Writing Guide or the APA manual.

Use double quotation marks:

- to refer to a letter, word, phrase, or sentence as a linguistic example or as itself.
Example: the letter “m”
Example: the singular “they”
Example: answered “yes” or “no”
Example: Students wrote “I promise to uphold the honour code” at the top of the page.
- to present stimuli in the text.
Example: The stimulus words were “garden,” “laundry,” “briefcase,” and “salary.”
- to introduce a word or phrase used as an ironic comment, as slang, or as an invented or coined expression; use quotations marks only for the first occurrence of the word or phrase, not for subsequent occurrences.
First occurrence: considered “normal” behaviour
Subsequent occurrence: normal behaviour
First occurrence: called a “friendly link”
Subsequent occurrence: a friendly link
- to introduce a label; after the label has been used once, do not use quotation marks for subsequent occurrences.
Example: The image label changed from “spiderweb” to “dartboard.” The spiderweb and dartboard labels...

Do *not* use double quotations:

- to highlight a key term or phrase; instead, use italics.
- to identify the anchors of a scale; instead, use italics.
- to refer to a numeral as itself because the meaning is clear without quotation marks.
The numeral 2 was displayed onscreen.

Note: Place commas and periods inside closing quotation marks. Place other punctuation marks (e.g. colons, semicolons, ellipses) outside closing quotation marks.

Slash

When to use a slash:

- to clarify a comparison in a compound adjective, especially when one of the elements is a hyphenated compound (alternatively, use an en dash)
Example: The classification/similarity-judgement condition
Example: Hits/false-alarms comparison
- to specify either of two possibilities
Example: And/or (use sparingly)
Example: Latino/a

- to separate a numerator from a denominator
Example: X/Y
- to separate units of measurement accompanied by a numeric value; if no numeric value appears with the unit of measurement, write the word “per.”
Correct: 0.5 deg/s
Correct: 7.4 m/s
Correct: Cost per square meter
Incorrect: cost/square meter

Do *not* use a slash

- when a word or phrase would be clearer.
Correct: Each child handed the toy to their parent or guardian.
Incorrect: Each child handed the toy to their parent/guardian.

Italics

Use italics:

- for key terms or phrases, often accompanied by a definition. *Note: Use italics for a term or phrase only once, when it is most appropriate to draw readers’ attention; in any other location in the text, the term or phrase should be in standard (nonitalic) type.*
Correct: Mindfulness is defined as.... Mindfulness can be a useful tool to cope with anxiety.
Incorrect: Mindfulness is defined as.... Mindfulness can be a useful tool to cope with anxiety.
- For anchors of a scale but not the associated number.
Example: Ranged from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)
- For the first use of a word, phrase, or abbreviation from another language when readers may not be familiar with it; however, if the term appears in a dictionary for the language in which you are writing, do not use italics.

Tense

Past Tense: Used for expressing an action or condition that occurred at a specific, definite time in the past.

Present Perfect Tense: Used to express a past action or condition that did not occur at a specific, definite time or to describe an action beginning in the past and continuing to the present.

Present Tense: Used for discussing actions and conditions currently happening.

Paper section	Recommended Tense	Reasoning	Example
Literature review (or whenever discussing other researchers' work)	Past	Discussing studies that have already taken place, should be described in the past	Quinn (2020) presented...
	Present perfect	Discussing the phenomenon or a large body of research as a whole took place in the past but research is still ongoing.	Many researchers have studied...
Method and description of procedure	Past	Methods for your study or an individual study took place in the past.	Participants completed a survey.
	Present perfect	Used when discussing methods used during multiple studies because it is not at one definite time.	Others have used similar approaches.
Reporting of your own or other researchers' results	Past	Results are obtained once the analyses are run. These analyses are run prior to submitting the paper and results can be obtained without submitting the paper.	Result showed... Scores increased... Hypotheses were supported.
Personal reactions	Past	Personal reactions vary and can be in any tense.	I felt surprised...
	Present perfect		I have experienced...
	Present		I believe...
Discussion	Present	In contrast to results, the discussion begins when submitting the paper.	The results indicate... The findings mean...
Presentation of conclusions, limitations, future directions, and other concluding statements	Present	Similar to the discussion, these elements are first being presented when the paper is submitted.	We conclude... Limitations of the study are... Future research should explore...