



Guide to Writing Research Reports 101

(Includes APA Specifications)

Revised December 3, 2014

Steps to writing your Research Report

1. Decide on a topic idea.
 - a. Get ideas for your paper based on the class syllabus, personal experience, interests, etc.
 - b. Consult your instructor for feedback on your topic
 - c. Briefly research chosen topic to confirm there is sufficient information available for your paper
2. Begin your research using credible sources
 - a. Look for websites with .edu, .gov, .mil and .ac. These domains are limited to qualified organizations and are therefore credible
 - b. Choose web resources carefully. Look for sites that are authoritative, accurate, current, and unbiased. Check the credentials of the author and/or the organization for legitimacy. Look for reference lists- these can be good sources to use too!
 - c. Wikipedia, answers.com, wikis and most blogs are NOT considered credible
 - d. Find journal, magazine and newspaper articles using the EBSCOHost database: <http://search.ebscohost.com> (User name: SouthernTechnical, Password: stc)
3. Develop a thesis statement
 - a. Your thesis statement should be one or two sentences explaining exactly what your report will cover. This brief and powerful statement also serves to keep your report on topic.
 - b. Do not say: "This report is about", instead, your sentences should be brief, pointed statements. For example:
 - i. "The Medical Assistant in a pediatric office requires specific education, technical skills, and dedication. Individuals with the specific skills for pediatric Medical Assistant will find rewarding career opportunities."
 - ii. "Medical billing and coding professionals are continuously developing improvements in their field duties as technology changes. General equivalence mappings (GEMS) can streamline the switch from ICD-9 to ICD-10."
 - iii. "Because the average American child consumes more than half their caloric intake from sugar, soda machines in schools should be replaced with healthier beverages and water."

4. Create an outline **(optional) (Include only if your instructor requires)**
 - a. An outline is useful when formulating ideas, mapping a paper, and maintaining structure. For best practices, before writing a paper you should create a general outline in order to formulate ideas and create structure for your research paper. However, APA guidelines do not require an outline as part of a research submission. However, any instructor retains the right to insist on an outline as part of the research paper process.
 - b. For more information on APA Outlines and formatting an outline go to <http://southerntechlibraries.wordpress.com/tutorials/>
5. Continue research, formulate and write report
 - a. Research each point notated in the outline to ensure you have enough information to write your paper.
 - b. Compile your information and begin your first draft. Be sure to take note of your sources as you go. You will need this information for your in-text citations and reference page. Details on citations to follow.

Formatting Your Paper

SPACING: Double-space your entire paper. Use the tab button to indent five (5) spaces for each paragraph.

1. **FONT:** 12-point font, Times New Roman.
2. **HEADER:** Use a running header to title every page at the top left corner. In Microsoft Word, you can do this by going to *Insert* and choosing *Header*.
3. **PAGE NUMBERS:** Number every page at the top right corner. In Microsoft Word, you can do this by going to *Insert* and choosing *Page Number*.
4. **REFERENCES:** Double spaced. Use a hanging indent for each entry. In Microsoft Word, you can do this by typing your Reference page, selecting the text and choosing *Page Layout*, from then *Paragraph* box. Next choose *Indentation*, then *Special* and finally *Hanging* from the drop down menu.
5. **HEADINGS:** Are included ONLY on the following pages: References, and Appendix, if added.

The Sections of Your Report

1. **TITLE PAGE:** Includes title, your name, and Institution's name
2. **OUTLINE:** Lists title, introduction, main ideas and conclusion. (Optional: ask your instructor)
3. **THESIS STATEMENT:** One or two sentences which explain what your paper will prove or explain. (This is placed at the end of your introduction.) **THIS IS NOT PLACED ON A SEPARATE PAGE.**
4. **BODY:** This is the written portion of your report. It begins with an introduction and ends with the paper's conclusion. The body should correspond with the included outline. The body will include in-text citations documenting quoted or paraphrased material. The body will often have numerous revisions.
5. **REFERENCES:** The listing of all materials, websites, books, etc. used to write your report. If you did not know the information BEFORE your research, you must give credit to the author. References should be listed in alphabetical order, double-spaced, using hanging indention with the correct APA format.
6. **APPENDIX (optional):** This is the place to include charts, tables, graphics, illustrations, or other information that might be relevant to the report but that does not belong in the body of the report.

Sample Title Page:

Running head: REPORT TITLE	1
Report title	
Your Name	
Institution Name	

“Running head” is only on your title page. Your first page should not say “Running head.”

Quotes and In-text Citations

Using quotations and in-text citations

Use quotation marks around your text and include an in-text citation when one of the following situations occurs:

- The author of the source includes something that aligns perfectly with your thesis.
- There is a statistic or fact included in your paper that you need to substantiate.
- You incorporate the exact wording of the source into your paper.
- You closely summarize or paraphrase the wording of the source.
- You are using the ideas or thoughts created by someone else.

If you find you are overloading your paper with too many quotes, you need to continue with your research until you have a greater understanding and can form your OWN thoughts, ideas and opinions on the subject matter. Write creatively and think about all of your research results rather than just one source at a time. **Never cut and paste a paper together and present it as your own! Your paper should NEVER be more than 50% quotations or paraphrasing!** See the Plagiarism Guide for more information.

- For **long quotations** (*greater than 40 words*):
 - Use a block quote, indenting the entire quote, followed by an in-text citation.
- For **short quotations** (*fewer than 40 words*):
 - Use quote marks to identify the quote in the body of the paper, followed by an in-text citation.

Citations

There are two kinds of citations used in APA Citation: **in-text citations** and **Reference page citations**.

- The **in-text** citations are notations in the body of your paper that tell the reader where the specific information you are stating came from.
- The **Reference** page citations are a longer version of the in-text citation and list the complete publication information of your source.

Both types of citations have specific APA formats that must be followed. The following pages give working examples of commonly cited sources and their formatting. For sources not explained here, please refer to Purdue University's OWL cite <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/> and choose *in-text citations* and *reference list* from the left column menu. This website does a wonderful job of explaining the process and format.

Additionally, <http://citationmachine.net> is a useful tool for formatting your citations. Be sure to choose APA and enter your source's information for help with formatting.

Examples: In-text Citations

SOURCE	IN-TEXT CITATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Book: 1 Author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Johnson, 2001) • In 2001, Johnson states..... *(see below)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Book: 2 Authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Johnson & Adams, 2004)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Book: 3-5 Authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st citation: List all authors- (Johnson, Adams & Jones, 2008) • 2nd citation: (Johnson, et al., 2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Book: 6+ Authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Johnson, et al., 2001)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encyclopedia: No Author (Use the title of the section used) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (“Medical assisting”, 2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encyclopedia: 1 Author (Editor is cited the same way) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Jones, 2002)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Magazine: 1 Author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Madison, 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website: No Author or Date (Use the title of the page to cite the source) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (“Thomas Paine”, n.d.) No Date • (“Thomas Paine”, 2012)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website: 1 Author 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Simon, 2006)

*If the name of the author appears in the narrative, you do not need to repeat it in the reference. In this example, you would not write a citation because both the author and year have been noted. However, if you wrote, “According to Johnson, panda bears prefer the color red”, your citation would look like:

- According to Johnson (2001), panda bears prefer the color red.

Examples: Reference Page Citations

- **Book: 1 Author**

Last, F.M. (Date). *Book title*. Place: Publisher

Jackson, T.L. (2005). *Writing for art*. New York: Harper & Row.

- **Book: Editor** (Use commas in between each author and an ampersand {&} to separate the final author)

Last, F.M. (Ed). (Date). *Book title*. Place: Publisher

Bradshaw, T., & Duncan, J. (Eds.). (2007). *Growing trends*. New York: Russell Publishers.

- **Book: 2+ Authors** (Use commas in between each author and an ampersand {&} to separate the final author)

Last, F.M., Last, F.M. & Last, F.M. (Date). *Book title*. Place: Publisher

Cooper, J., Adams, T., Johnson, C., & Babcock, H. (2010). *English made easy*. Boston: Freedom Publishers.

- **Encyclopedia: Author or No Author** (If there is not an author, move the article title before the date in place of the author's name)

Last, F.M. (Date). Article title. In *Encyclopedia Name (Volume Number, Page Numbers)*. Place: Publisher.

Bloomberg, M. (2012). Medical assisting. In *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 20, pp. 81-82). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.

- **Encyclopedia: Author or No Author (cont.)**

Medical Assisting. (2012). In *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 20, pp. 81-82). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.

- **Magazine Article**

Last, F.M. (Complete Date). Article title. *Magazine Name, Volume Number, Page Numbers*.

Smith, J. (2009, January 21). Obama inaugurated as President. *Time*, 171, 21-23.

- **Newspaper Article**

Last, F.M. (Complete Date). Article title. *Newspaper Name, Page Numbers*.

Jacobson, J. (2009, February 11). Orlando trail expands. *Orlando Sentinel*, p. A3.

- **Website** (Many webpages do not provide all the information true APA citations call for. In these cases, omit the missing information and follow the form below as closely as possible. If the information is changeable or it updated frequently, you MUST include the retrieval date.)

Last, F.M. (Date). *Webpage title*. Retrieved from [http:// URL](http://URL).

Elliot, G. (2000). *Postpartum depression*. Retrieved from

http://www.webmd.com/postpartum_depression.

Diabetes. Retrieved August 18, 2011 from <http://www.diabetes.com>.

Freud, H.L. *Robotic surgery improvements*. Retrieved September 25, 2013 from

<http://www.roboticsurgeryupdate.com>.

SAMPLE

References

Bradshaw, T., & Duncan, J. (Eds.). (2007). *Growing trends*. New York: Russell Publishers

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Medical Assisting. (2012). In *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol. 20, pp. 81-82). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.

For more information on citations, please see the following:

- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Sixth Edition)
- <http://www.apastyle.org/>
- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>
- <http://citationmachine.net>

Helpful Links for writing assistance:

- <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index.htm>
- <http://plagiarism.umf.maine.edu/index.html> - An Online Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism