Using the APA Style (6th edition): The Major Changes to Note

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ABSTRACT

The sixth edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual was released in July 2009 and authors are expected to adhere to the new requirements when submitting their manuscripts for publication from 2010 onwards. This paper highlights the notable changes and additions especially for the reference list and headings.

Keywords: APA style, in-text citation, reference

1. Introduction

The American Psychological Association (APA) released the sixth edition of its publication manual in July 2009. It is important that academic writing instructors become familiar with the major changes so that they can teach the correct ways of documenting sources according to the latest APA format. It is also advisable for authors who wish to submit manuscripts to journals from 2010 onwards to adhere to the new requirements in the latest edition.

2. The Major Changes

Users of the APA documentation style should be familiar with the new requirements as published in the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010). The following is a brief review of some of the major and essential formatting changes. Readers are encouraged to consult the publication manual for complete information.

2.1 Reference List

The APA has significantly revised the reference list. Refer to Chapters 6 and 7 of the manual for details.
2.1.1. DOI numbers

The DOI (Digital Object Identifier) number is a permanent address for online articles. The APA manual gives a detailed explanation of the DOI together with examples for its use in the reference list. Note that the letters appear in lowercase (doi) in the reference page.

2.1.1.1 If the DOI number is provided for print or electronic articles, it should be included in the reference. Since the DOI number is complex, copy and paste the DOI into the reference.

General Format:


Example:


2.1.1.2 Do not provide the retrieval date and the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) if the DOI is given.

2.1.1.3 If there is no DOI assigned, use the homepage URL of the journal or web address.

Example:


2.1.1.4 Break a URL only after a slash or before a period.

2.1.1.5 Do not use a period to close an entry with a DOI or URL.
2.1.1.6 If providing a URL, no retrieval date is necessary unless the source may change over time, for example, wikis, discussion boards or commercial websites.

Example:

Rampersad, T. (2005, June 8). Re: Traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions [Online forum comment]. Retrieved from http://www.wipo.int/roller/comments/ episforum/Weblog/theme_eight _how_can_cultural#comments

2.1.17 Do not list the database name that you used (e.g. EBSCOhost or ProQuest) unless the article is difficult to locate such as JSTOR or ERIC. In this case, the database homepage should be provided.

Example:

Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org

2.1.1.8 Use “Available from” rather than “Retrieved from” if the work is not readily accessible or free.

Example:

Available from http://www.amazon.com

2.1.2 Multiple Authors
For a work by more than one author, certain rules apply to all types of work whether printed or electronic.

2.1.2.1 For a work by two to seven authors, provide all the authors’ names. List by authors’ last names and initials. Commas separate author names. The last name is preceded by an ampersand (&).

General Format:

Example:

2.1.2.2 For a work by **eight or more authors**, list the first six authors, then insert an ellipsis (...) and add the last name.

**General Format:**

Example:

2.1.2.3 The rules for **in-text citations** have not changed. As a reminder, for a work by **three to five authors**, cite all the authors the first time the reference appears. For subsequent citations, use the first surname followed by “et al.”

Example:
First citation: (Ho, Wong & Mak, 2010)
Subsequent citations: (Ho et al., 2010)

For a work by six or more authors, use the first author’s name followed by “et al.”

Example:
First citation: (Tan et al., 2010)
Subsequent citations: (Tan et al., 2010)

2.1.3 **Place of publication**

Include the city and state (US Postal Abbreviations) or city and country of publication.
Example:

New York, NY: Springer
London, England: Taylor & Francis
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Pearson

2.2 Levels of Heading

The APA has revamped and simplified its headings. See Chapter 3 of the manual for complete information.

There are five sequential levels in APA. Boldface is used in four of the five headings as shown below:

- **Centred, Bold, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**
- **Flush-left, Bold, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**

    **Indented, bold, only the first word of the heading and proper nouns are capitalised.** Continue with the first sentence of the paragraph.

    **Indented, bold, italicised, only the first word of the heading and proper nouns are capitalised.** The paragraph follows.

    **Indented, italicised, only the first word of the heading and proper nouns are capitalised.** Regular text follows after this.

Note that the title of a paper appears on the first page, centred and in upper and lowercase letters. However, it does not count as a level of heading.

In the 5th edition of the APA publication manual, the headings were as follows:
- Level-1: centred and with only the first letter of major words capitalized
- Level-2: centred and italicized, with all major words capitalized
- Level-3: flush left and italicized, with all major words capitalized
- Level-4: indented and italicized, with only the first letter capitalized and ends with a period
- Level-5: centred and all letters are capitalized

Writers that need all five levels would start with level 5 and use the remaining header formats in sequential order:
2.3 Seriation

While the 5th edition of the APA publication manual did not allow the use of bullets, the new edition does. For detailed information, see Chapter 3 of the publication manual.

2.3.1 Bullets

Bullets are allowed when the order of the items in a series is not important. Remember that items in a bulleted list must be grammatically parallel. A bulleted list is also double-spaced like the rest of the text including references and blocked quotes.

2.3.2 Numbers

Use numbers instead of bullets to show hierarchical order or chronology.

2.3.3 Letters

A list of items within a sentence or paragraph can be designated by letters (not numbers) in parentheses. Do not forget the serial comma, i.e. the comma before the last item. Refer to Chapter 4 of the APA manual for more details.

Example:

Sources consulted for scholarly papers generally (a) have been reviewed by experts in the field, (b) contain content regarded as scholarly by experts in the field, and (c) are archived for a significant length of time.

2.4 Spacing between sentences

There is a change in spacing in the new edition. Writers are instructed to space twice after punctuation marks at the end of a sentence but the APA 5th edition indicated that writers should space once after punctuation marks at the end of sentences. Please refer to Chapter 4 of the latest APA manual for detailed information.
2.4.1 Insert **two spaces** after a punctuation mark, e.g. period or question mark that ends a sentence.

2.4.2 For initials, abbreviations, commas, colons and semicolon, **one space** is used.

2.4.3 There is **no space** inside quote marks and parentheses.

### 2.5 Citing direct quotations from electronic sources without pagination

In the 5th edition of the APA manual, writers could use the ¶ symbol or the abbreviation “para”. However, the 6th edition instructs writers to use the abbreviation "para” instead of the pilcrow (i.e. ¶ symbol) to indicate the location of direct quotes of web materials that do not have pagination. Refer to Chapter 6 of the latest manual.

**Example:**

(Lee, 2010, para. 3)

If there is no page number or paragraph number, cite the appropriate heading and specify the paragraph under that heading.

**Example:**

(Ooi, 2009, Discussion section, para. 1)

### 2.6 Repeating the same author within one paragraph

When citing a source within a single paragraph, certain rules apply.

2.6.1 If you mention the author’s name in your sentence, give the year of publication in parentheses the first time you cite the source. You do not have to include the year again when the name is repeated unless it can be confused with other sources.

**Example:**

Ho (2009) compared …. Ho also found that …. 

2.6.2 If you put the author’s name in parentheses the first time, then you will need to repeat the year when you cite the same source again.
Example:

A research showed that …. (Ho, 2009). Ho’s (2009) research also found that …. 

3. Useful Resources

For more information regarding the new guidelines, the following resources are recommended.

3.1 Online

Although not all websites have been updated with the current APA publication guidelines, the following sites have been revised accordingly:

3.1.1 APA style website:
http://www.apastyle.org

This is the official website with links to the FAQs, the APA blog and online tutorials. A document titled “What’s New in the Sixth Edition of the Publication Manual” is also available in this website.

3.1.2 Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL):
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

This is an award winning website and is highly recommended by writing instructors. Go to the section titled “APA formatting and style guide”.

3.1.3 Citation generator:
http://www.noodletools.com
http://www.stylewizard.com

There are many citation builders but not all can support the new style guidelines. For example, some cannot format a citation for more than eight authors.

3.2 Printed

The following sources are published by the APA.

3.2.2 Mastering APA Style: Instructor’s Resource Guide
(ISBN: 1557988900)

3.2.3 Mastering APA Style: Student’s Workbook and Training Guide
(ISBN: 1557988919)

4. Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief summary of some of the major changes in the APA documentation style. When in doubt, the final word is the new publication manual and the official website. It is every author’s responsibility to make sure that all sources of information used are properly documented both in the text and in the reference page not only to avoid plagiarism but also to enable readers to retrieve the information cited.

References

