

# Writing an APA paper

Ralitsa Todorova

PSY250

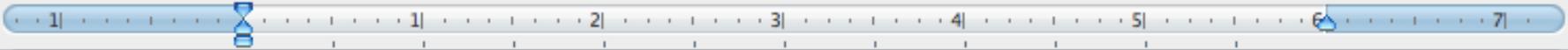
# Formatting

- Format
  - Font: Times New Roman
  - Font Style: Regular
  - Size: 12
- Paragraph
  - Line spacing: Double
- Page Layout → Margins → Normal (1” all around)
- Page numbers: top right on every page, title page included

# Elements of APA Style Papers

- Title page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Supplemental materials: tables, figures, appendixes

# Title page



Running head: ABBREVIATED TITLE

1

This is My Title

Ralitsa Todorova

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# Part 2: Abstract

- Starts on a new page
- Abstract at top, centered
- Between 150-250 words – don't go over but also try not to go under
- Typical framework follows the outline of the paper – about a sentence from each of the sections
  - The problem of the investigation
  - The participants
  - The essential features of the method
  - Basic results
  - Conclusion and implications
- *Keywords:* at the bottom of the abstract

# Part 3: Introduction

- Begins on a **new page after the abstract**
- At the top of the page, **full original title centered**
- **The Content:** findings from peer-reviewed sources that:
  - **orient** your reader around your rationale for your hypothesis and methodology
  - integrate relevant evidence together to shape a **narrative**
    - Findings don't stand isolated and are part of an overall story
      - Significant findings, contradictions, limitations
    - Try to avoid a laundry list of experiments or their procedures
    - Write a coherent **story** about the overall subject/theory
    - Stick to *what's interesting and exciting* about the research findings and the designs

# Introduction

- Present the topic of focus in the first paragraph, followed by a summary of the background literature
- From general > specific, guide your literature review through various experimental designs and findings **while exploring** the rationale of the hypothesis and theory it is based on
- Concluding paragraph
  - Statement of purpose based on the literature presented (why)
  - Hypothesis
  - Short method summary (how)

Introduction to the problem: Why is it important?

Discuss a closely related topic from a similar field that is relevant and leads into the next paragraph.

Background information on the topic.  
Discuss past evidence and how it is related to the current study.

Aims &  
Hypotheses

Go from general  
to specific

# Part 4: Method

- Describes how the variables were operationally defined & the way the study was conducted
- Heading is centered, in bold – Method (not Methods)
- Sub headings, flush left, in bold
  - **Participants** – how many were involved, how were they recruited, and any relevant demographic information
  - **Materials** (measures) – materials you used for your project. Cite them and refer to in the appendix if needed
  - **Procedure** – how the experiment was conducted. Can I read your paper and recreate it?

# Example of Participants and Measures

## Participants:

Eighty three squirrels from Central Park in New York City were observed in this experiment. There were # of squirrels observed in the winter (spring) and # of squirrels observed in the summer (fall).

The subjects in this study were squirrels ( $N = 83$ ) observed in Central Park.

## Measures:

Researchers used the Eastern Gray Squirrel Ethogram (Appendix A) provided by the Hunter Psychology Department to document squirrels behaviors. The ethogram has not been tested for reliability or validity. Researchers recorded 15 behaviors including *jump*, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Jump was operationalized as “jumping on objects above ground” (Appendix A). \_\_\_\_\_ was operationalized as “\_\_\_\_\_” (Appendix A). \_\_\_\_\_ was operationalized as “\_\_\_\_\_” (Appendix A).

# (Too short) Example of Procedure

## **Procedure**

Researchers observed the squirrels for 20 minutes and recorded each time a squirrel's behavior changed. For example, when a squirrel climbed - regardless of the amount of time it climbed - it was coded as one climb. Then when a squirrel stopped climbing and froze that was coded as freeze.

*Give a detailed, step-by-step description of what was done so that other researchers can recreate your study.*

# Part 5: Results

- Section begins with heading **Results** (in bold), centered
- Sometimes it's helpful to remind us of your hypothesis/research question at the beginning
- Give statistics of results in proper APA format.
- DO NOT spend time descriptively talking about the results and what they mean – just give the data here.

## Discussion

heading in bold, centered

From specific to general

At least 4 paragraphs

Do the results support your hypothesis? What are your initial interpretations of your findings?

How does your results compare with the results of other studies discussed in the introduction? Do they clarify or complicate things? Why are they the same or different are previous studies'?

What are the limitations of the current study? How can the study be modified to overcome these problems?

Give a brief summary of your conclusions. Propose future research to extend the current findings. What is the next step?

# Part 6: References

- Heading not bold, centered
- Alphabetically by first author's last name and then by year (earliest first) if multiple articles by same author
- Hanging indent
- Journal articles:
  - Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (year).  
Title of article: Capitalize the word after a colon.  
*Title of Periodical*, xx(x), pp-pp. doi: xx.xxxxxxx

## References

- Alloway, T. P., Gathercole, S. E., Kirkwood, H., & Elliott, J. (2009). The cognitive and behavioural characteristics of children with low working memory. *Child Development, 80*, 606-621.
- Glover, J. A. (1989). The “testing” phenomenon: Not gone but nearly forgotten. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*, 392–399.
- Lohnas, L.J., Polyn, S.M., & Kahana, M.J. (2011). Contextual variability in free recall. *Journal of Memory and Language, 64*(3), 249-255.
- Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information. *Psychological Review, 63*, 81–97.

# Plagiarism



- “Borrowing” from a friend's paper
- Cutting and pasting from the Internet
- Turning in a paper without any citations
- Turning in a paper with in-text citations but no reference section
- Documenting only quoted material but not documenting paraphrased material
- Retaining too much of the wording and style of the original in paraphrasing
- Citing at the end of a long passage without making clear how much is from the source

# Types of Plagiarism

## Accidental Plagiarism (I didn't pay attention)

- Might not fully understand what proper documentation is and how to do it
- Source materials which are never mentioned in the text and/or are not listed in the references
- Writing long summaries without including citations
- Paraphrasing which isn't actually paraphrasing - is too close to the original

## Deliberate Plagiarism (she'll never figure it out)

- Borrowing papers from others
- Purchasing papers
- Internet cut-and-paste or journal read-and-copy



# Tips to Avoid Plagiarism

1. Do your own work and use your own words
2. Allow yourself enough time
3. Keep track of your sources
4. Take notes
5. Assemble your thoughts & make clear who is speaking
6. If you use an idea, a quotation, or a paraphrase, then credit the source
7. Learn how to cite correctly
8. Paraphrase carefully

# When you don't need citations...

- Common Knowledge
  - Information from various sources and known to most educated people, e.g. the U.S. went to war in 2003, or Columbus discovered America
- Information that is well known in a field of study
  - Most medical researchers believe heredity plays a role in diabetes.
  - As a rule, if you see the same idea in three different sources, it is probably well known in the field
- Factual information
  - The Civil War ended in 1864 and Robert Lee was a Southern general

# When you should have citations...

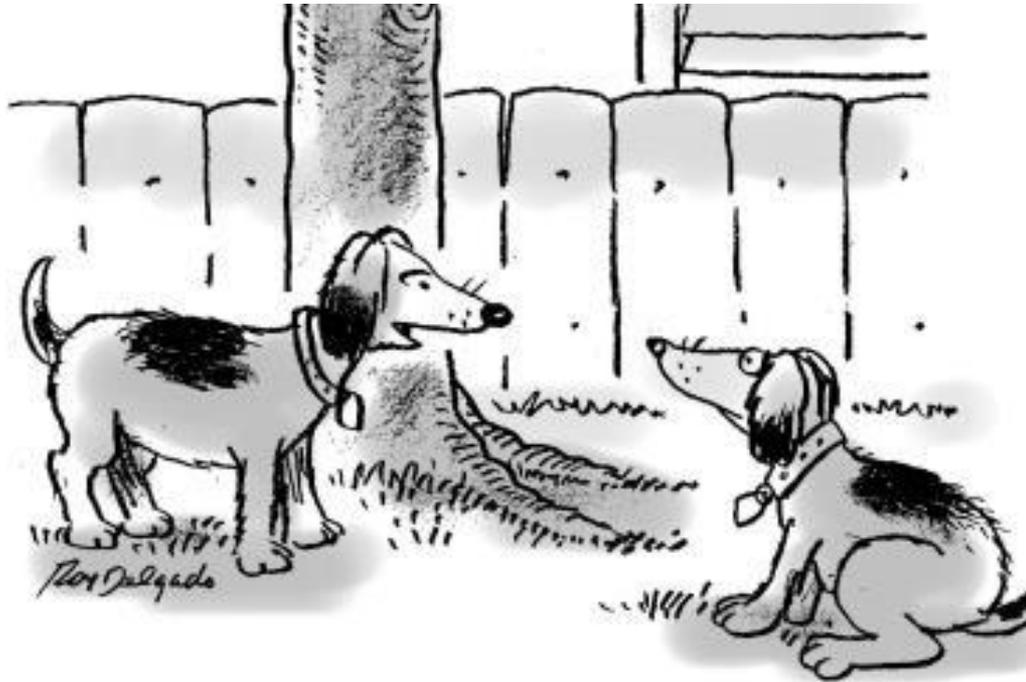
- Another person's words, ideas, organization, judgments, and unique opinions
- Information from an organization - like a government Web site
- Information like articles, lectures, personal interviews, emails, discussion groups
- Numerical information like statistics, amounts, and dates that are not common knowledge
- It's your responsibility to know the rules!!

# Consequences...



- Failing grade on the assignment
- Failing grade in the class
- Possible expulsion from school
- Permanent record
- Embarrassment

# So what should you do?



"WOOF, WOOF, WOOF - BUT I'M PARAPHRASING."

# Summarizing vs. Paraphrasing vs. Quoting

Summarizing	Paraphrasing	Quoting
<p>Restate the major points of the article</p> <p>To distill only the most important points of someone else's work</p> <p>The text is shorter than the original text</p> <p>Must use your own words with limited use of quotations</p> <p><b>Must reference the original source</b></p>	<p>Your own version of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in your own language</p> <p>The text can be shorter or longer than the original text.</p> <p>Must use your own words</p> <p><b>Must reference the original source</b></p>	<p>The text is the exact length of the original text quoted.</p> <p>Use the original words of the authors.</p> <p>Include the page number of the original source from which you took the quote.</p> <p><b>Must reference the original source</b></p> <p><b>NOT IN THIS CLASS</b></p>