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APA Writing Format

**Level One Headings**

Level one headings are always centered, bolded, contain both upper and lower case letters, and do not end in any punctuation. In a level one heading, all essential words are capitalized. Rarely will an ECU undergraduate student need to use headings; however, students regularly use headings incorrectly in papers that costs them points. Should a student need headings, two levels are likely all they will need for the paper.

**Level Two Headings**

Level two headings are flush left, boldface, contain both upper and lower case letters, and do not end in any punctuation. In a level two heading, all essential words are capitalized. The use of punctuation is a common error in a level two heading. Students commonly do not use “quotation marks” accurately within their papers. Quotations should only be used when introducing a word like “wackadoo” used as an ironic comment, slang, or as a coined expression. Comma, usage, is, the, most, common punctuation error seen when students first learn to write in APA format. Students that elect to use commas should use commas, in between phrases, and use the word and in between the last comma and phrase within a sentence. For example, word word word word, word, and word is a correct example.

Indentation of paragraphs is another issue I see with students learning to write in APA format. They will not indent or will apply “double spaced” to their indentation of paragraphs. Sometimes, students will get cute and creative and use the space bar to create an indentation. The usage of the space bar to create indented paragraphs can be identified by clicking the “non-printing characters” button in Microsoft word.

In text citations are a massive source of errors when undergraduate students write in APA format. One common error is the introduction of references (Dustin H. Williams & Ronald Reagan, 2004). Students tend to include all sorts of information that is not needed. All that is needed are the last names and the year of publication (Williams & Shaw, 2016). In the citation, the ampersand character separates last names. Students rarely cite references with more than three authors accurately (Williams, Thompson, & Biles, 2013). After first introducing a citation with three or more authors, students can then use the shortened version of the citation (Williams et al., 2013). In a sentence, they would state that Williams et al. (2013) published an article. In text quotations are another source of errors when students write in APA format. Students tend to “Start a direct quote and then begin an interpretive grammatical dance…..” I commonly caution students against using direct quotes to avoid errors and quoting erroneous material. Should they need quotes, “the piece of information quoted should be offset by a comma, quotation marks, and include relevant information from the reference in the citation” (Williams et al., 2013, p. 24). Punctuation placement is a problem with in text citations. Punctuation needs to go outside of parentheses or inside or quotation marks. Quotes of more than 40 words should be offset in block quotations.

For example, block quotations needs to be indented. Block quotations do not start with

quotation marks. I am not a fan of block quotations as I do not believe that undergraduate students need to be quoting 40 or more words from authors given the assigned length of their papers. The block quotes should end with the correct citation information   
 (Williams & Shaw, 2016, pp 21 – 24).

Both bulleted and numbered lists are acceptable in APA format. There are no hard and fast rules for formatting these lists. Consistency is paramount. Each bullet should end in some form of punctuation and students can choose their own bullets as long as they are consistent in their usage.

* Quick list APA formatting guide.
* Double spaced.
* Times new roman font, 12 point.
* Include a cover page with a name, university, and the name of the assignment.
* There should be a header on the first page with a page number.
* All subsequent pages should included the shortened header and page numbers.
* The “header” portion denoting the title of the work should be capitalized.
* Make sure the header is in Times 12 point.
* When linking phrases students should use commas, commas, and the word and in between the last comma and phrase.
* There should be a header on the first page.
* Use indentation in paragraphs.
* Rarely should students need headings. If they do, level 1 headings should be centered, bolded, upper and lower case, and not containing any punctuation.
* Level two headings should be flush left, bolded, contain upper and lower case, and not contain any punctuation.
* Passive voice is not acceptable in APA format. Will be is the most common form.
* References are critical to students success.
* References should be alphabetized with last name of first author as the guiding criteria.

References

Williams, D. & Shaw, M. (2016). Applying cognitive heuristics and biases to decisions,

decision making processes, and the outcomes of decisions. *Journal of Awesome Professors and Students, 45*(3), 236 – 432.

* Journal article reference format.
* Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical, Volume*(Issue), pp – pp. doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx

Williams, D. W. (Producer) & Gorley, G. (Director). (2010). *How to*

*write good psychology papers: A mockumentary* (Motion Picture). United States of America: Awesome Productions.

* Movie citation format.
* Producer then Director. Year of movie release. *Title of movie in Italics* (Motion Picture). Country where movie was made: Studio or product.

Williams, D. W. & Shaw, M. (2014). *My first book: An attempt to make an APA reference for a*

*book.* Oklahoma City, OK: 405 Publishers.

* Book citation format.
* Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). *Title of book.* Location: Publisher.

Williams, D. (2016, July). This is my first psychology article published online. *Journal of Online*

*Psychology, 42*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.google.com>

* Online article format.
* Author, A. A. (Year, Month). Title of article. *Title of publication, Volume*(Issue). Retrieved from website [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)