The Basics of APA Formatting

APA is the acronym for the American Psychological Association, a professional organization representing psychology that sets formatting guidelines for academic writing in the behavioral and social sciences. The purpose of APA style is to provide a common framework to share scholarly work in a clear and concise manner.

APA formatting:
• One-inch margins all around
• ½ inch indentation for paragraphs
• Left aligned
• Double spaced text throughout the entire essay
• One space after the period at the end of a sentence
• Use standard available fonts such as Times New Roman 12 pt, Calibri 11 pt, or Arial 11 pt

APA structure:

Note: There are professional and student papers. Be sure which one your professor wants as the requirements change.

• Title page
• Abstract (required for professional papers, professor may require for student paper)
• Main Body
• Reference page
• Footnotes, tables, or figures not included in the text will become their own section
• Appendix – information that would have disrupted the text such as a survey questionnaire

Title Page
• The title page text should be centered and double spaced.
• The actual title is properly capitalized, bold face, and three to four lines down from the top of the paper.
• Student papers include:
  o page 1 at top right corner
  o paper title
  o author
  o affiliation (department and college)
  o course code and name
  o instructor’s full name
  o due date (spell out month and use four-digit year)
• For professional paper requirements and example, please see a tutor or go to https://apastyle.apa.org
Abstract

APA requires an abstract for professional papers. Student papers do not require them unless instructed by the professor. The abstract will be its own page, with the word Abstract, centered and in bold, written on the first line of the page. An abstract is a single paragraph, without indentation, and usually 150-250 words in length. The abstract will be page two of your essay. This section is a concise, comprehensive summary of the purpose and content of the paper. Please note the running header here is only for professional papers or if required by a professor.

If keywords are used, Keywords is italicized and indented on the very next line. Use a colon after Keywords and list the key words, separated by a comma. The actual keywords are not italicized.
Abstract example:

**Abstract**

When institutions administer student evaluations of teaching (SETs) online, response rates are lower relative to paper-based administration. We analyzed average SET scores from 364 courses taught during the fall term in 3 consecutive years to determine whether administering SET forms online for all courses in the 3rd year changed the response rate or the average SET score. To control for instructor characteristics, we baselined the data analysis on courses for which the same instructor taught the course in each of three successive fall terms. Response rates for face-to-face classes declined when SET administration occurred only online. Although average SET scores were reliably lower in Year 3 than in the previous 2 years, the magnitude of this change was minimal (0.11 on a five-item Likert-like scale).

We discuss practical implications of these findings for interpretation of SETs and the role of SETs in the evaluation of teaching quality.

**Keywords:** college teaching, student evaluations of teaching, online administration, response rate, assessment

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**Main Body**

Main body begins on the very next page. Notice that you have a page number in the top right. This will be page two unless there is an abstract, which will then make it page three. The title is restated exactly like it was on the title page, at the top, centered, in bold.

Note that the first paragraphs of an APA style paper are understood to be introductory. Therefore, the heading “Introduction” is not needed. Do not begin a paper with an “Introduction” heading because the paper title at the top of the first page of text acts as the heading.
Example of main body:

Guided Imagery and Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Group Psychotherapy

A majority of Americans experience stress in their daily lives (American Psychological Association, 2017). Thus, an important goal of psychological research is to evaluate techniques that promote stress reduction and relaxation. Two techniques that have been associated with reduced stress and increased relaxation in psychotherapy contexts are guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation (McGuigan & Lehrer, 2007). Guided imagery aids individuals in connecting their internal and external experiences, allowing them, for example, to feel calmer externally because they practice thinking about calming imagery. Progressive muscle relaxation involves diaphragmatic breathing and the tensing and releasing of 16 major muscle groups; together these behaviors lead individuals to a more relaxed state (Jacobson, 1998; Trahtenberg, 2008). Guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation are both cognitive behavioral techniques (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) in which individuals focus on the relationship among thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (White, 2000).

Group psychotherapy effectively promotes positive treatment outcomes in patients in a cost-effective way. Its efficacy is in part attributable to variables unique to the group experience of therapy as compared with individual psychotherapy (Bolton, 1990; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). That is, the group format helps participants feel accepted and better understand their common struggles; at the same time, interactions with group members provide social support and models of positive behavior (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Thus, it is useful to examine how stress reduction and relaxation can be enhanced in a group context.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the research base on guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation in group psychotherapy contexts. I provide overviews of both guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation, including theoretical foundations and historical context. Then I examine guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation as used on their own as well as in combination as part of group psychotherapy (see Nader et al., 1994, for more). Throughout the review, I

Reference Page

The reference page is very important because it ensures proper credit is given to the works cited (in-text citations) within the paper. EACH source cited in the text of the paper MUST appear in the reference page. The different citation format options are determined by the type of reference work such as a book, journal article, website, or video.

The page numbering continues in the upper right-hand corner. The word “References” (or “Reference” if there is only one) is centered and in bold. All references are double spaced. After the first line of a reference, all remaining lines should be indented .5 inches from the left margin (hanging indent). References are ordered alphabetically by author’s last name.
Example of a reference page:

References


References used in creating this handout


Purdue Online Writing Lab (2021, October 28). APA headings and seriation. Purdue OWL. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/apa_headings_and_seriation.html