Sample APA Paper

Name of Assignment

Your Name

NURS/ALHT (as appropriate for the course) \_\_\_\_ CRN \_\_\_\_, Title of Course Here

Instructor’s Name

Month, Day, Year

Abstract

APA 6th edition has specific requirements for all parts of a paper. A word processor will put in a superscript for ordinal numbers such as 6th (like this: 6th), which is not allowed. This can be corrected by highlighting the superscript and going to the toolbar. Click on the x with a superscript (i.e., x2) that will be highlighted, and the superscript will be removed. Notice how there is double spacing after each sentence. An abstract must be 150-250 words in length. Note that the word *abstract* is capitalized, centered, and not bolded. Note that the content of the abstract is flush with the left margin. This is the only place in APA that does not indent paragraphs. The content of the abstract does not contain general introductory information for the paper. It contains specific information of what is found in the paper (American Psychological Association, 2010). A good idea is to go by the grading rubric for the particular paper and incorporate into the abstract every topic to be covered in the paper. Insert a page break after the last character of the last line so that the next page does not creep up onto this page. Hit Enter after the last punctuation, and then insert the page break so centering on the next page does not center the last paragraph of this page.

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On the first page of text, the exact same title used on the cover page must be placed at the top and centered with the main words capitalized. It is not bold because it is the title of the paper and not a heading (American Psychological Association, 2010). All paragraphs must be more than three sentences in length and no longer than a half page.

The first couple of paragraphs of the paper are for introductory information about the topic. It is the introduction, but it should not have a title of introduction. Notice that all paragraphs are indented, a function that is set in the toolbar of the Word program. After the introductory information, headings are used, which have specific requirements. There are no extra spaces anywhere between paragraphs or headings. The entire paper is double spaced, including the reference list, and margins all around the paper are 1 inch (American Psychological Association, 2010).

**Headings**

The use of headings organizes the paper. Think of the topics for headings as if the topics were in outline form. An outline breaks the information to be discussed into parts, with each part having subparts. The main topics will be Level 1 headings, and the subtopics will be Level 2 or lower headings. Level 2 subtopics may be broken down further, if needed, but most papers will only require Level 1 and Level 2 headings.

Headings should only have a few words to indicate the content. An excellent method of organizing the paper is to use the topics from the criteria in the grading rubric. The rubric specifies exactly what must be covered in the paper. Using each general element of the rubric will provide the Level 1 headings for the paper. Additional information required within each element will be the Level 2 headings.

Level 1 headings are centered, bolded, and have the main words capitalized. Level 2 headings are flush left, bolded, and have the main words capitalized (American Psychological Association, 2010). Refer to the APA Manual for additional levels. A heading at the bottom of a page with no text under it is called an orphan. All headings must have at least two lines of text under them, so the heading should be moved to the next page by hitting enter until the heading is positioned properly on the next page.

**Grammar**

It is a requirement of APA that good grammar be used in writing. The first few pages of the manual are devoted to correct grammar. Good grammar encompasses many rules usually learned by the eighth grade, such as only capitalizing proper nouns, subject and verb agreement, noun and pronoun agreement, and sentence structure. This is basic to APA format and academic writing.

**Seriation**

Seriation is the listing of information, and there are specific rules to follow. There are four methods of listing information that are acceptable. Specific rules for the types of seriation can be found on p. 63 of the manual.

1. Numbers are used with the first word after each number capitalized and a period at the end.

2. Bullets may be used with the first word capitalized in each entry and a period at the end.

3. Information may also be written in a sentence as (a) good, (b) bad, and (c) ugly in the text itself.

4. Items may be listed in a sentence, but three or more items require commas separating each item. If any of the items contain a comma, the separating punctuation becomes a semi-colon.

**Numbers**

Numbers less than 10 are spelled out. Numbers 10 and higher are written as numerals. There are exceptions, however. Numbers relating to time, age, percentages, and money are some examples of when to use the numeral, no matter how small the quantity; basically, use numerals for anything that can be measured. When writing a plural number, such as the 1980s, no apostrophe is used (American Psychological Association, 2010). If a number is the first word of a sentence it should be written out, but try not to start a sentence with a number.

**Citations**

Citations are required any time information that does not originate completely with the writer is discussed in a paper, or to support original ideas that grow out of reading the literature. Using information from any source without citing where it came from, whether from a conversation, website, journal, or book, is called *plagiarism*. A good writer uses information from other sources and credits the source through the use of a citation. Citations are used at the end of any information from another source. It is not necessary to cite after each sentence, but it is necessary to cite at the end of the information before other information from another source is used. The standard citation goes at the end of the information and before the punctuation, which goes after the citation (American Psychological Association, 2010).

There are many different types of citations. Each citation must have a corresponding entry in the reference list at the end of the paper. Each entry of the reference list must also have a corresponding citation in the body of the paper. The reference list is done in alphabetical order. Always keep the APA Manual next to the computer when writing a paper. There are specific rules that must be followed in writing a citation and there are samples of all of the different types in the APA Manual.

**Quotations**

A quotation of less than 40 words can be used in the body of the paragraph and has double quotation marks around it. A citation is required directly after the information that is in quotation marks. A quotation of 40 words or more must be in a block of text, on a new line, double spaced, indented a half inch without a paragraph indent for the first paragraph, and with no quotation marks. This is called a *block quotation*. Information directly quoted must include the page number or paragraph number in the citation (American Psychological Association, 2010).

**Nonparenthetical Citations**

Nonparenthetical means not in parentheses. “If the name of the author appears as part of the narrative, cite only the year of publication in parentheses” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 174). An example is: According to Makhombe (2009), leadership is a matter of style.

**Parenthetical Citations**

Parenthetical means in parentheses. Parenthetical citations are used when the information must be credited, but the author’s name is not used as part of the text. This is the best way to cite as it does not intrude into the meaning of the sentence and focuses on the topic and not the author.

There are rules that must be followed and are based on the number of authors in the reference. For two authors, both names and the year must be used every time. For three, four, or five authors, all authors must be used in the first citation in the text, but after the first citation, only the name of the first author is used followed by et al. and the year (American Psychological Association, 2010). Note the period after the word al.; it is a Latin abbreviation and needs that period.

The following is an example of five authors in a citation for the first use in-text: Endicott appears to exhibit the transformational leadership style, which formulates a clear vision that allows employees to see the big picture and enhance their understanding of where they fit in (Nielsen, Yarker, Brenner, Randall, & Borg, 2008). All subsequent citations for this reference would look like this: (Nielsen et al., 2008). Notice the period and the comma after the word *al*. There are exceptions to this rule and rules for six or more authors, so the manual must be consulted for exactly how it should appear in the paper (American Psychological Association, 2010).

**Referencing**

After all the text of the paper is written, a page break must be inserted to force the reference list to begin on a fresh page. Every paper must have a reference list at the end of the paper. Every citation used in the text of the paper must have a corresponding reference included in the reference list. Conversely, every reference listed must be cited in the paper. A reference list contains only what is read and used; a bibliography, *which APA does not use,* would list everything read, whether or not it is used in the actual paper.

The heading References, or Reference, if there is just one entry, is centered and not bolded. The reference list is double spaced, just as the entire paper is double spaced, with no extra spaces inserted anywhere. The entries are listed alphabetically by the first author’s last name. Hanging indents must be formatted for this page so the second line of each reference is indented (American Psychological Association, 2010). Hanging indents are formatted by clicking on page layout, paragraph, indents and spacing, special, and hanging. There are very specific rules for the order of information in a reference, so the APA Manual must be consulted. Pay special attention to the use of italics, punctuation, capitalization, and superscript. Do not double space after periods in the reference list.

There will always be something italicized in a reference. It will be a book title, an article title, or a journal name and volume number. Use the group name if no specific author is given. Use the title of an article in the author’s place before the year element, if no author is listed. A period is required after all elements in a reference unless the ending information is a website. Always put a space between the first name initials of an author and do not use suffixes, such as degrees or titles. The edition of a book must be written in a certain format, the volume of a journal is italicized, and the issue is in parentheses but not italicized. If no date is given for the information, n.d. is placed in the date position. Consult the APA Manual for samples of reference citations for each type.

**Conclusion**

Always include a conclusion in a paper. A conclusion tells us what the point of the paper was, what was learned, and such. It is not a summary, which is a short version of the paper. APA has very specific requirements about writing. Contractions are not allowed. Only certain words can have quotation marks around them such as words used in an ironic expression, slang, or coined words. Abbreviations are only allowed if they are used a minimum of four times in the paper, and each abbreviation must be spelled out the first time it is used, unless it is recognized in Webster’s Dictionary as an abbreviation (American Psychological Association, 2010). An example of one such abbreviation found in Webster’s is RN (RN, 2010).

This document provides some valuable information to help write a paper in APA format. This paper can be used as a template for writing all papers; this is highly recommended. To use this paper as a template, save it to your computer. Every time a paper has to be written, pull up this paper and begin typing in the new information. Do not erase all the existing information until typing in some of the new information, or the formatting will be erased. By using this paper as a template, new margins, spacing, hanging indents, and headers will not have to be formatted since they are already set.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

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Nielsen, K., Yarker, J., Brenner, S., Randall, R., & Borg, V. (2008). The importance of transformational leadership style for the well-being of employees working with older people. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *63*(5), 465-475. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04701.x

RN. (2010). In *Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary.* Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/RN