

Running head: WRITING A REPORT IN APA STYLE

Writing an APA Style Report

Author's Name

Name of College or University

Author Note: This handout was written by Dr. Matthew Chin and Dr. Valerie Sims on March 20, 2002. It is a revision of a document written on December 10, 1992. Much of the content was adapted from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) and Cozby's (1993) Methods in Behavioral Research (5th ed.).

Abstract

The abstract is a short (120 words) description of what you did, how you did it, what you found, and how you interpreted what you found. It is one long paragraph (with no indentation) and it appears on a separate page. It is best to write this section of your paper last. Numerical results should not appear in the abstract. You should be sure to mention your main research question. Also, be sure to briefly mention the theoretical significance of your experiment.

Writing an APA Style Report

The main purpose of your introduction is to convince the reader that your experiment is important research. You need to logically justify your predictions (i.e., hypotheses) by explaining the theoretical basis for them. Remember that any idea that is not your own should have a reference citation following it. Even if you have paraphrased someone else's ideas, you still need to use a citation. Also, never cite a source that you have not actually read yourself.

Your predictions should be logically derived from past theories and research. Therefore, you should summarize previous research and make your main research question clear. Although it is important that some relevant experiments be reviewed in detail, make sure that your introduction does not simply read like a sequence of short summaries. It is vital that the links between the past research you have reviewed and your hypotheses are straightforward and logical. When describing past research, be sure to address any important theoretical controversies in the literature. You might also comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the past research. At the end of the introduction, you should explicitly state your hypotheses.

Method

Participants

This subsection should describe relevant characteristics about the participants used. Typically, these characteristics include how many participants were used, the participants' approximate ages (you can give a range), the gender of the participants, the race/ethnicity of the participants and the place from which the participants were obtained. You should also mention how the participants were recruited and if they received any compensation (e.g., money) for their participation. Depending on the nature of your study, it might be appropriate to state explicitly in this subsection that all participants provided their informed consent and were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" of the American Psychological Association.

Materials

This subsection should briefly describe the materials (e.g., questionnaires, the videotapes, the photographs, etc.) used in your study. Only describe the items that are necessary to replicate your study or understand what happened in your study. If you used complex visual stimuli in your study, provide a full description of the stimuli along with an appropriate figure to illustrate them. If you are writing a paper for a

class, include copies of all of your materials in an appendix at the end of your paper. Note that procedural details should not be discussed in this subsection.

Apparatus

If you used special equipment (e.g., computers, television monitors, video cassette recorders), you should use a separate apparatus subsection. Again, only describe the items that are necessary to replicate your study or understand what happened in your study. Note that procedural details should not be discussed in this subsection either.

Design

This subsection should describe your experimental design. If your experimental design is a factorial design, be sure to state that. You should note whether you used a between-subjects (i.e., independent groups) design or a within-subjects (i.e., repeated measures design). Also, both the independent and dependent variables should be identified by name, and if there are multiple levels of the independent variable, you should describe them. When identifying your variables, do not simply refer to your theoretical constructs (e.g., “the dependent variable was verbal intelligence”). Instead, specify how your variables were operationalized (e.g., “the dependent variable was verbal intelligence, which was defined as the Verbal IQ score on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R)”).

Procedure

This subsection should describe exactly how your experiment was conducted. A good general guideline is that your description should allow another researcher to replicate your study in order to retest your hypotheses. Avoid describing unnecessary and trivial details.

Results

The results section should describe what statistical tests you performed (e.g., ANOVA, t-test) and whether they were statistically significant (e.g., did you find any significant main effects? Significant interactions?). Be sure to report means (and standard deviations) for the various conditions in your experiment directly in the text if you are not using a table or a graph to summarize them. You should describe the trends in your data in this section, but refrain from mentioning what they imply. Also, be sure to explain your figures (e.g., graphs) and tables to the reader. Assume the reader will not look at these items if you do not explicitly point out important aspects of them. It might help to think of this process as describing the figures and tables to a blind

person whom you would have to lead through step-by-step. Incidentally, although you should refer to your figures and tables as if they were present, they should actually be placed at the end of your paper. Also, you should not have both a table and a figure for the same data (choose one).

Discussion

The discussion section should explain the implications of the results. It should begin with a very brief summary of the results that does not include any actual numbers. If you have significant results that match your a priori hypotheses, then it should be relatively straightforward to explain what they mean. However, you also need to discuss any aspects of your results that do not coincide with your original hypotheses. Why do you think you did not find results that match your hypotheses? It could be that your original hypotheses were correct but there was something wrong with your methodology (i.e., perhaps there is a confounding variable). Keep in mind that a confounding variable must provide a feasible alternative explanation for your results. A confound is not simply any potential methodological problem. Another possibility is that your original predictions were incorrect and the data from your experiment indicate what is actually true. Yet another possibility is that a competing theory is supported by your data. Incidentally, it is not appropriate to propose that your data are simply the result of not having enough subjects. Next, you should describe any practical applications of your results (e.g., for education). At the very end of your discussion section, you should attempt to make several good suggestions regarding appropriate future research. Your suggestions should logically follow from the results obtained in your experiment, pertain to your original research hypotheses, and fit with past research on your topic.

References

The list of references should directly follow the discussion section but begin on a new page. Only sources cited in your report should be listed here. All references should appear in order of the first author's last name. The list of references should be double-spaced. General forms of common references appear below:

Periodical:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, xx, xxx-xxx.

Nonperiodical:

Author, A. A. (Year). *Title of work*. Location: Publisher.

Part of nonperiodical (e.g., book chapter):

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of chapter. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C. Editor (Eds.), *Title of book* (pp. xxx-xxx). Location: Publisher.

Nonperiodicals include items published separately: books, reports, brochures, certain monographs, manuals, and audiovisual media.

Online Periodical:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, xx, xxx-xxx.

Retrieved month day, year, from source.

Computer Software:

Author, A. A., Author, B.B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of software (Version X.X) [Computer software].

Location: Software Producer.

Unpublished Paper (or poster) presented at a meeting:

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year, Month). Title of paper or poster. Paper (or poster) presented at the full name of the meeting, Location.

Table 1

Mean Score on the Dependent Variable as a Function of Independent Variable A and Independent Variable B

	Independent Variable A	
Independent Variable B	Level 1	Level 2
Level 1	100	30
Level 2	30	100

Figure Caption

Figure 1. This figure shows mean score on the dependent variable as a function of independent variable A and independent variable B.

