

## APA Mechanics of Style – 7<sup>th</sup> edition

(This guide provides only selected portions. See Chapter 6 in the 7th edition APA manual for full information.)

### Punctuation

#### Spacing After Punctuation Marks

##### Insert one space after

commas, colons, and semicolons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• After the rain stopped, I went to class.</li><li>• Here is the list of supplies: paper, pens and glue.</li><li>• The student passed the test; she was proud of her grade.</li></ul>
periods used to separate the parts of a reference source	Sorrell, J. (2001). Stories in the nursing classroom: Writing and learning through stories. <i>Language and Learning Across the Disciplines</i> , 5(1), 36-48. Retrieved from <a href="https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/llad/v5n1/v5n1.pdf">https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/llad/v5n1/v5n1.pdf</a>
periods for the initials in personal names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• J. K. Jones</li></ul> <p>Note: There should be a space in between the letters (J. and K.), not J.K. with no space between the letters.</p>
Do not insert a space after internal periods in abbreviations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• e.g.</li><li>• a.m.</li><li>• i.e.</li><li>• U.S.</li></ul>

Adapted from page 154 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

#### Period

Use a period with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• initials for personal names (J. K. Jones)</li><li>• abbreviation for the U.S. when used as an adjective (U.S. Marines)</li><li>• labels for study participants to conceal identify (F.I. M.)</li><li>• Latin term abbreviations (a.m., i.e., p. 6)</li><li>• abbreviations for reference sources (Vol. 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 9).</li></ul>
Do not use periods with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State name abbreviations (NY, CA, Washington DC)</li><li>• In capital letter abbreviations and acronyms</li></ul>
Use periods for the initials in personal names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• J. C. Jones</li></ul> <p>Note: There should be a space in between the letters (J. and K.), not J.K. with no space between the letters.</p>
Do not insert a space after internal periods in abbreviations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• e.g.</li><li>• a.m.</li><li>• i.e.</li><li>• U.S.</li></ul>

Adapted from page 154 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Comma

### Use a comma

in a series of three or more items (comma goes before “and” and “or”) – also known as the Oxford comma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... in a study by Jones, Baker, and Bentley.</li> </ul>
for non-essential or non-restrictive clauses (these clauses can be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning or sentence structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane, who was a girl, was a good student.</li> </ul>
to separate two complete sentences (independent clauses) joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study was completed, and it provided conclusive results.</li> </ul>
to separate the year for exact dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>August 19, 1992, was today’s date.</li> </ul>
to separate the year in the parenthetical in-text citations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Jones, 2007)</li> </ul>
for numbers with three or more digits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,000 1,000,000</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 155 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### DO NOT use a comma

for essential or restrictive clauses (these change the meaning of the sentence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The timer that sets off the alarm also shuts it off.</li> <li>“that sets off the alarm” is essential to meaning of the sentence.</li> </ul>
for non-essential or non-restrictive clauses (these clauses can be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning or sentence structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane, who was a girl, was a good student.</li> <li>“who was a girl” is not essential to the meaning of the sentence</li> </ul>
between a complete sentence and an incomplete sentence connected with a conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study was completed and provided conclusive results.</li> <li>The second part of the sentence after “and” is not a complete sentence, so a comma should not be put before the “and”</li> </ul>
to separate the parts of measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 years 4 months 2 min 52 s</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 156 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Semicolon

### Use a semicolon

to separate two complete sentences (independent clauses) that are not connected with a conjunction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The study was completed; the results were conclusive.</li></ul>
to separate items in a series that also contain commas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The study was conducted in 1990, 1991, and 1992; 1995, 1996, and 1997, and 2000, 2001, and 2002.</li></ul>

Adapted from page 156 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Colon

### Use a colon

before lists at the end of a sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The study was conducted in the following years: 1992, 1993 and 1994.</li></ul>
with ratios and proportions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1:9.</li></ul>

Adapted from pages 156-157 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Don't use a colon

after an introduction that is not a complete sentence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The instructions for the test were Your group's task is to match terms with their definitions.</li></ul>
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Adapted from page 157 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Dash

### Use a dash

to set off a parenthetical element in a sentence that is a sudden interruption in the sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The study was conducted—on the first group and then the second group—over two days.</li></ul>
Note	A dash is created by typing two hyphens together—with no blank spaces on either side of the hyphens. Word will often convert the hyphens to an em dash —

Adapted from page 157 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Quotation Mark

### Use “double” quotation marks

To refer to a letter, word, phrase, or sentence as a linguistic example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The letter “s.”</li> <li>• The singular “they.”</li> </ul>
for expressions that are ironic, slang or invented/coined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new term is “frenemy.”</li> </ul>
to encase the title of articles or chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The History of Graphic Design.”</li> </ul>
whenever exact words are used from a source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smith (2007) said, “The study was conclusive” (p. 1).</li> </ul>
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periods and commas go inside the end quotation mark. Semicolons and colons go outside the end quotation mark.</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 158 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### DO NOT use “double” quotation marks

when introducing a technical term; use italics instead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The term <i>hyperdrive</i> was used in the article several times.</li> </ul>
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Adapted from page 158 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Use ‘single’ quotation marks

to quote words or phrases within a double-quotation mark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to Smith (2009), “in science fiction, the term ‘hyperdrive’ describes the ability to travel in space faster than light speeds” (p. 1).</li> </ul>
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Adapted from page 158 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Square Brackets

### Use brackets

to include parenthetical information already in parentheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (The results of the study [n=10] were conclusive).</li> </ul>
when altering a quotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to Smith and Jones (2018), “[t]he study was conclusive” (p. 3).</li> <li>• “The study [on diabetes] was conclusive.”</li> </ul>
to encase statistical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The results were statistically significant (p = .055)</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 160 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Parentheses

### Use parentheses

to separate independent elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study was significant (see Figure 2).</li> </ul>
for the publication year and page number in attribution in-text citations and parenthetical in-text citations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smith and Jones (2018) said “The study was conclusive” (p. 3).</li> <li>(Smith &amp; Jones, 2018).</li> </ul>
for abbreviations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Psychological Association (APA)</li> </ul>
for numbered lists using letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study was conducted in (a) England, (b) France, and (c) Germany.</li> </ul>
for mathematical expression grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><math>(x - 1) / (y - 2)</math></li> </ul>
to encase statistical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The results were statistically significant (<math>p = .055</math>)</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 159 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### DO NOT use parentheses

within other parentheses; use square brackets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(American Psychological Association [APA], 2009, p. 43).</li> </ul>
next to each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(e.g., clinical depression) (Smith &amp; Jones, 2018).</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 159-160 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Slash

### Use a slash (/)

to separate numerator from denominator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X/Y</li> </ul>
in units of measure to indicate <i>per</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 mg/kg</li> </ul>
for linguistics to set off English phonemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>/o/</li> </ul>
in the publication year of an in-text citation to indicate a republished work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jones (1989/2010)</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 160-161 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Hyphen

### Use a hyphen

between two words when one of the words is a participle and modifier the word it precedes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• role-playing exercise, anxiety-producing condition</li> <li>• Note: A participle is a word formed from a verb (e.g., going, burned) that is used as an adjective or a noun.</li> </ul>
in a phrase used as an adjective when it comes before the word it modifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trial-by-trial study</li> </ul>
with a combination of adjective and noun when it comes before the word it modifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• middle-class people</li> </ul>
when a number is combined with a word and comes before the word it modifies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two-way highway, 7th-grade classroom</li> </ul>
when a fraction is used as an adjective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-thirds majority</li> </ul>
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A hyphen has no space before or after it = step-by-step</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 163 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### DO NOT use a hyphen

In a combination that includes an adverb ending in <i>ly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• widely used methods</li> </ul>
a combination that uses a comparative or superlative adjective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• higher order learning</li> </ul>
with chemical terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hydrogen peroxide solution</li> </ul>
with foreign phrases used as adjective or adverbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post hoc assessments</li> </ul>
when a letter or number follows a modifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group A students</li> </ul>
with common fractions used as nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one fifth of the students</li> </ul>

Adapted from page 163 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Question Mark

The question mark goes inside the quotation mark if there is a question in the sentence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student asked, “Why is everyone so concerned about the chemistry test?”</li> </ul>
The question mark goes at the end of the sentence if the whole sentence is a question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Haven’t you heard the expression “A penny for your thoughts”?</li> </ul>

## Ellipsis

Use an ellipsis when omitting a word, phrase, line, paragraph, or more from a quoted passage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Original quotation: “Today, after hours of heated debate, we finally approved the bill.</li> <li>With ellipses: “Today . . . we approved the bill.”</li> </ul>
If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, then use four dots—one for the period at the end of the sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Original quotation: “She arrived home just in time for lunch. Although she didn’t tell her family, she brought her boyfriend along.”</li> <li>“She arrived home just in time for lunch . . . she brought her boyfriend along.”</li> </ul>
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use three ellipses points and put a blank space before, in between and . . . after the dots.</li> </ul>
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not use an ellipsis at the beginning or end of a quote.</li> </ul>

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## Italics

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### Italicize

titles of books, periodicals, films, videos, TV shows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Moby Dick, Vogue, Star Wars, The Big Bang</i></li> </ul>
a new, technical term, key term or label	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The term <i>crowdsourcing</i></li> </ul>
a letter, word or phrase that is used as a linguistic example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the letter <i>d</i></li> </ul>
periodical volume numbers in reference lists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Journal of Technology, 4(1), 44-48.</i></li> </ul>

Adapted from page 170 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

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## Capitalization

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### Capitalize

the first word in a complete sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study was a success.</li> </ul>
the first word after a colon when it is followed by a complete sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study had one conclusion: More participants were needed.</li> </ul>
major words in titles and headings = title case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalize words with four or more letters and major words (nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjective, linking verbs and pronouns).</li> </ul>
Sentence case (e.g., reference list source titles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalize the first word of the title and the first word of a subtitle after a colon, em dash or end punctuation in a heading. All other words are lower case letters except for proper nouns and acronyms.</li> </ul>
the first word after a colon or dash in a title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Understanding Diabetes: A New Approach”</li> <li>“Understanding Diabetes—A New Approach”</li> </ul>
when a capitalized word is hyphenated, capitalize both words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-Esteem is necessary for achievement.</li> </ul>
APA level headings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All level headings use title case capitalization</li> </ul>
proper nouns and trade names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boston Red Sox, Apple iPad</li> </ul>
specific university department names and academic class names, but not general ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of English, English Composition 100</li> <li>NOT: a history department, an introductory composition course</li> </ul>
trade and brand names, drugs, equipment and food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apple iPad, Alprazolam, Cuisinart, Purina Dog Chow</li> </ul>
nouns followed by numerals or letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Table 3, Figure 1, Chapter 2, Day 2, Experience 4</li> <li>but not page iii, column 2</li> <li>but not trial <i>n</i> and item <i>x</i></li> </ul>
noun that precedes a variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trial 3 and Item b</li> <li>but not trial <i>n</i> and item <i>x</i></li> </ul>
specific test titles but not generic ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scholastic Aptitude Test</li> <li>not: a spelling text</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 165-168 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

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## Numbers

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### Use numerals

for numbers 10 and higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10, 11, 25, 100</li> </ul>
for numbers before a unit of measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 kilometers</li> </ul>
for numbers representing statistical or mathematical functions, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios, percentiles and quartiles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• divide by 5</li> <li>• 6 times as many</li> <li>• 0.33</li> <li>• less than 7% of the sample</li> <li>• ratio of 5:1</li> <li>• the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile</li> </ul>
for times, dates, ages, scores, points on a scale, sums of money, and numerals as numerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 hr 50 min</li> <li>• at 1:00 p.m.</li> <li>• 3-year-olds</li> <li>• scored a 5 on a 10-point scale</li> </ul>
if it has units after it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 years old, 5 cm wide, 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students, 5-mg dose, 1:30 p.m.</li> </ul>
for scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7-point scale, scores ranged from 0-50</li> </ul>
for decimals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use zero before decimal if number can exceed one (0.23 cm; 0.48 seconds; Cohen's <math>d=0.70</math>)</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 178-179 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Use spelled out word

for numbers from 0-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one, two, three</li> </ul>
for numbers that begin a sentence, title or text heading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two studies were done ...</li> </ul>
for common fractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two-thirds cup</li> </ul>
for universally-accepted phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Twelve Apostles"</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 178-179 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

### Other rules

Use spaces between numbers and mathematical operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <math>a + b = c</math></li> </ul>
Use the percent symbol when preceded by a number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% of people</li> </ul>
Spell out the word "percent" when a number is not included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two-thirds cup</li> <li>• a significant percentage</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 178-179 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

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## Abbreviations

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Write out the term first and put the acronym in parentheses after it; use the acronym for the rest of the paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Psychological Association (APA)</li> <li>• short-term memory (STM)</li> </ul>
Don't start a sentence with a lower case abbreviation; use a capitalized abbreviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrect: mph is 65 for the freeways</li> <li>• Correct: IQ requirement for Mensa is 132 (Binet) or 148 (Cattell).</li> </ul>
Don't spell out acronyms that appear as word entries in the <i>Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IQ, AIDS, HIV</li> </ul>
Plurals of abbreviations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IQs, Eds.</li> </ul>
Countries – spell out the country name when it is used as a noun or location. Use the abbreviation with periods when it is used as an adjective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United States is a democracy.</li> <li>• U.S. Marines, U.S. Census Bureau</li> <li>• The United Kingdom is a monarchy.</li> <li>• The U.K. population</li> </ul>

Adapted from pages 172-176 in the APA manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Additional Resources from APA.org

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