

# APA FORMATTING: WORD DOCUMENTS

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Many instructors want you to format your papers according to APA guidelines, and it can be hard to remember how to do all of these things until you've done them multiple times. You can use this guide and the list below as a checklist to follow as you format your essays in Word.

## Your paper is in APA format if it:

- has 1 inch margins on all sides
- is typed in Times New Roman font, size 12
- is double-spaced throughout the entire document
- begins every paragraph with an indentation
- has a title page with information about you and your paper
- includes a running header with the paper title and page numbers
- has an abstract with a brief summary of your paper's argument/findings
- has a title centered at the beginning of the essay
- includes a References page at the end of the essay with alphabetized APA citations

Be aware that there are some differences in how things work between different versions of Word and between Word for PC and Word for Mac. These steps should work most of the time.

## Margins

Word defaults to setting 1 inch margins on all sides of a document. Unless you've changed your default settings before, every Word document you begin should have the correct margins. But, you can check this by clicking on the **Page Layout** tab, and then **Margins**—it will show you which setting is currently being used. If for some reason it's not on "Normal," click on **Normal** and you'll have the correct margins.

## Font and Size

APA strongly encourages all papers be written in Times New Roman font, size 12. Always submit your papers in a font that is size 12, no larger and no smaller. Teachers can tell if you've enlarged your font size to meet page requirements! Change the font and size of your text on the **Home** tab, under the **Font** section.

## Line Spacing

APA formatting requires the text of your paper (including title page, abstract, and references) to be double-spaced. The default when you begin typing is usually single-spacing. You can change the spacing before you begin typing, or you can change it after you have typed everything up by highlighting all of the text and *then* completing the steps listed here.

## To quickly change the spacing *before* you've started typing:

From the **Home** tab, find the **Paragraph** section and the button that looks like this:



Click the button and choose **2.0** as your spacing.

**To quickly change the spacing *after* you've typed your essay:**

Highlight all of your text throughout the entire document and right click within some of the highlighted text. Select **Paragraph** from the dialog box that pops up, and once in the Paragraph menu, find the **Spacing** section, click on the **Line Spacing** drop-down box, and select **Double**. Click **OK** at the bottom of the dialog box.

## **Indented Paragraphs**

The first line of every paragraph of your essay should be indented. You should do this by hitting the **Tab** key on the keyboard (located on the left side) once at the beginning of the paragraph. Do not indent by hitting the space bar multiple times—that's what the Tab key is for!

## **Title Page**

The first page of your APA formatted paper will not begin with the essay itself, but will instead be a title page which has information about you and the class you're writing the paper for, as well as the title of the paper.

To properly format the title page, you should first hit Enter about 9 times so that you will begin not at the top of the document, but around a quarter of the way down the page. All of the text on the title page should be centered. Center your text by going to the **Home** tab, and in the **Paragraph** section, clicking on the **Center** button: 

The first line of text should be the full title of your paper. After you've typed this, hit Enter and move to the next line. On this line, type your full name and then hit Enter. On the next line, you'll type the name of your school—in this case, Edmonds Community College.

The next section on the title page is the Author Note section. This is not usually included unless you are a professor, are working on a longer, funded research project, or are looking to publish your essay in an academic journal. Skip the Author Note unless your instructor has told you to include it.

## **Header and Page Numbers**

In an APA formatted paper, the header is different on the first page of the document than it is on the following pages. In general, though, it contains only the title of your paper and the page number.

Begin on the first page of the document—the title page. To quickly open the header, simply double-click at the very top of the document and the header should open up. You can also open the header by clicking on the **Insert** tab on your document—you'll find it right next to Home. Next, find the **Header & Footer** section and click on **Header**—this will bring up multiple kinds of headers to choose from. Select the first option, **Blank**.

Now that the header box is open, before you type anything, look up under **Header & Footer Tools** in the section called **Options**, and check the box marked **Different First Page**.

Next, type the following: **Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER IN ALL-CAPS**. This should be aligned to the left, which is the default alignment for Word.

Next, you will insert the page number. Hit the Tab key until your cursor is now all the way on the right side of the screen. Still in the **Header & Footer Tools** menu, look to the left side of the screen in the section called **Header & Footer**, and click on **Page Number**. When the menu pops up, choose **Current Position** to put the page number exactly where your cursor is, and then select the first option it gives you, **Plain Number**. The page number will now appear and every new page added to the document will automatically update with the correct page number.

**Because you clicked the “Different first page” checkbox earlier, all you have done up to this point is set the header for the first page of the document. You will now need to adjust the header for the following pages of the document.** In APA formatting, the first page of the document—the title page—has “Running head: TITLE OF YOUR PAPER IN ALL-CAPS.” But all of the pages that follow the first page remove the “Running head:” so that in the left corner of the header, it is just TITLE OF YOUR PAPER IN ALL-CAPS. When you reach the second page of your document (the Abstract, or if the Abstract is being omitted, the page where your essay begins), open the header again as you did before, type the title of your paper (in all-caps), hit Tab to move the cursor to the right side of the header, and insert the page number again.

## Abstract

It’s a good idea to double-check with your instructor about whether or not they want you to include the abstract: some instructors will, while others will not. The abstract follows the title page of your document, and it is a brief paragraph where you summarize the key ideas/arguments/findings in your paper. The abstract should be around 150-250 words. A reader should be able to read your abstract and get a clear sense of the overall argument and key points of your paper.

On the first line of the new page after the title page, type and center the word Abstract. Hit Enter, and on the following line, begin your abstract paragraph with the text aligned to the left. The Abstract is the only paragraph in your paper that should *not* be indented using the Tab key—it should be totally aligned to the left. Change the text justification to the left by going to the **Home** tab, and in the **Paragraph** section, clicking on the **Align Text Left** button: 

## Paper Title

Even though the title of your paper is found on the title page and in the header, you will also begin the essay with the title, centered above your opening paragraph.

Title your paper creatively and specifically! Your title should represent the topic(s) discussed in your essay. You should not just call your paper something like “Essay 1.”

## References

Your References page includes all of the sources you have summarized, paraphrased, and quoted from in your essay, listed in alphabetical order. This page needs to go at the end of the essay and begin a new page. When you have reached the end of your essay, hit Enter until you

arrive on a new page. Then, type References and center the text. Your actual References entries should be left-aligned and double-spaced.

## Hanging Indents

Your References entries need to have what is called a **Hanging Indent**, where the text starts out left-justified but the second line of the citation is indented. The easiest way to do this is to type all of your citations up and then change the formatting after you are finished.

To give your citations a hanging indent, **highlight all of your citations** (or each individually) and right-click inside the highlighted text. Select **Paragraph** and find the **Indentation** section. Click on drop-down box under the word **Special** and select **Hanging Indent**. Click **OK** at the bottom of the dialog box.

Your citations now have a Hanging Indent, which looks like this:

Author's Lastname, First Initial. (Year/Date of Publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal in Italics, volume number in italics*(issue number not in italics), pages. Retrieved from  
<http://www.URLofArticle.com>.

The Full Title of My Paper:

The Running Head is the Shortened Version

Student Name

Edmonds Community College

