

Academic and Professional Document Guidelines

The goal of this formatting guide is to ensure that all of your program documents are formatted in a clear, neat, attractive, modern, and consistent manner. These basic guidelines will help you create attractive and usable documents for use within your program and the workplace.

This document provides basic guidelines for the use of source material and academic honesty, as well as basic document format.

Basic Document Format

All work created for your program will be written in a clear, concise, reader-friendly format that is modern and attractive. Some documents will be written in an academic style and others in a professional style.

Academic Style

Academic style papers will be in APA format. This means meeting APA requirements for spacing (double spacing), heading style, indentation, cover pages, citations, and so forth. While running heads are not required and points will not be deducted for minor formatting errors, when asked to write in academic style or to create a research paper, this is the format you should use. See Appendix A: Basic APA Format for more details, or look for a primer on APA format online.

Professional Style

While academic style is often appropriate in school, professional workplace documents are rarely written in such a format. Rather, professional documents are usually more concise, single spaced, not indented, and so forth.

Format all professional documents that are not specifically identified as academic papers in attractive, professional business format. APA paper structure is not required unless course requirements specify something different, though you will always use APA format for citations and references. Follow any templates or guidelines provided in your course before following any other guidelines.

Strive to develop solid business documents that are modern, attractive, professional, and useful to your reader. The following guidelines will help you create effective written works for both your courseroom and workplace:

1. Include a cover page with written projects, as seems appropriate or as specified by course or workplace requirements. Check with your instructor/faculty if you have questions on heading/cover page formatting, but a basic cover page will contain the following information centered, about one-third of the way down the page:
 - a. Document title.
 - b. Your name.
 - c. Project name.
 - d. Date.

2. Set up the document pages with one-inch margins at the top, bottom, right, and left, if appropriate. Feel free to use other margins, if that is called for by your particular writing task.
3. Use 11- or 12-point font size in one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier.
4. Single space the entire document, with double spacing between paragraphs.
5. Left justify paragraphs, or indent 5–7 spaces.
6. Put page numbers on each page, including the cover page. You may add other information such as the title or your name to each page as well.
7. Include a Table of Contents, or simply Contents, for documents 10 pages or longer. The Table of Contents page should come directly after the cover page, or after the abstract or executive summary, if your document has one.
8. Center the document title at the top of the first page of text.
9. Use sub-headings to divide all documents, particularly those over a page in length, into logical, well-ordered sections.
10. If you cite sources in your document, include a reference page at the end of the document, but before any appendices, listing all sources referenced within the text. Ensure that all sources listed in the references section are used and cited within the document as in-text citations, using APA format as discussed later in this document.
11. Include figures, diagrams, pictures, or flow charts within the text, as appropriate. Refer to the Tables, Graphs, and Figures section below for more information.
12. Use ordered or bulleted lists to clarify points within your document. Refer to the Ordered or Bulleted Lists section below for more information.

Tables, Graphs, and Figures

The use of tables, graphs, and other figures in academic and professional documents is encouraged when they aid in the presentation of information. Use the following guidelines to incorporate such visuals:

- Assign sequential numbers to all figures.
- Use brief but descriptive titles to summarize the content of the illustration.
- Refer the reader to each figure, using the following format:

For more information see Table 1: Competitive Analysis.

- Insert visuals near the text they illustrate.
- Reference all visual information obtained from a cited source by putting an in-text citation after the visual's title (see below) and a full citation on the reference page.

Figure 3: Market Share (Cooper, 2017, para.4).

- Ensure that all visuals are clear, clean, and easy to read.

Ordered and Bulleted Lists

When using bulleted or ordered (numbered) lists, always introduce the list with a complete sentence, such as, “Use the following guidelines to format all documents you submit for class:” This clarifies the impending listed items for the reader. Use bullets when the order or number of listed items is unimportant. Use numbered lists when the order or number of items is important or when there are a large number of items in the list.

If you have a reference that appears within a bulleted or numbered list included in the text, use one of the following guidelines:

- If the reference applies to all of the items in the list, put the citation at the end of the introductory sentence.
- If the reference applies to only one of the list items, place the reference at the end of the applicable listed item.

Academic Honesty

Capella University considers academic honesty to be one of its highest values. As a learner, Capella expects that you will credit any sources you use for your coursework. Academic honesty, or recognizing intellectual property, is something Capella takes very seriously.

A learner who attempts to obtain academic credit for work that is not the product of his or her own effort is being dishonest and is undermining the academic integrity of the university. If you did not write something or think up the original idea, your writing should say who did. For example, if you use the facts from an article about a new technology in a course activity, you need to reference the article.

Learners are expected to be the sole authors of their work. Use of another's ideas must be accompanied by specific citations and references, per these guidelines. The disciplinary consequences of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty include possible dismissal from the university.

Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas and work as your own, either intentionally or through carelessness. Plagiarism includes not only copying verbatim but also rephrasing the ideas of another without properly acknowledging the source. In the preparation of work submitted to meet course requirements, you must take great care to distinguish your own ideas and language from information derived from other sources. Sources include published primary and secondary materials, electronic media, and information and opinions gained directly from other people.

When writing academic and professional documents, you are required to cite a reference for any idea that is not your own or that is not common knowledge. The term *common knowledge* applies to information that is generally known and accepted in a field. For example, writing that many people own home computers is common knowledge; writing that 85 percent of Americans have home computers is not common knowledge, and thus a reference must be provided.

All learners must read the Capella University Academic Honesty policy, which is available within University Policies on Campus.

Citing References

There are two primary goals for citing references. The first is to give credit to the original author or authors. The second is to provide sufficient information for readers to find the original source.

As a Capella learner you will be graded on the clarity of your writing and on crediting your sources accurately and sufficiently to meet these goals, whether in an e-mail, PowerPoint presentation, academic paper, or other requirement. While there are different models for citing references, for consistency Capella University requires the use of APA format for all citations.

Consider Your Sources

How you communicate and where you get your information reflect upon your own credibility. Thus, you should use your own critical thinking skills to critically evaluate sources you are considering and use only credible material.

When you are choosing sources, consider each source's credibility along with what it has to say. Ask yourself questions such as: Who wrote the article? Was it Joe Smith who has a blog? If so, what are Joe's credentials? What else does Joe have to say? Would you trust Joe's opinion, based on that research? Where is the information published? What is the author's intent? What is their intended audience? When was the information published? Asking questions like these can help you ensure that you use valuable, valid, and credible sources.

No matter how your document is laid out, in Capella courses all sources used (quoted or paraphrased) in any academic or professional document or project must be accurately cited per APA style. When writing, whether academically or professionally, it is important to reference all works from which information is borrowed. This is true for both direct quotations and paraphrased information. Each time a source is used, reference it at the specific spot in the text (an in-text citation) and in more complete form in the reference list at the end of the document.

Again, in some programs we do *not* require APA format to be used for formatting professional documents (spacing, font, layout, et cetera), but APA must be used for in-text citations and reference lists.

Following are some suggestions for citing your sources in different types of writing.

- **Report:** End the report with a list of your sources. Use the heading References. Include the information you have, such as author, date, and title, and a "Retrieved from" link if appropriate. The information should lead the reader to the source if they want to look at it for themselves. If the link breaks, the other information can be useful in an Internet search. See Appendix A for a brief overview of APA format and more examples, but here is a basic example of an APA reference:

Smith, J. (2015, April 2). How to cite something. Retrieved from <http://website123.com>

Each source cited in the references section should be used and cited within the document as an in-text citation, with the author's name and date, like this: (Smith, 2015). If you use a direct quote you must add a page or paragraph number, like this: (Smith, 2015, para. 4).

- **PowerPoint Presentation:** Include a final slide or slides with a list of your sources. Again, include the information you have about each source. Do not bury your references in the notes; they should be treated as part of the presentation. In addition, use in-text citations, as appropriate.

For PowerPoint presentations, also remember to format your slides so the most pertinent information is organized into brief bullet points, and use the speaker's notes or a separate document for your talking points. Keep your slides uncluttered by avoiding big chunks of text.

- **E-mail:** In e-mail conversations, citations can be less formal than the above. If you got your idea from an article or a conversation with a coworker, credit that source in the text of the e-mail.

Example: Hey All, we need to consider SLAs with our cloud services. Here's an article on that topic: <http://www.cioinsight.com/it-strategy/cloud-virtualization/slideshows/11-ways-to-protect-data-in-the-cloud.html>

For more information on citing references per APA style, refer to the following resources:

- Appendix A of this document.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). APA style. Retrieved from <http://www.apastyle.org/>

Conclusion

In short, ensure that every document you develop is well written, easy to read, and attractively formatted. Use headings and formatting to make reading easy for your audience. Use APA format to cite source material, and unless course requirements direct you otherwise, use the guidelines in this document to format professional documents and APA formatting guidelines to format academic papers.

To learn more about business writing, credibility, citing references, and formatting documents, read the following:

- Appendix B in this document.
- Snarski, R. D. (2017). *Credible communications in the information age: A guide to easy and effective writing for employees, students, writers and anyone who uses the written word*. Tampa, FL: Author.

This book is available in the Capella bookstore.

Appendix A: Basic APA Format for Citing References

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA manual) was created to be a guide for writing in many fields, including psychology, health, academia, and more. It is a commonly accepted format in many fields and used by many journals, magazines, and websites. Capella University uses APA format for citing references in all programs. This provides for consistency across the university, a good thing for faculty and learners alike. You may or may not be called upon to use APA format in your career, but whenever you need to cite references and no other format is specified, it will be handy to know APA format. In addition, you will be expected to use it for citing sources in all of your Capella courses.

The APA manual is hundreds of pages long and full of examples of how to cite various things, from magazine articles to websites, newsletters to seminar presentations. Following is a brief primer on APA format. It is likely that this information will be enough to get you through all of your citation needs in your program. However, you can always use online resources if you wish to learn how to cite more unusual source material.

In addition, Microsoft Word has References tab that can help you cite in APA format, the Capella University library has a citation link for most sources that will give you the citation in APA (or almost any other) format, and a quick Web search on how to cite in APA format will bring up a variety of sources and even citation generators that you can use.

Basic APA Formula

APA format varies depending upon what type of source you are citing, from magazine articles to websites and beyond. But all follow this basic format:

Author, owner, or company. (date or n.d.). Page or article name. Publication, publisher, or retrieval information.

If you go on to the PhD or DBA programs, you will be expected to apply APA format more formally. However, in many programs the above formula will usually be enough to get the job done.

When creating a reference list, follow a few basic rules:

1. Title it References, centered, at the top of the page.
2. List all sources with author's last name first, then a comma, then the author's first and middle initials: Smith, A. C.
3. List references in alphabetical order.
4. Put a line space between references.
5. If you have multiple sources by the same author, put them in order by the date, oldest first.
6. Capitalize all major words in journal and magazine names, but not article titles, and italicize them. So it would be *The New Yorker* for the magazine, but the article would be "How Google changed the world".
7. In book titles, capitalize only the first word and proper nouns, and italicize it. For example: *Harry Potter and the goblet of fire*.
8. When listing multiple authors put "&" in between the last two: Smith, J., & Robertson, P.

APA References Formatting Examples

Let's look at some very specific APA format for the most common types of citations.

Published Book

Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York, NY: Association Press.

Chapter in an Edited Book

Nakata, C., & Antalis, E. P. (2018). In L. C. Leonidou, C. S. Katsikeas, S. Samiee, & B. Aykol (Eds.), *Advances in global marketing: A research anthology* (pp. 147–168). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Journal Article

Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1), 96–103.

Newspaper Article

Elder, K. (2017, December 19). At least we still agree on one thing: Bacon makes everything better. *The Washington Post*, p. A12.

Online Magazine or Newspaper Article

Grossman, L. (2009, June 17). Iran protests: Twitter, the medium of the movement. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html>

Online Government Report

U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Education, NetDay. (2005, August). *Visions 2020.2: Student views on transforming education and training through advanced technologies*. Retrieved from <http://www.technology.gov/reports/2005/Visions2020-2.pdf>

APA In-Text Citation Formatting Examples

Every source listed in your references section must be used and cited within the text of the document. In short, you provide the author's name and date of publication. For quotes, you provide this plus the page or paragraph number. So, if you took information from a book by Michael Kruger, you would list the full APA citation in the references. However, in the text where you used the information, you would use this in-text citation: (Kruger, 2017). If you quoted Mr. Kruger, you would have "the quote here" (Kruger, 2017, para. 4). That way, someone can easily find the quote if they want to verify it or read the context.

For multiple authors, write "and" in between, like this: (Johanson and Milo, 2017). If you have more than three authors, you can use "et al.", like this (Christianson et al., 2016), the second time the material is referenced. The first time the material is referenced, list all the authors up to five; for more than five authors, use "et al." every time the material is referenced, including the first.

Appendix B: Basic Writing Templates

Different documents will require different formatting, and unless your supervisor, client, or instructor/faculty specifies formatting, it will be up to you to decide how to properly format a document. Following are some guidelines and templates for formatting a few basic documents that you might write at work or in your program.

Proposal

Proposals can take on many different forms. They might be formal, requiring specific structure, or informal, with structure left up to you. In general, a proposal contains an introduction, which overviews what the document (the proposal itself) is about, a problem statement, a proposed solution, a timing or plan section, and a conclusion. Notice that notes on content are provided, and you can see the simple, professional format for yourself. A simple proposal might look like this:

A Proposal to Install Vending Machines in Employee Lounge

An introduction of a paragraph or two here would say that this document proposes installing vending machines in the employee lounge. It might mention that many employees have requested it and that this proposal provides a cost and benefit analysis.

Problem

In this section you would discuss the problem in detail. You might mention that employees are frequently late from breaks because they tend to walk to a corner store four blocks away to get a snack. You might talk about how employees have asked for vending machines.

A Detailed Analysis of the Situation

In this section you might discuss what you have learned in your research. You might give details on how you did an informal survey to ask people how they felt about the lack of vending. You might also include a cost analysis from a couple local vending companies, showing how the company might actually profit from such a machine.

Solution

Present your recommended solution and any additional details that seem appropriate.

Suggested Action

Add a section that reiterates, briefly, the problem and proposed solution. Very clearly say what action you are requesting, whether it is approval or other specific action.

References

If you have any references, include them in this section in correct APA style. Remember that every source listed here must be used and cited within the text.

Business Report

The term “business report” is a very generic term for any written document that is meant to analyze an existing business situation or problem and then provide recommended solutions or action steps.

A business report should overview the situation, background, or problem. Then it should provide research into that problem so that the reader clearly understands the situation, what actions have been tried (if applicable), what research exists in the area (if any), and so forth. Then there should be a section that presents recommendations for action. The sections of such a report can vary wildly depending on the topic and situation, but following is a generic template to help guide you in creating your own business report.

Café Eats’ Profits are Down Even Though Customers Served Has Changed Little

Begin with an introductory paragraph that summarizes the situation, almost like an executive summary but more brief. It might say that over the last 4 months the restaurant has seated nearly the same number of customers as in the previous 8 months, yet profits have fallen. Tell, briefly, that research reveals that customers are spending less per meal but also that what the restaurant pays for food has increased. Depending on the length of the report, you may choose here to also summarize the most important recommendation you are making. It depends on whether you want that to be a surprise for the end or if you feel your audience is the type that would rather read it up front.

Food Costs Are Up

This section might start with a quoted statistic about how research indicates that one main reason profits are down is because of spending a certain percentage more on raw food materials, followed by a proper APA citation (author, date, page/paragraph number). Follow this statement with more details, telling the facts and making inferences based on those facts.

Customers Are Spending Less

This section might say how customers are buying a certain percentage fewer appetizers. Or, maybe they are using more coupons. First, state facts (supported, when possible). Then analyze the information and make inferences about why this is so.

Contributing Factors

This section might discuss other areas of concern that relate, peripherally, to this problem. Remember, the headings given here are simply examples based on our Café Eats scenario. You would name the headings as appropriate for your report topic.

Recommendations

This section would make supported, actionable recommendations based upon your research. These should NOT be ideas off the top of your head. In this situation you might look at how other restaurants in the area are doing. Are they experiencing these same things? If not, why not? If so, how are they handling it? What can you find in credible research that helps you create solutions? Very clearly list out what steps to take, like this: Recommendation 1– Encourage customers to

purchase appetizers by offering a happy hour special on appetizers. [Source (date)] says it's a good idea.

Conclusion

Add a conclusion that wraps things up. It might summarize the main points. Or, in the business world it might request approval of your taking action on the above recommendations.

References

If you have any references, include them in this section in correct APA style. Remember that every source listed here must be used and cited within the text.