APA Style: Sections

WHAT ARE SECTIONS IN APA FORMAT?

Sections are one way to organize a paper. Sections break up the paper according to topic. A more in-depth, complicated section might be broken down into sub-sections.

WHY DO I NEED SECTIONS?

Sections help organize papers that are more data-driven, like project reports, lab reports, and case studies. Sections make complex information easier to read and digest.

For example, if your paper responds to an experiment, you may be asked to break the paper down into Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions.

Sometimes, if you are researching a very complicated topic, you may choose to break that topic down into sections you create yourself.

Many papers—especially shorter papers—do not require sections. Ask yourself if the readability of your paper would benefit from sections, then organize accordingly. And always refer to your assignment sheet and follow your instructor’s guidelines.

HOW DO I FORMAT SECTIONS?

Use section headings, which are broken down into levels. Heading Level 1, bolded and centered, would be the most likely form you would use. More complicated papers might break down material even further, to Heading Level 2, Heading level 3, and beyond. Here’s how the levels would be formatted:

Heading Level 1

Heading Level 2

  Heading level 3.

  Heading level 4.

  Heading level 5.

**See the opposite page for an example of sections at work.**

The section topic, “A Review on Citations,” (Heading Level 1) has two sub-headings, “In-Text Citations” and “Reference Page Citations” (Heading Level 2). See how this helps organize the information?

WHERE DO I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

From Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL): 
APA Headings and Section
APA Style: Sections (Cont’d)

A Review on Citations

As Bullock and Weinberg (2011) noted, “when you work with the ideas and words of others, you need to clearly distinguish those ideas and words from your own and give credit to their authors” (p.82). Writers give that credit in APA Style through in-text citations and the References page. Keep in mind that for all research papers, both in-text citations and a Reference page are required.

In-Text Citations

As you may have noticed in the example above (Bullock and Weinberg (2011)), in-text citations are brief tags woven into the structure of your paper that quickly show your reader where you found the information you are using, whether you are quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing.

Reference Page Citations

Every in-text citation is a tag for the source’s full citation, listed at the end of the paper in the References page. It is crucial to be certain that “every source listed is cited in the text; do not include sources that you consulted but did not cite” (Bullock and Weinberg, 2011, p.164).