

APA for Teachers

A basic APA stylesheet for cohort students

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The information in this document has been adapted to meet the needs of Jeffco teachers enrolled in classes at the University of Colorado at Denver.

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1. What's APA?

APA stands for the American Psychological Association. Researchers and graduate students in the field of education use APA guidelines when formatting their papers.

1.1 Why Use APA?

There are many reasons why graduate students in the School of Education are required to format their papers using APA.

- When papers are formatted in a uniform way, your instructor can focus on the content of your paper rather than on how it looks.
- When sources are cited in APA, the task of tracking down a citation is simplified. Your readers can then evaluate the accuracy of a source for themselves.
- APA offers tips for streamlining language and improving proof-reading. Learning these can improve your professional writing both in and out of graduate school.

2. Formatting Basics in APA

2.1 Fonts, Spacing, and Margins

- **Font for Body, Headings, and Tables:** Times or Times New Roman
- **Size:** 12 pt.
- **Word Spacing:** Only 1 space between words (this includes between sentences and after punctuation marks)
- **Line Spacing:** Double, with no extra spaces between sections or section headings (see 2.2 for an example of this)
- **Margins:** 1 inch (this is default in most word processors)
- **Page Numbers:** Number all pages in the upper right hand corner, including the title page and references
- **Alignment:** Left (do not justify)

2.2 Example of APA Spacing on a Page

2

Introduction

“We believe that information from areas of linguistics such as phonology, morphology, and syntax can inform educators as they evaluate methods of teaching reading and methods of teaching second languages” (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 53). In this case study, the present authors transcribed sections of a thirty minute interview with an English language learner in order to begin making informed choices about his education. By examining his use of English phonology, morphology, word choice and syntax, we were able to take a snapshot of the process by which Ibrahim is acquiring English, and to discover that Ibrahim has made great progress in his pronunciation and use of English inflections, even as he continues to work on his use of tense and longer, more complicated syntactic structures.

Background

Ibrahim (not his real name) is a ten-year-old in the fourth grade at a public school in Jefferson County, Colorado. He moved to the United States just prior to beginning third grade, having emigrated from Saudi Arabia, where he spoke Arabic. Before living in Saudi Arabia, he was born and lived in Somalia, where he spoke Somali. When he entered the third grade he had very limited English vocabulary, although his records indicated he had studied English as a Foreign Language. His third grade teacher does not recall him speaking for several weeks, aside from the daily rituals they established, like saying “good morning” at the start of the day and “good-bye” at day’s end. He had no Somali or Arabic speakers with whom to talk to at school, as most of the ELL population at Ibrahim’s school are Spanish speakers. In addition, the ESL teacher he saw twice a week for a half hour at a time did not have any history of working with an

3. Title Pages

3.1 Choosing a Good Title

Choose a title which accurately reflects the scope of your paper. At the same time, you should strive to avoid unnecessary words. A good title should balance accuracy with brevity.

Problematic: *Language Acquisition*

Better: *Overview of Major Language Acquisition Theories*

In this case, *Language Acquisition* is the title of a book, not a short paper. The better title more accurately describes the paper's narrower focus.

Problematic: *Ibrahim: A Case Study of a Third Grade Language Learner*

Better: *Ibrahim: A Third Grade Language Learner*

Here, *Ibrahim: A Third Grade Language Learner* is both concise and accurate. There is no need to state that the paper is a case study; this is implied in the focus on a single student.

3.2 Title Page Layout

Title pages are important to editors, instructors, and anyone else who has to work their way through a stack of papers. They provide space for written comments and allow for quick organization by either name or topic.

Unless your instructor asks you to do otherwise, your title page should include:

- page number (i.e., page 1)
- title of your paper
- your name
- course number
- current semester/date

3.3 Example Title Page

1

This is the Title of My Paper

My Name Here

University of Colorado at Denver

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of

LLC 5030

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4. Quotations

4.1 Use of Quotations

Quotations should be chosen for their ability to illustrate or support an argument you've already made in your own words. Quotations should be used sparingly, as their overuse can make your paper seem choppy and derivative.

You should take care to copy quotes accurately, but you may change the capitalization of the first word or the punctuation of the last in order to fit a quote more subtly into your paper (see 4.2 for an example).

4.2 Direct Quotes (Less Than 40 Words)

Quotations of fewer than 40 words should be placed in quotation marks. The final punctuation mark comes after the citation.

“The so-called double-negative, far from being a corruption, was the norm in Chaucer’s Middle English” (Pinker, 1994, p. 389).

Alternately:

According to Pinker (1994), “the so-called double-negative, far from being a corruption, was the norm in Chaucer’s Middle English” (p. 95).

4.3 Direct Quotes (More Than 40 Words)

Quotations of more than 40 words do not need quotation marks. Instead the quote should be indented an additional ½ inch and double-spaced.

In contrast to shorter quotations, the final punctuation mark comes before the page number (see below).

Rosen and Sasser (1997) write:

How did these English language learners access the linguistically and cognitively challenging material presented by Mr. Dorff? Prior to his visit, teachers had prepared the students with a variety of hands-on science activities. They made star charts and models, used flashlights to demonstrate a variety of astral phenomena, and measured and drew the planets to scale on their asphalt playground. (p. 113)

In this instance, teachers worked hard to make input comprehensible. Their use of realia...

5. Paraphrases

5.1 Use of Paraphrases

Taking someone else's ideas and putting them into your own words is essential to a concise, well-written paper. Paraphrases allow you to inject important information into your text without breaking the flow of your narrative.

Like direct quotations, paraphrases require attribution via an in-text citation, especially when information or assertions in your paper might not be "common knowledge" to your audience.

5.2 Simple In-Text Citation of a Paraphrase

When children learn English at the expense of their native language, it can have negative impacts on self-esteem and the development of healthy family relationships (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

5.3 Information Cited From Secondary Source

Clymer (as cited in Freeman & Freeman, 2004) showed that some commonly taught phonics rules are applicable as little as 45% of the time.

5.4 Encyclopedia or Dictionary

An ‘acrolect’ is a language’s highest status variety or dialect (“Acrolect,” 2006).

5.5 Personal Communication (Letter, Email, Conversation)

On average, it takes 5-7 years for immigrant students to reach grade level proficiency in English, Social Studies, and Science. (F. Klesmer, personal communication, October 4, 2003).

5.6 Lecture Notes

You may find yourself wishing to cite information taken from your course lectures. Strictly speaking, APA style does not provide a format for this. For the purpose of this class, however, you may use a format similar to that used for citing personal communication.

Of the world’s 6000 languages, more than half are threatened with extinction by the year 2100 (G. Dunnet, lecture in LLC 5030, January 20, 2007).

5.7 Web Page with Author

For decades, schools run by Bureau of Indian Affairs punished Native American children for speaking their home languages (Crawford, 2008, ¶ 5).

5.8 Anonymous Web Page

The creators of DIBELS claim their test is valid for all elementary students, regardless of English language proficiency. Even they, however, decline to suggest it be used with deaf children (DIBELS, 2008).

5.9 Wikipedia

Use the entry title and the date of the entry's last revision. Note, however, that Wikipedia is not considered an acceptable source by all instructors. Check with your instructor before using:

The film version starred Francois Truffaut as the French doctor Jean Marc Itard ("The Wild Child," October 22, 2007).

6.0 Reference Lists

6.1 Use of References

If you cite a source in your paper, it must appear on your reference list. The reverse is also true: all items on your reference list must have been cited in your paper.

An important exception is made when you cite lectures or personal communications. Because readers cannot reference these unpublished sources, they need not appear on your reference list.

6.2 Book

Pinker, S. (1994). *The language instinct: How the mind creates language*. New York: William Morrow.

6.3 Book with Edition Number

Samway, K., & Mckeon, D. (2007). *Myths and realities* (2nd ed.). London: Heinemann.

6.4 Book With Editor(s)

Brinton, D. & Snow, M. A. (Eds.). (1997). *The content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

6.5 Chapter from a Book By Multiple Authors

Grabe, S. & Stoller, F. L. (1997). Content-based instruction: Research foundations. In D. Brinton & M. A. Snow (Eds.), *The content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content* (pp. 5-21). White Plains, NY: Longman.

6.6 Encyclopedia or Dictionary

Acrolect. (1995). *New American Dictionary* (4th ed.). New York: Little House Publishing.

6.7 Commercially Produced Test

Flynt, E. S. & Cooter, R. B. (2004). *Flynt-Cooter reading inventory for the classroom* (5th ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

6.8 Web Page with Author

Crawford, J. (1998). *Endangered Native American languages*. Retrieved January 10, 2008, from <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/brj.htm>

6.9 Anonymous Web Page

DIBELS. Retrieved January 10, 2008, from <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

6.10 Wikipedia

Note that Wikipedia is not considered an acceptable source by all instructors, so check with your instructor before using.

The wild child. (2007, October 22). In *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved October 22, 2007 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wild_Child

6.11 Example Reference Page

As in the rest of your paper, all lines on your reference page should be double-spaced. There are no extra lines between references, and all lines after the first line of a reference list should be indented.

References

- Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. *Educational Researcher*, 21(8), 5-14.
- Tse, L. (2001). *“Why don’t they learn English?”: Separating fact from fallacy in the U.S. language debate*. New York: Teachers College Press.

7. Reducing Bias

7.1 Why Work to Reduce Bias?

Educators should always treat both individuals and groups with fairness and respect. For that reason, you should strive to reduce potential bias in your writing.

7.2 Be Specific When Attributing Belief to People

Problematic: Spanish-speakers feel strongly that...

Better: Spanish-speaking students interviewed in this study felt strongly that...

Problematic: Soo Min loves English class.

Better: According to his teachers, Soo Min loves English class.

7.3 Pluralize Nouns To Avoid Gender Bias

Problematic: When a child enjoys a book, he will soon ask for more.

Better: When children enjoy books, they will soon ask for more.

Problematic: A good teacher takes the time to listen to her students.

Better: Good teachers take the time to listen to their students.

7.4 Quantify Measurements

Problematic: Vladimir learned a ton of English.

Better: Over the course of two years, Vladimir's ELPA score went from an A to a B.

7.5 Avoid Subjective Descriptions

Problematic: At times Diego regressed into Spanish

Better: At times Diego spoke Spanish.

Problematic: A handful of troublemakers walked out of class.

Better: A group of upset students walked out of class.

8. Common Errors

8.1 Editing for Common Errors

Academic papers at the graduate level should be submitted without typos and with standard punctuation and spelling. They should read smoothly and proceed logically from point to point. To achieve this, leave enough time for the multiple drafts that are required to bring a paper up to the level of polish required for graduate school.

The following are errors common to first and second drafts:

8.2 Verbiage

Resist the temptation to add verbiage. Instead, focus on clarity:

Problematic: There are various theories/thoughts that hold validity toward helping children decipher language.

Better: Various theories explain how children decipher language.

8.3 Unnecessarily Repeated Words

Problematic: The following timeline shows the times when teachers administered the DRA.

Better: The following timeline shows when teachers administered the DRA.

8.4 Passive Voice

Use of the passive voice obscures who is responsible for an action. While there are times when this is appropriate, APA style generally calls for clarity in regards to who is doing what:

Problematic: The study was conducted at Heath Middle School.

Better: Ramírez conducted the study at Heath Middle School.

8.5 Punctuation Errors with Commas

Never use a comma to separate a subject from its predicate:

Problematic: Chomsky in the 1950's, challenged the Behaviorists.

Better: Chomsky in the 1950's challenged the Behaviorists.

On the other hand, always use two commas to set off a clause acting as a modifier:

Problematic: Chomsky considered to be the father of modern linguistics, challenged the Behaviorists.

Better: Chomsky, considered to be the father of modern linguistics, challenged the Behaviorists.