

# APA Changes in the New Seventh Edition

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During the fall of 2019, the American Psychological Association (APA) published the seventh edition of its *Publication Manual*, which is the official guide to APA style. While the changes are not monumental, they do make the process of writing a research paper a bit easier for students. Here are some of the highlights.

**The Running Head.** The “running head” is no longer required for student papers. The running head used to be a minor hassle for students to set up because the first page of the research paper had to be a bit different from the following pages. Under the new edition, only the page number is required in the top right corner of each page.

**Spacing.** Use only one space after a period or other punctuation mark at the end of the sentence. Though many students and teachers were not aware of the previous rule, the sixth edition actually required two spaces with the explanation that “spacing twice after punctuation marks at the end of a sentence aids readers of draft manuscripts” (APA, 2010, p. 88). The seventh edition eliminates the need for that second space.

**Use of “They.”** Use the singular pronoun “they” to refer to a person who prefers that pronoun or when the gender of the person is “unknown or irrelevant to the context of the usage” (APA, 2020, p. 120). Previously, the sixth edition stated that “Each pronoun should refer clearly to its

antecedent and should agree with the antecedent in number and gender” (APA, 2010, p. 79). By contrast, the seventh edition points out that “the use of the singular ‘they’ is inclusive of all people, [and] helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender” (APA, 2020, p. 121). Thus, instead of writing “The researcher submitted ‘his’ work for publication,” one should now write, “The researcher submitted ‘their’ work for publication.” (Note the use of single quotes within double quotes.)

**Quotation Marks.** Also, instead of using italics to highlight a unique example, you should now use double quotation marks. (See the first sentence in the previous paragraph.) The examples may include “a letter, word, phrase, or sentence” (APA, 2020, p. 157). For instance, the letter “w” is silent when pronouncing the word “wrench.” If the example is repeated in your text, you do not need to use the quotation marks for the repeated item.

**Et al.** Regarding in-text citations, you may now use the abbreviation “et al.” (and others) more frequently when citing multiple authors within the text. Under the previous rule, you could consistently use the abbreviation for six or more authors, but if your source had three to five authors, you had to list all the names in the first mention and later use the abbreviation after the first author’s name in subsequent citations.

Under the new guidelines, if your source has three or more authors, you may now use the last name of the first author only, plus the abbreviation “et al.” every time you mention that particular source (unless that shortened form would be ambiguous).

**Place of Publication.** For full citations at the end of the paper, you no longer have to list the place of publication. The Modern Language Association (MLA) made a similar change when it published its most recent edition in 2016. As the new APA edition states, “Online search makes a work easily discoverable with it [the publisher location], and it may be unclear what location to provide for publishers with offices worldwide or online-only publishers that do not readily disclose their location” (APA, 2020, p. 295).

**Issue Number.** Regarding journal citations, you now must always include the journal issue number. In the previous edition, you only had to include the journal number when the journal was “paginated separately by issue” (APA, 2010, p. 186).

**Hyperlinks.** In addition, when using a hyperlink for a DOI (digital object identifier) or a URL (uniform resource locator) on the reference list, you no longer have to include the phrase “Retrieved from” or “Accessed from.” In addition, these hyperlinks to web addresses “should be live if the work is to be published or read online” (APA, 2020, p. 299). Keep in mind, too, that you should not add a period at the end of the

DOI or URL because that period may prevent the link from working properly.

**Online Media.** Finally, the seventh edition of the APA guidelines includes a special new section for online media. So if you are taking information from social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or other similar websites, be sure to consult that section of the seventh edition, and look over the basic rules and the examples. Keep in mind, too, that since this short summary cannot include every item listed in the new edition, you should refer to the text itself for more information.

#### References

American Psychological Association.  
(2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.).

American Psychological Association.  
(2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.).

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