

A Short Guide to Style for Educational Research Papers

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(Revised November 24, 1999)



Master of Education Programs

A Short Guide to Style for Educational Research Papers

This introduction to style is designed for research papers submitted in the Master of Education Program at The College of St. Scholastica. Of course, individual instructors may wish to modify these style rules, so always check with your instructor about specific requirements for each course.

This guide is based on the fourth edition of APA's *Publication Manual* (American Psychological Association, 1994), but it should not be seen as a replacement for that guide when preparing manuscripts for publication in professional journals. Note that this Short Guide itself is in APA format with a couple of exceptions, such as spacing (to save paper and postage) and fonts (to make examples easier to follow).

The Research Paper

An educational research paper may take several forms. One can write a review of previous research on a given topic or a report on original research performed by the author. Research may be qualitative or quantitative or a combination of both. One cornerstone of educational research paper style is to simply and elegantly explain the topic and findings. No matter how faithfully one follows a guide to style, there is no substitute for clear, efficient writing. This guide to style is designed to help with several of the mechanical parts of research paper writing. You'll have to supply your own clear thinking and express it in your own elegant way.

Instructors in the Master of Education Program expect students' papers to show evidence of quality writing and thought. Correct spelling and grammar are important to effective communication and are expected in all written class work. What follows are answers to the most frequently asked questions about mechanical details, such as the design of the title page, text format, citations, and reference lists. Nothing in this guide replaces the instructor's specific expectations stated in the syllabus or in other correspondence.

Mechanical Details

Title Page

The title page consists of (a) the title – ten to twelve words that describe the paper's topic; (b) the author's name (first name, middle initial, last name); (c) the author's affiliation (usually where you work or are a student); and (d) a page header (first two or three words of the title). All lines are centered. Center the title of your paper vertically on the page. Break the title into two centered lines, if necessary. Type everything in upper and lowercase letters. Capitalize important words but do not use bold font.

Author's name is typed two double-spaced lines below the title. Omit the word "by." Author's affiliation is typed on the next double-spaced line. The page header is placed in the upper right-hand corner five spaces to the left of the page number. The title page is page one.

Abstract

An abstract is a comprehensive but brief summary of an article. Its aim is to help readers understand the contents of the article quickly without having to read the article. A good abstract must be accurate, self-contained, concise and specific, coherent, readable and non-evaluative.

In an action research report, the abstract should describe the problem under investigation, the participants, the method of investigation employed, the findings, the conclusion drawn from the study, and the implications for further study or action.

Text Format

The text of a research paper should be easy to read and have room to make editorial and other comments. Use Times 12 point font. Top, bottom, left, and right margins should be one inch. Double-space all lines of the manuscript. Type no more than 27 lines of text (not counting the running head and page number) on a page. Indent paragraphs five spaces or set the tab at 1/2 inch. Do *not* (a) justify the right side of text; (b) hyphenate words that are too long to fit a line; (c) use bold type on any part of your paper, including headings and title; (d) skip lines between sections, or (e) put two spaces between sentences.

The page header and number should appear at the top of each page, flush right. Five spaces should separate the header and page number. Page numbers appear on every page, including the title page. Text begins one double-spaced line below the page number.

Headings

Headings are the titles used to indicate parts of a paper. The *Manual* (American Psychological Association, 1994) suggests a format for up to five levels of headings. Most papers you write will need no more than three levels of headings, in which case you would use Levels 1, 3, and 4. Level one headings are centered, upper and lower case. Level three headings are underlined, flush left, upper and lower case. Level four headings are underlined, indented 5 spaces or 1/2 inch, lower case except for first letter and end with a period. Figure 1 is an example of a three heading paper. You may have a situation where headings follow one another directly, with no interceding text. Do not skip a line between a heading and the text.

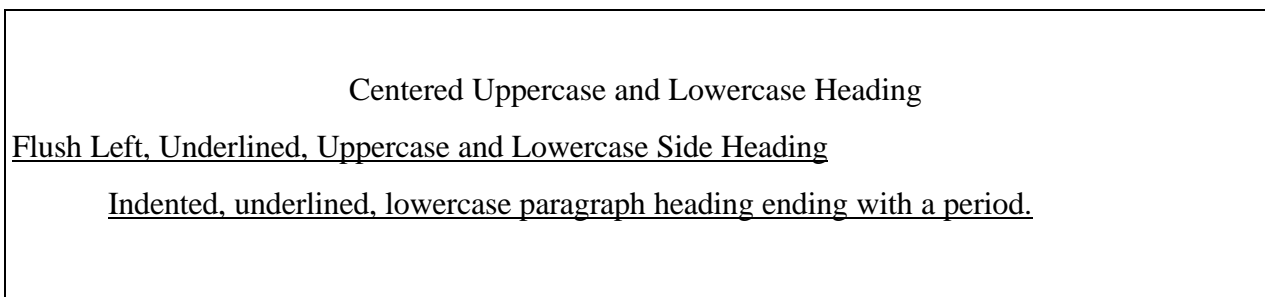


Figure 1. Sample of heading placement

Tables

Tables are tabular presentations of data. They are efficient ways of presenting a large amount of data in a small space and allow you to avoid sentences dense with numbers. Tables are numbered and captioned. Refer to table by number in your text. Then place the table as closely as possible to that reference (i.e., on the same page or the very next page) or at the end of your paper, after the references. For example:

As seen in Table 3, there were significant . . .

Several students showed increases . . . (see Table 1).

Figures

A figure is a picture, line drawing, graph, or similar element other than a table which augments your paper. Figures are numbered and have a caption below (see Figure 1). You refer to the figure in the text by number either in parentheses (as in the previous sentence) or simply in the text. Place the figure as closely as possible to that reference (i.e., the same or very next page) or at the end of your paper after the references and tables.

Citations

Cite references in the text. Don't use footnotes. When citing a source in the text of your paper, you do not need to provide all of the source information. Simply provide enough information so that the reader can find the full citation on your reference list. Normally this would be the name of the author(s) and the year of publication. Single author works are cited parenthetically using the author's name, a comma and the year the work was published:

Jones (1992) argued that intelligence is entirely genetically based.

Intelligence is entirely genetically based (Jones, 1992).

Two authors are cited similarly – (first author & second author, date).

Jones and Johnson (1992) argued that intelligence is entirely genetically based.

This style continues for fewer than six authors (first, second, third, fourth & fifth, 1989).

For six or more authors the first author's surname is followed by "et al." (Bloom et al., 1956.)

However, the names of all six authors are to be cited in the reference list.

If you cite two or more authors, "and" is abbreviated if the citation is in parentheses and written out if the citation is part of the sentence:

Jones and Johnson (1992) argued that intelligence is entirely genetically based.

Intelligence is entirely genetically based (Jones & Johnson, 1992).

If you need to cite an author whom you have read about in another source (for example, you read about Jones in Fish and Lee), indicate that you did not read Jones in the original source, but rather, read about Jones in the Fish and Lee source:

Jones (cited in Fish & Lee, 1993)....

Intelligence is entirely genetically based (Jones, cited in Fish & Lee, 1993).

Only the secondary source (Fish & Lee) will appear on the reference list.

It is easier to read text that is not too broken up by citations. Whenever possible, put your citations at the end of a line rather than use the author's name in the sentence. This keeps the text flowing. The next two examples might illustrate this point:

Dubious (1956), Lindberg, Cohen, Lindberg & Kegel (1994), Norden, Lindberg, Cohen, Lindberg-Kegel, MacDonald, & Foss (1994), and MacDonald (1993a, 1993b) note that Smith's writings show the influences of her work with autistic children.

That sentence is a visual quagmire. Instead, try something like this, which places the focus on the idea:

Smith's chosen topics were the stereotypes associated with autism and the need for more research into the range of autistic behaviors (Dubious, 1956; Lindberg, Cohen, Lindberg & Kegel, 1994; Norden, et al., 1994; and MacDonald, 1993a, 1993b).

Quotations

Use quotations sparingly. As a general rule, use your own words to relay the ideas of sources you are citing. There are two styles of quotations. Longer quotes need to be indented five spaces or 1/2 inch on the left without the usual paragraph indentation and with a period at the end of the statement. For example:

Smith's writing in the early 1990's shows the influence of her work with autistic children. Her chosen topics were the stereotypes associated with autism and the need for more research into the range of autistic behaviors. She repeatedly notes that this is no surprise – it is something anyone can see (MacDonald, 1993a, p. 256).

Quotes of fewer than forty words should be placed in the text between double quotation marks. "Studies of Smith's writing repeatedly noted a marked influence of her work with autistic children on her research. She indicates a relationship between what subjects interest researchers and their chosen topics for research" (MacDonald, 1993b, p. 122). Note that both examples include the page numbers of the quote at the end of the citation. However, the period goes after the parentheses, not after the statement, when the quotation is placed within the text:

“Intelligence is entirely genetically based” (Jones, 1992, p. 45).

Reference List

Material cited in the text must appear in a reference list and materials in the reference list must be cited in the text. Check to make sure that each citation matches the reference list (e.g. author's name spelled the same both places, same year of publication). The reference list should appear on a separate page, is double spaced, and is indented in the same way as the rest of the

paper. Alphabetize the list by the surname of the author or first author listed if there is more than one with the same surname. If there are multiple entries by the same author, list them in order of publication, earliest date first. If two entries by the same author are published in the same year, mark the first cited with a small "a" and the second with a small "b" (See MacDonald on the Reference list).

Punctuation in references may seem odd at first, but there is a fairly logical pattern. A period follows the publication date, title, and source, and signifies the end of the entry. Commas are used between authors' names and the volume (or issue number) and page numbers of journals. Colons are used to separate the location and name of the source (e.g., New York: Fishbein Press) and between the main and sub- titles (e.g., Bill Norden: A life in fiction).

Capitalize only the first word in the title and subtitle and any proper names in the titles of books or articles.

Models of intelligence.

Models of intelligence: Three ways to look at intelligence.

Models of intelligence: Theories by Gardner, Guilford, and Jones.

Capitalize all important words in the titles of journals. Journal titles are underlined or italicized:
Journal of Unusual Information

Referencing books and other non-periodicals. Non-periodicals include most monographs, reports, brochures, manuals, and audio-visual media. List the author's last name first and initials for first name, publication year in parentheses, title (underlined or italicized), city of publication and publisher. The location of some cities is obvious to a national audience (London or New York, for example). Most are not. There is a Duluth, Georgia.

Rigoni, D. (1994). Fishing for compliments in mid-life. Underwood, MN: Vanity Press.

Burke, J. (Producer) & Smith, W. (Director). (1985). The day the universe changed [Video]. Available from Global Video Productions, 100 Boylston St., Boston, MA 10788.

When you name the publisher, include only the essential information for a reader to find the publisher. Words and abbreviations such as " Inc." are not necessary, but spell out names of associations and universities.

Jones, E. A. & Johnson, P. T. (1992). Models of intelligence. New York: McGraw-Hill. (*not* McGraw-Hill, Inc.)

Badger, B. (1991). Complimenting the fish in mid-stream. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

If the book is an anthology of works from several authors, use this format: Author(s), initials. (year). Title of chapter. In editor's name (Ed.), Title of book (pp.xxx-xxx). Location: Publisher.

Nordlee, S. E. (1898). I was born. In S. P. Fishbait & P. M. Duckwok (Eds.), The book of life (pp. 123-345). Kokomo, IN: Lotsa Books.

Referencing periodicals. Periodicals include journals, magazines, newspapers, and other references which are published periodically. List the author's last name first and initials for first name, publication year in parentheses, title of the article, name of the journal (underlined or italicized), volume (underlined or italicized), issue number (plain text in parentheses), and page numbers.

Jones, E. A. (1992). Models of intelligence. *Journal of Psychological Inquiry*, 5(4), 21-24.

Jones, E. A. (1992). Models of intelligence. Journal of Psychological Inquiry,5(4), 21-24.

If the journal does not have a volume number, include the month of publication. For example:

Rover, G. D. (1992, April). Barking up the wrong tree: My life as a dog. Journal of Canine Behavior, 156-167.

Referencing reports from ERIC. If the organization that submitted the report to ERIC has assigned a number to the report, put that number in parentheses after the title. Give the name of the department and institution that produced the report. Put the ERIC document number in parentheses at the end of the entry.

Rover, G. D. (1992, April). Barking up the wrong tree: My life as a dog (Report No. 7576). Canine City, NJ: Center for Research on Canine Behavior, University of Animal Science. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 123 987)

Referencing on-line sources. Use the following guide for referencing on-line sources:

Author, I. (date). Title of article. Name of Periodical [On-line], volume. Available: Specify path.

Stensvold, M. (1995). Evaluating instructional software based on research in computer assisted instruction. Enquiry [On-line], 1. Available: <http://www.css.edu/acad/grad/CAI.html>

Punctuation

Use of the Dash

A dash can be used to show interruption in the flow of a sentence. It should be used on either side of the interrupting phrase. Two hyphens can be used to signify a dash:

One of three models of intelligence -- multiple intelligences, the structure of the intellect, and genetic predisposition -- was attributed to Jones simply to teach APA style.

Use of Ellipses in Quotations

Ellipses (three periods with a space before, between each, and after) are used when words are omitted in a direct quote. You do not need to put ellipses at the beginning or end of a quotation, even when you lift a quotation out of the middle of a sentence from the original source.

If the original statement reads, “Intelligence, though complex, is entirely genetically based,” the ellipses are used in the following quotation:

“Intelligence . . . is entirely genetically based.”

If the original statement reads, “Though complex, intelligence is entirely genetically based,” no ellipses are used in the following quotation:

Jones stated that “intelligence is entirely genetically based.”

Changes in capitalization and punctuation can be made in a quotation to make it fit grammatically within your sentence, as long as it does not change the meaning of the original author.

Use of the Apostrophe

An apostrophe can be used to show possession or to signify a contraction.

Possession: Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences is popular.

Contraction: Multiple intelligences is covered in EDU 6130 because it’s [it is] an important theory.

If showing possession by “it”, no apostrophe is used so that it is not confused with the contraction for “it is.”

Possession: The theory has run its course.

If the noun which has possession is singular, the apostrophe goes before the “s”. If the noun is plural, the apostrophe goes after the “s.”

Singular: Gardner’s theory of intelligence is popular.

Plural: Many researchers’ theories of intelligence conflict with Gardner’s.

Other Details

Check your agreement of subjects with verbs and pronouns with their referents. The pronoun needs to agree with the word to which it refers. For example, if you are referring to “the student,” the pronoun should be “he or she” not “they.”

The word “data” is plural. The singular form of “data” is “datum.” Therefore, you must use a plural verb to agree with “data.”

The data confirm [not confirms] findings reported in the literature.

Final Note

The purpose of this paper is to set general rules for writing research papers in the graduate education program at The College of St. Scholastica. Instructors in CSS programs are free to modify these rules to meet the individual needs of their courses. Students should carefully read the course syllabus for expectations about writing assignments in each class.

References

- American Psychological Association. (1994). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.) Washington, DC: Author.
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- MacDonald, B. M. (1993a). I know a bunch of things that anyone can see. Journal of Very Obvious Things, 105(2), 243-367.
- MacDonald, B. M. (1993b). I still know a bunch of things that anyone can see. Obvious Things Journal, 22(5), 121-127.
- Norden, W., Lindberg, J. L., Cohen, L., Lindberg W. E., Kegel, P. K., MacDonald, B. M. & Foss, M. L. (1994). Why only Bloom is remembered. Annals of Annoying Stuff, 2, 1-2.
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- Stensvold, M. (1995). Evaluating instructional software based on research in computer assisted instruction. Enquiry [On-line], 1. Available: <http://www.css.edu/acad/grad/CAI.html>

Start a new page for each Table, Figure and Appendix.

Tables

Put the table number and title above the table. Underline the title of the table. Use horizontal but not vertical lines in a table.

Table 1

Series of numbers with little or no meaning

| | Children | Adults |
|--------|----------|--------|
| High | 178.25 | 167.56 |
| Medium | 76.08 | 89.72 |
| Low | 15.75 | 32.56 |

Figures

Put the figure number and short description of the figure underneath the figure.

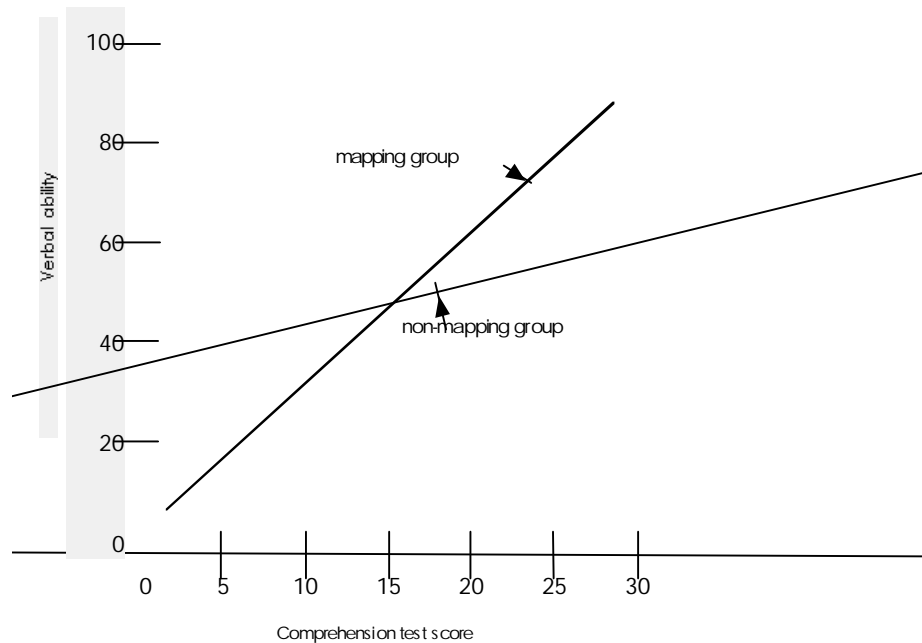


Figure 1. Regression equation lines indicating aptitude treatment interaction between verbal ability, concept mapping, and comprehension test score for mapping ($n = 89$) and non-mapping groups ($n = 94$).

Start a new page for each Table, Figure and Appendix.

Appendices

Put essential supplementary material (e.g. survey, interview questions) in Appendices. Reference all appendices in the text. If your paper has only one appendix, label it Appendix. If you have more than one appendix, label them Appendix A, Appendix B, etc. and place them in the order in which they are referenced in the text.