

# **An Introduction to Writing in APA Style**

This document provides an introduction to writing in American Psychological Association (APA) style. All of the information in this document is contained within the **seventh edition** of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. If you need more details, please refer to the APA manual available in the: Douglas College Library, Psychology Lab, and Learning Centre.

Student papers for psychology courses usually fall into 2 categories: a literature review or an empirical study.

## **Literature Review**

A literature review, also referred to as a “narrative literature review”, provides a narrative summary or evaluation of the findings or theories of an area of research. A thorough, if not exhaustive, search of published work (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-model research) is conducted for a given topic within a defined time frame. The resulting list of research articles are carefully examined to find trends, similarities, differences, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies. The resulting literature review synthesises this information resulting in an overview of past research with suggestions for future research. In sum, the narrative literature review should:

- define and clarify the problem;
- summarise previous research by identifying trends, similarities, differences, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies; and
- suggest directions for future research.

The organisational structure of a narrative literature review is at the author’s discretion. The paper may be organised based on similarities in concepts, research methodology, outcomes, theoretical perspectives, etc., with subsections detailing specifics when necessary. A literature review consists of, at minimum:

- title page
- introduction
- body — divided into sections and/or subsections
- conclusion
- references list

## **Empirical Study**

An empirical study is a report of original research (experimental or correlational) in which an hypothesis is tested; data is collected; and the results are presented and evaluated. An empirical study consists of, at minimum:

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| • title page   | • results    |
| • abstract     | • discussion |
| • introduction | • references |
| • method       |              |

Formatting for a literature review and empirical study follows the same conventions. Because the sections within an empirical study are more prescriptive, this document focuses on writing an empirical study.

# Sample Apa Paper Introduction

**Diana Hacker, Nancy Sommers**



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