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APA Reference Page Checklist (Podcast Transcript)



APA Reference Page Checklist:

What Not to Forget to Do on the References Page, Podcast 37, Click link for audio:

<https://kuportal-a.akamaihd.net/ascmmedia/kuwc/podcasts/37referencechecklist.mp3>

Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another Effective Writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to discuss the elements of an APA references page that you will not want to forget to check for correctness.

First things first just in case you were wondering: The references page is a list of the sources used (and sometimes consulted) in an APA formatted paper. The references page comes at the end of a research-based academic essay and includes all of the important bibliographic information someone would need to be able to locate the sources such as the author, date of publication, title of article, journal name, issue and volume number, access link or digital object identifier. These entries are called full citations.

Please keep in mind the following: There are two types of citation—some that appear within the body of the paper and some that appear at the end on the References page. *In-text citations* are a type of shorthand that signals readers and lets them know that the information they just read or are about to read is borrowed from another source. Full citations are, well, fuller than in-text citations because they contain more specific information about the source.

What's required for a full citation will vary depending on the kind of source you use (web page or book, for example), and let's face it: This page can be a nightmare. It contains oodles of formatting requirements—how to set up the page, how to organize entries, how to capitalize titles, how to punctuate, and so on. Although the page can be a nightmare, not all nightmares end badly. In fact, this APA References Page Checklist podcast should provide you with the information that you need to do a bang-up job on your References page.

The “references” page goes by other names depending on the documentation style used. A paper that uses MLA style calls the “references” page Works Cited. The Chicago style calls its list of sources page the Bibliography. In APA this page is called, as you know, References.

Make sense so far? Now let's turn our attention to what you need to check on your references page.

First, you will want to make sure the running head and the page number appear on this page as it does on the previous pages. In the upper left-hand corner, you should see your title in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS and in the right-hand corner you should see the page number. If this checks out, make sure the word References with a capital R and the rest lower case letters is centered on the page. The word References is typed directly onto the page—in other words,

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it's not inserted as the header and page number were inserted. The word References should not be in bold, underlined, italics, quotation marks, or any other special formatting feature.

Good so far? You might want to jot down the items to check so that by the time we're done the podcast, you have a checklist that you can use for any APA references page. However, I'll repeat in brief the checklist at the end of the podcast.

The next item to check is an easy one: Make sure the entire page is double spaced. The full citation entries should not be single spaced with double spacing between entries. Everything on the references page—in fact, this is true for the entire APA formatted paper—should be double spaced. So, centered on the page should be the word References and two lines down should be the first entry. Why? Because the entire References page is double spaced.

Moving on.

Please understand that in-text citations (with one exception) match up to the *full citations* on the references page. So, if you cite author X within the body of the paper, readers should find a full citation on the references page for author X. Make sure that the first piece of information for a source in an in-text citation—and that first piece of information could be the author's last name, an organization's name, or the title of the article—is also the first piece of information listed on the References page for that source, as in-text citations corresponding exactly with full citations on the References page.

Here's the next item to check: Make sure the full citation entries use hanging indentation. What's hanging indentation, you ask? Hanging indentation is when the first line of an entry (presuming the entry is more than one line) hangs out and the second line is indented inward five spaces or a half an inch.

You will want to make sure that the entries on the References page are alphabetized A - Z. Usually, you will cite by the author's last name, but if that is not the case and you have to alphabetize by the title, you will ignore the articles a, an, the if such a word is the first word of a title. So, if you have an unsigned newspaper article entitled "The Lowdown on APA References Page Full Citations," you would defer to the "L" in "Lowdown" when alphabetizing. Easy enough, right?

Let's talk about something that's a bit tricky. Yes, things were going along much too easy, right? Full citations vary in format and in the information they provide depending on the *source type*. For instance, full citations for books are different than full citations for journal articles or full citations for Web pages. Why is that? Well, like teachers, citation gurus stay up all night wondering how to make your life miserable. Not really, but I know that's what you're thinking. There really is a valid reason why full citations have to vary so much depending on the source type. The reason is that the information provided in a full citation is for the purpose of retrieval. If readers want to look up the sources in your paper themselves, then they turn to the References page to get that information, and the way you look up sources in a library or

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online vary depends on the source type. So here's what you need to check on your References page: In order to include exactly what's needed for any given entry, you need to consult one or more sources to ensure that the entry is formatted as correctly as possible.

I know what you're thinking now. You're thinking that you will use technology to help you with the full citation formatting. There are a number of citation generator web sites, word processing software often has built-in APA citation help, and even online libraries provide full reference page citations. However, and it's a big however, just because you use technology to help you with reference page citations does not mean those full citations will be correct. In some instances, the correctness of a full citation is directly proportional to the information inputted, which means if you put in incorrect information, the citation will be incorrect. Word of advice: Be careful when using such technology.

Here's another tricky APA matter to check and it's one that is often overlooked, but you won't forget because you have this podcast.

Be sure to check how your first-level titles are capitalized. What's a first-level title? Depending on the type of source used, an entry may have multiple titles that need formatting. Books, for example, will have a single title, but journals will have two—the title of the article and the title of the journal. For some reason that I won't pretend to understand, APA has a seemingly arbitrary capitalization rule used only on the references page (but ironically not elsewhere in the paper!).

Here's the arbitrary first level title rule: Capitalize only the first letter of the first word in first-level titles except for proper nouns, proper adjectives, and the first letter of words that follow a mark of punctuation in the title (usually a colon).

Second level titles rule: Capitalize the first letter of the first, last, and all important words (what we might call standard capitalization or title case).

How about an example? Let's say you have an article in a journal that needs to be cited on the References page. The title of the article is "The New Coffee Culture," and it appears in *Studies in Popular Culture*. The first-level title—that is, the first title—is "The New Coffee Culture" and the rule says to capitalize the first letter of the first word, so all that would get capitalized is the T in The.

The title of the journal, *Studies in Popular Culture*, would use title case and capitalize the S in Studies, the P in Popular and the C in Culture. The i in in is not an important word, so in this case it does not get capitalized.

Here's an easy item to check: Include a period at the end of Reference page entries except when the last item of the entry is a DOI or URL.

What's a DOI? DOI stands for digital object identifier, and it is a string of numbers and letters

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specific that provide a persistent link to a given source found online so that you can locate that content no matter what online library is used, as the DOI does not change. Always include the DOI even for print sources, as this string helps locate the content relatively easily.

Make sure your entries do not include retrieval dates. Retrieved from info is included (unless there is a DOI) but not retrieval dates. In case you're saying, "Huh," let me explain further. Let's say you found a scholarly article online, you would need to set up the full citation so that it includes all of the information needed for a journal article. Let's also presume, the source does not have a DOI. The last piece of information a journal article found online needs is the "Retrieved from" information that simply says "Retrieved from" and is followed by the URL. The date you accessed the online content is not needed according to the most recent edition of the APA Publication Manual. Of course, nothing can be so clear-cut in APA. so there is, predictably enough, an exception, but it's a rare exception, so I am going to keep things simple—and I hope clear—and not discuss the exception. So, no retrieval dates. But do include Retrieved from followed by the URL when using online content.

Check URLs. That is, if a URL is included in your full citation on the References page, it needs to take readers to the content. If not, update the URL.

Are you ready for the last item to check on your APA References page? If I had a drum roll, I'd use it, so just imagine one.

Check your references page and make sure that entries are not URLs—and by "not URLs," I mean the entire full citation is not just a web URL; other information would be required. I cannot tell you how many times I've seen a References page with a bunch of URLs (or maybe just one) listed as the full citation for a source. This is not correct, and it is something to definitely check.

How about a recap?

Reference Page Checklist in Brief

1. The running head and the page number appear.
2. The word References has a capital R and the rest of the letters are lowercase.
3. The word References is centered and typed directly onto the page—in other words, it's not inserted as the header and page number were inserted.
4. The word References should not be in bold, underlined, italics, quotation marks, or any other special formatting feature.
5. The entire References page is double spaced.
6. In-text citations match up with full citations on the References page.
7. Full citation entries use hanging indentation when applicable.
8. Alphabetize entries A - Z.
9. Consult a source for specifics on formatting different types of sources.
10. Be wary of citation generators and the like.
11. Check for arbitrary APA first-level title capitalization rule on References page.

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12. Include a period at the end of Reference page entries except when the last item of the entry is a doi or url.
13. Make sure your entries do not include retrieval dates.
14. Ensure URLs work.
15. Full citation entries will never be just a URL.

I hope you find this APA References page checklist and podcast helpful when working on your next APA formatted paper.

Thanks for listening, everyone. Happy writing.