APA stands for American Psychological Association and is simply a documentation style used in most disciplines at Purdue University Global. APA can be broken down into two general categories: paper formatting and citation. With a little effort, you can understand the basics of APA.

**PAPER FORMATTING**

The visual design of your paper is important. Your paper should follow APA manuscript guidelines that speak to such matters as the size of the margins, header placement, title page layout, font style and size, spacing, and the like. The basic formatting of a paper is the first impression readers get of your work, so you want to make yours count.

**CITATION**

When you conduct research, you need to write with integrity by giving credit for the information you use, so you properly acknowledge the source of the information and avoid plagiarizing. The method for giving credit where credit is due is called citation, and APA style uses two types of citations: in-text and reference list entries.

- **Reference list entries** are a formal list of sources and include full bibliographic information.
- **In-text citations**, by contrast, are placed in parenthesis within the body of the paper and include short bits of information that highlight specific pieces of information of a source.

**APA CHALLENGES**

The biggest challenge with APA is citation, especially formatting reference citations. Formatting can be tricky because of the varying kinds of references, so the best advice is to take your time and learn to consult dependable resources such as those found in the Purdue Global Writing Center. In fact, the PGWC has a section devoted entirely to APA matters—check out these APA Resources.