

APA 7TH EDITION KEY CHANGES

(PODCAST 41 TRANSCRIPT)

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Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I will discuss the key changes in the new 7th edition of the APA Publication Manual.

The current 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* came out in October of 2019, ten years since the 6th edition came out. Usually the changes from one edition to the next are relatively minor, but that is definitely not the case with the 7th edition, which makes some major updates to the protocol of formatting and citing.

For those of you who are curious, the APA style guide originated in 1929 as a seven-page document that according to the APA website was to establish a simple set of guidelines to improve the readability and comprehension of scientific writing. The publication manual has grown a lot since 1929. The current 7th edition is 427 pages long counting the index and while it has considerably more information, its purpose is still essentially the same: to present content in a uniform and consistent manner to aid the reading and comprehension of scholarly writing. Although use of APA is widespread among scholars and students, it's primarily the documentation style used in the social sciences and includes such fields as education, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, nursing, and business.

On to the key changes!

Perhaps the most notable overarching change from the 6th edition to the 7th edition is APA's conscious effort to make the Publication Manual more student friendly. Do you remember the times you wanted to rip the hair out of your head trying to get the running head to appear one way on the title page and a different way on every other page? Remember what a nightmare it was to make the long, unwieldy URLs look pretty on the references page and still function properly? Well those horror stories and others are a thing of the past in the 7th edition, which now provides a kinder and gentler experience for student researchers. Still, key differences and some ambiguities exist between the 6th and 7th editions that one has to keep straight.

Let's start with the new APA lingo. In the past, the term "citation" was used to refer to information about sources within a paper and at the end. To differentiate where the citations appeared in a paper, the terms "in-text citation" and "reference citation" and sometimes "full citation" were used. Now, however, **the term "citation" refers only to those citations found**

within the body of the paper. The terms “reference citation” and “full citation” do not even exist in the 7th edition of APA. So if someone says, “Where’s the citation?” the question can only refer to in-text citations.

So what is all the bibliographic information that appears on the references page called? Well, first the term “**references page**” is no longer being used. That page is now called “**references**” or “**references list**” or even “**list of references**,” but NOT “references page.” When you format the references list for an actual paper, you center and bold the word “References” [no quotes] on a new page and then list what are now called “reference entries” or “references.” Following me so far? Good.

Another language change concerns how to talk about “in-text citations,” which you already know could also be referred to as just plain “citations,” right? In the previous edition of APA, citations within the body of the paper were referred to as “citations” or “in-text citations” and sometimes “parenthetical citations,” but all of the terms meant essentially the same thing--information about a source that followed APA’s author-date citation format.

In the 7th edition, APA establishes two types of in-text citations: parenthetical and narrative. With the author-date citation system, sometimes both the author and date appear in parenthesis separated by a comma--thus, a parenthetical citation--and sometimes only the date appears in parenthesis, and the author’s name is used in the sentence as part of the narrative--hence narrative citation.

A sentence with a narrative citation, for example, would include some kind of signal phrase, the date of publication in parentheses, and the rest of the sentence like this: Clements (2020) (in parentheses) explained the difference between a parenthetical in-text citation and narrative citation.

APA 7th edition provides clearer guidelines for citing specific parts of a source beyond just page and paragraph numbers. The author-date citation format is still used for all sources, but in the past, knowing how to cite a quote in a YouTube video, for example, was always a bit of a mystery. Now the publication manual includes information about citing chapters, tables, slides, timestamps on videos or podcasts, and other such content making what to include much less of a mystery.

One mind-blowing change APA made in the 7th edition is to require one space after a period rather than two. That’s right--one space after periods (and other marks of punctuation in general). What’s mind-blowing and perhaps mind-numbing about this change is that when APA came out with the 6th edition in 2009, it changed the spacing after a period from one space in previous editions to two spaces, and now the 7th edition has returned to the one-space-after-a-period requirement. What’s confounding, however, is that in the new publication manual, APA says that it *recommends* (emphasis on recommends) the use of one space after periods, but if an instructor or publisher has other requirements such as using two

spaces after a period, to follow those guidelines. There. That clears it up. To quote my favorite tragic literary hero, “Good grief!”

Here’s a big change to make note of: **The 7th edition of APA heralds in and formally recognizes the singular “they.”** Yes, singular “they,” a pronoun whose singular time has finally arrived.

Grammatically speaking, the pronoun “they” has long been a plural pronoun in that “they” refers to more than one person. Grammar requires agreement between a pronoun and the antecedent (what the pronoun refers to), so a sentence like “Each grammar curmudgeon rolled their eyes at the thought of a singular ‘they’” would not be grammatically correct because “their” is plural and refers to “curmudgeon,” which is singular. Well, the singular “they” resolves this agreement issue.

Singular “they” also resolves the awkward “he or she” constructs because with singular “they” sentences like “Each student realized that he or she should do all he or she could to write well” would not be needed since singular they could be used instead of “he or she.”

All that said, a more important reason for recognizing singular “they” exists in our world today. The singular “they” is a pronoun of inclusivity in that it is a nonbinary singular pronoun for those who do not identify with either he or she. When a gendered pronoun like “he” or “she” is used, people make assumptions about people that may or may not be accurate. Using a bias-free word like singular “they” is needed to be inclusive of all people regardless of what language purists or traditionalists or stuck-in-the past grammarians advocate is the correct way to use language.

For a fascinating discussion and some snarky comments, read about the singular “they” on the APA Style Blog at <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they>. You can also check out my [podcast](#) devoted exclusively to singular “they.”

Let’s talk about some nuts-and-bolts formatting changes that are important to recognize.

In the 7th edition of APA, paper formatting requirements are divided into two categories: professional and student. I am going to discuss only matters that relate to student papers.

The most noticeable change to basic formatting is the running head, which in previous editions has been the impetus of enormous frustration. Countless YouTube videos were created to demonstrate how to properly format the running head of an APA paper, but things have changed.

Now, all that is required in the header is the page number in the upper, far-right corner. The title page starts the numbering sequence at one, the next page is two, and away we go! Easy peasy.

The title page in the 7th edition is substantively different and now requires the following: About one-third of the way from the top, the title should be typed in title case, centered, and bolded on the page. An APA formatted paper is double spaced start to end EXCEPT after the paper's title on the title page which has extra double spacing--count them, four lines total--so that a little white space appears after the title and before the next element of the title page, which is the author's name.

So, start with the title of the paper in title case, centered, and bolded, skip four lines and center on the page on successive lines in this order without any special formatting: author's name, school, course, instructor, and due date.

One other formatting related notable change is the font style and size. APA 7th edition says that standard sans serif or serif fonts of 10 to 12 point are acceptable. The publication manual indicates that the font style and size should be "accessible to all readers."

Do you need to catch your breath? I have a few more key changes that I want to discuss, but I also want to make it clear that more changes exist in the new APA 7th edition than I have time to discuss (and likely you have the patience to listen to). I've tried to flag what I consider the key changes to take note of in student papers.

Here's a change that you're bound to appreciate: **The in-text citation guidelines for content authored by more than one author have been simplified.** That's right, *simplified*. In the previous edition, in-text citations differed depending on if the citation was for one author, two authors, three to five authors, and six or more authors. In addition, the citation would vary depending on the number of authors and whether or not the citation was the first time it appeared or a subsequent time. In short, a lot of back-and-forth cross checking and counting and double checking was needed. Not anymore. Remember earlier when I said that in the 7th edition, APA made a conscious effort to make the Publication Manual more student friendly? Well, this update is a case-in-point example.

Here are the guidelines: For a work with one or two authors always name the author(s) in the citation. For a work with three or more authors, list the first author's name and then et al. That's et space al period (which means Latin for "and others") in every citation.

Here's a change you're going to love: **APA now allows the use of a URL shortener** for those unwieldy and unsightly character strings that marred many a list of references. Now the URLs can be neat and tidy on the page.

And speaking of the list of references: In the 7th edition of APA, **the words "Retrieved from" no longer need to precede a URL or a DOI.** All you need to do is place the URL or DOI after whatever piece of information precedes it, and you're done. And remember: Do not place a period after the URL or DOI.

Here's another change that concerns the DOI: **The DOI is now presented as a web link beginning with "https://"** as of the date of this podcast. So no need for "DOI" in all caps and a colon prior to the DOI's alphanumeric string.

Here's a doozy: **On the references list, you will now list up to twenty authors.** Count them. Twenty.

Ok, folks, I have one final change in the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* that I want to share--here it goes: **The place of publication is no longer needed for books on the list of references.** Why, you ask? According to the publication manual, the place of publication is no longer needed because it's easy to find that information online. End of story.

Are you ready for a recap? Hang on!

Major Changes in the 7th Edition of APA in List Form:

1. APA has made a conscious effort to make the Publication Manual more student friendly.
2. The running head for student papers now only requires the page number in the upper, far-right corner starting on the title page.
3. The term "citation" refers only to citations within the body of the paper.
4. The term "references page" is no longer used; that page is now called any of the following: "references," "references list," "reference list entries," or "list of references."
5. The word "References" is centered and bolded at the top of the list of references.
6. The guidelines for citing specific parts of a source beyond just page and paragraph numbers are clearer.
7. One space is now required after a period rather than two.
8. APA establishes two types of in-text citations: parenthetical and narrative.
9. The 7th edition of APA recognizes the inclusive singular "they."
10. The title page in the 7th edition is substantively different.
11. Font sizes of 10-point, 11-point, and 12-point are acceptable.
12. An in-text citation for more than two authors now requires only the first author's last name followed by et al. for all entries.
13. The use of a URL shortener for long character strings is now allowed.
14. The words "Retrieved from" no longer need to precede a URL or a DOI.
15. The DOI is now presented as a web link beginning with "https://"

16. Up to twenty authors can be listed on the list of references.

And the final key change in APA 7th edition . . . drum roll, please. [Drum roll plays.]

17. The place of publication is no longer needed for books on the list of references.

Well, everyone, that does it for this effective writing podcast. I hope you found the information helpful. Thanks for listening. Happy writing.