

APA Format: Headings



Writing Center

989-964-6061, www.sdsu.edu/writingcenter

This handout is based on the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Sixth Edition, 2010.

Headings are used to signal the organization and structure of the paper. The appearance of the heading changes depending on the number of structural levels within the paper. Observe the following conventions:

- Use the same heading level for sections of the same importance
- Begin a new level only if it will have two or more headings
- Do **not** label the introduction (unless the instructor requests this)
- Do **not** label headings with numbers or letters
- Maintain the same font size used in the paper
- **Maintain double-spacing** before and after Level 1 and 2 headings; double-spacing does not apply with Level 3, 4, and 5 headings (for these levels, the text continues on the same line as the heading)

Headings used in your paper are dictated by the number of content levels in the paper. APA has 5 levels of headings (see below), from Level 1 major sections to lower level subsections. The heading structure begins with Level 1, and then continues depending on the number and division of subsections. (See examples.)

APA Headings

Level of Heading	Format
1	Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading
2	Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading
3	Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period. Text continues.
4	<i>Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period.</i> Text continues.
5	<i>Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period.</i> Text continues.

For examples of heading structures, please see the back of the page.

Paper with two levels:
Use Levels 1 and 2. Example:

Method (Level 1)
Procedures (Level 2)
Sample (Level 2)
Results (Level 1)
Discussion (Level 1)
Limitations of the Study (Level 2)
Application of the Results (Level 2)
Conclusions (Level 1)

Paper with three levels:
Use Levels 1, 2, and 3. Example:

Method (Level 1)
Measures (Level 2)
Perceived control. Text continues here. (Level 3)
Autonomy. Text continues here. (Level 3)
Behavior and emotions. Text continues here. (Level 3)
Results (Level 1)
Discussion (Level 1)
Limitations of the Study (Level 2)
Application of the Results (Level 2)
Conclusions and Future Prospects (Level 2)

Paper with four levels:
Use Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4. Example:

Method (Level 1)
Procedures (Level 2)
Perceived narcissism. Text continues here. (Level 3)
Methods of assessment. Text continues here. (Level 3)
<i>Self-assessment approaches.</i> Text continues here. (Level 4)
<i>Group-assessment approaches.</i> Text continues here. (Level 4)
Results (Level 1)
Discussion (Level 1)
Effects of Self-perceived Narcissism (Level 2)
Effects of Group-perceived Narcissism (Level 2)
Limitations of the Study (Level 2)
Applications of the Results (Level 2)
Summary and Concluding Discussion (Level 1)