Checklist for Formats and Conventions of Theses and Dissertations
McKay School of Education
Brigham Young University

Directions. You are responsible for checking your thesis/dissertation to be sure that formats and conventions follow your program/department requirements, BYU Graduate Studies guidelines, and the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*. This checklist highlights some of the most critical formatting elements and common errors; refer to the following pages and the APA manual for more information. Submit this completed checklist to the dean's office with the emailed copy of your thesis/dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Submitted</th>
<th>Date Returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

BYU Format for Preliminary Pages and Organizational Components
- Line spacing
- Spelling of committee members’ names and department name
- Chair identified; committee members just listed
- Date thesis/dissertation approved by the dean’s office (not graduation date)
- Completeness of abstract
- Table of contents, list of tables, list of figures; correlation between table and manuscript (wording, page numbers); hanging indent, subheading indentation, number alignment
- Description of thesis structure (if needed); title of thesis italicized, appendices referred to in order

Numbers and Other Conventions
- 1-inch margins
- Double-spacing
- Times New Roman 12-point font, including page numbers
- Half inch paragraph indentation
- Items centered on the page appropriately (e.g., Level 1 headings centered without indentation)
- Page headings
  - Running head (if required by department)
  - Preliminary pages unnumbered
  - Page numbers at top right corner of each subsequent page
  - Lowercase Roman numerals on pages beginning with the table of contents
  - Arabic numerals on all pages of the body of the thesis, including appendices
- Consistent spaces after periods ending sentences
- Widows and orphans corrected

Headings
- Up to five levels of headings formatted correctly
- Subheadings that are clear divisions of sections (at least two for each area subdivided)
Designated chapters (if used) on the same level as chapter titles

Tables and Figures
- Tables displaying substantial amounts of data to supplement written text
- Table titles above (left side for sideways table); figure captions beneath
- Large tables displayed on separate pages
- Tables placed as close to the in-text reference as possible (or according to department standard)
- Tables and figures mentioned in the text and displayed in chronological order (e.g., 1, 2, 3)
- Single or double spacing on tables (see APA manual for other formatting instructions)

Seriation
- Use of (a), (b), (c) for horizontal lists
- Use of Arabic numerals followed by period for vertical (hanging-indented) lists

References
- Double spacing, hanging indent form on reference list
- Alphabetical and chronological placement on reference list
- DOI, as available
- Consistency between citations in the text and items on the reference list
- Citations in text and items on reference list formatted according to instructions in the APA manual

Writing Style and Mechanics
- Abbreviations
- Acronyms
- Capitalization
- Grammar and usage
- Italics
- Numbers
- Punctuation
- Quotations
- Spelling
- Statistical and mathematical copy
- Writing style

Appendices
- Clear mention of all appendices in text for traditional theses/dissertations or in “Description of Thesis/Dissertation Structure” for journal-ready theses/dissertations
- Listing in text and placement at the end of text designated in alphabetical order
Information in these guidelines, which is drawn from BYU Graduate Studies and from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 6th edition, is intended to be a reference for graduate students and a helpful refresher for faculty as they prepare manuscripts for submission to professional journals. These guidelines cover the most common format and convention issues; however, writers should consult the APA manual for more specific and detailed information. Also, refer to your program/department for specific thesis/dissertation requirements.

Manuscript Components

The contents of your thesis/dissertation must conform to the standards determined by your department and those published by BYU Graduate Studies as well. However, most theses and dissertations include the following sections and materials:

Preliminary Pages

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
   a. Single-space and indent each paragraph. Use active voice, emphasize verbs, use digits for all numbers, use present tense for results/conclusions, use past tense for study procedures and outcomes, emphasize study findings.
   b. The following content will be expected:
      • Description of the problem (in one sentence)
      • Description of the participants (with pertinent characteristics)
      • Description of the study method (include key measures)
      • Report of the findings (the 4 or 5 most important findings, including significance levels)
      • Report of conclusions
      • Report of implications or applications
   c. At the bottom of the page include no more than six keywords. Find keywords that are indexed through ERIC at http://eric.ed.gov/. You can also find keywords through BYU’s paid version of EBSCO, from the center box on the education subject guide at http://guides.lib.byu.edu/education. (Link to the thesaurus containing keywords at the top left.) Also look for terms that appear after the word subjects when you are looking at search results.
3. Optional Acknowledgment Page

Organizational Components

1. Table of Contents
   a. Be sure the page numbers are right aligned.
   b. Do not put “page #” or “page” as a column header for the page numbers.
c. Include in the Table of Contents all of Headings 1-3 in the work.
d. Assure that the sub-headings are indented under their respective headings.

2. List of Tables, with tables names listed exactly as they appear in the body of the work, title case
3. List of Figures, with concise summary of each figure caption, sentence case
4. Description of Thesis/Dissertation Structure (only for theses and dissertations with journal-ready article(s), not for traditional 5-chapter theses/dissertations)

Body of Thesis/Dissertation

1. Introduction
2. Method
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. References
6. Appendices (may include extended review of literature and associated references, annotated bibliography, consent forms, instruments, and other related information)

Manuscript Formatting

APA style requires specific formats and conventions regarding numbers and other conventions, headings, tables/figures, and seriation. See the APA manual for specific instructions and examples.

Numbers and other conventions (APA 8.03, pp. 228-231)

1. Margins should be one inch all around.
2. The entire text should be double spaced.
   a. Double spacing includes blocked quotations, reference list(s), headings, footnotes, and figure captions.
   b. MS Word has an option for an extra half line space default after each paragraph. Change this default to consistent double spacing (Mac: Format/Paragraph/ Don’t add space between paragraphs of same style; PC: Home/Paragraph/Remove Space After or Before Paragraph).
3. Use the Times New Roman typeface and a 12-point font.
4. Indentation for paragraphs and footnotes should be set at ½ inch.
5. Some journals require authors to identify their manuscript with a running head (see p. 230 and sample manuscript p. 41); for theses/dissertations, this is only required if this is the department standard.
6. Page numbers are placed in the top right corner of every page, with the following exceptions.
   a. Do not number preliminary pages.
   b. Starting with the Table of Contents, number the pages in lowercase Times New Roman numerals.
c. Beginning with the body of the thesis, use Arabic numerals, beginning with page 1. See the BYU Graduate Studies Preliminary Pages Template, Form 11b or Form 11d for an example.

7. Eliminate all widows and orphans in your document. Widows and orphans are words or short lines at the beginning or end of a paragraph that are separated from the rest of the paragraph by page division (top of the page – widow; bottom of the page – orphan).

**Headings** (APA 3.03, pp. 62-63)

1. Use headings to identify the logical progression and relationships of sections and subsections. Use the five levels as shown below. Make sure the descriptions are parallel within their sets: all Level 1 headings, all Level 2 headings under the each Level 1, all Level 3 headings under each Level 2 heading, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Centered, Bolded, Initial Caps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Left Margin, Bolded, Initial Caps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Indented, bolded, paragraph heading, first word capitalized, followed by period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: Indented, bolded, italicized, paragraph heading followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5: Indented, italicized paragraph heading followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Whenever you break information from a section to another level of headings/subheadings, be sure there are at least two. You can’t break something down and come out with just one.
   a. If you have only one subheading in a section and it is near the beginning, it may be just a slightly more specific rewording of the section heading. Just make it the section heading.
   b. If you have just one subheading and it is close to the middle, it may be that the material preceding it is really a subsection and needs a subheading designating it as a unit as well. Give the earlier material the subheading that it needs.

3. If your document has chapters designated as Chapter 2, Chapter 3, etc., the chapter designation should be on the same level as the chapter title (e.g., Level 1).
Tables and Figures (APA 5.01-5.30, pp. 125-167)

1. Use tables and figures purposefully.
   a. Use tables only when you have substantial amounts of data (more than one or two columns or rows).
   b. Use a table to supplement, not duplicate, the written text.
2. Follow placement and format conventions of APA, as well as those required by your department.
   a. Check on your departmental standard for placement of tables and figures (e.g., within the body of the text, following the reference list, in appendices).
   b. Short tables appear on a page with text; do not have a short table on a page with blank space. Long tables and figures are placed on a separate page immediately after the page on which the table or figure is first mentioned.
   c. Tables may be single spaced to enhance clarity. Place sideways tables with the top on the left.
   d. Font size may be reduced in tables or appendices. A sans serif type may be used in figures.
3. Be sure that numbers and titles are handled correctly.
   a. The number of the table goes above the table, flush left. The title of the table goes next, double spaced under the table number, flush left, italicized. If the title is more than one line, it can be single spaced.
   b. The number of the figure goes under the figure, flush left. The figure caption goes next to the number (APA 5.23, pp. 158-160) and is double-spaced (APA 8.03, p. 229).
   c. Tables and figures are numbered in Arabic numerals consecutively according to their first reference in the text, even though they may be further discussed in a later section (APA 5.05, p. 127).
   d. See the APA manual for additional formatting instructions: table titles, headings, notes and canonical (standard) table forms; and figure types, standards, legends, and captions (APA 5.01-5.30, pp. 125-167).

Seriation (APA 3.04, pp. 63-65)

1. When a series occurs within a sentence or paragraph, set off series items with lower case letters in parenthesis: (a), (b), (c), etc.
   a. Separate items with a comma, unless there is already a comma within one of the items.
   b. If one of the items includes a comma, separate the elements with semicolons.
2. When items are set off as a formal series, introduce the series with a complete statement plus a colon.
   Incorrect: The four suggestions are:
   Correct: Four suggestions are given:
   Incorrect: To complete the procedure, teachers must:
   Correct: To complete the procedure, teachers must do the following:

USE A COLON ONLY AFTER A COMPLETE STATEMENT.
a. If ordinal position is important (e.g., sequence indicates importance or process), use Arabic numerals followed by a period. Do not use parenthesis with an indented series.
b. If ordinal position is not important, use bullets.
c. Use MS Word’s automatic numbered (or bulleted) list format; set the number indent the same as for a paragraph (usually 0.5 in.); if sentences run over one line, they must be in hanging indent form.
d. If series items are complete sentences, punctuate them as sentences: Begin each with a capital and end it with a period.

e. If series items are fragments, begin each with a capital but do not end with a period.

Positive behavior support is evidence based:
1. Diagnostic data guide selection of intervention.
2. Data are collected to track student progress.
3. Changes and adaptations are made in accordance with data collected.

Series is formally introduced with a complete statement and a colon.
Series items are fragments; they all begin with a capital but do not end with a period.

3. A series of very short, simple, and closely related items can be set off with a sentence stem, which embeds them in a sentence structure.
   a. The stem is not a complete sentence, the items are considered as embedded in the sentence, and NO COLON IS USED.
   b. Series items are not capitalized and are punctuated as if they were part of the sentence: Each ends with a comma (or semicolon if there are commas within the items), the second to last item is followed by and or or, and the last item is followed by a period.

After appropriate screening, students were grouped as
1. not at risk for EBD,
2. at risk for EBD, or
3. currently showing symptoms of EBD.

Series is set up with a sentence stem, so items are considered to be within the sentence. No colon is used.
Series items are not capitalized and are punctuated as if they were part of the sentence.
Note that length, complexity and relationship of items determine which form of seriation is used. If material is complex or important, it needs a formal series introduced by a complete statement and a colon. If items in the series are short, direct, and very closely related, the structure with the sentence stem can be used.

References

Handling of references, including citations and reference lists, is among the most conspicuous aspects of APA format—for many students, the most frustrating. Two chapters of the manual are devoted primarily to these challenges. Keep the manual close by to help you with the nitty-gritty specifics.

Citations

1. When more than one source is given in the same parentheses, arrange them in the sequence they appear on the reference list: in alphabetical order by the first author’s surname (APA 6.16, p. 177-178).
2. When a work being cited has two authors, give both names every time. In the text, use and between the names; in parenthesis (as on the reference list) use ampersand (&) (APA 6.16, p. 177-178).
3. When citing a work with between three and six authors, use all names on the first reference, then use the surname of the first author followed by et al. (two separate words, PERIOD ONLY AFTER AL.).
4. When citing a work that has six or more authors, use the surname of the first author and et al. and the year in the first citation as well subsequent citations. The year should always appear inside a parenthetical citation and the first time the author is cited outside the parenthetical in a given paragraph, even if it has already been mentioned inside parentheses. The year may be omitted when the author appears later in that paragraph only if the source can’t be confused with another (APA 6.11-6.29, pp. 174-185).

Reference List (APA 6.01- A7.07, pp. 169-224)

1. References in the text must match references in the reference list (APA p. 174).
   Check this very carefully.
2. The reference list must be double-spaced with hanging indentation (approximately 5-7 spaces) (APA 2.11, p. 37).
3. Be sure that authors are listed correctly.
   a. Use the first and middle (if any) initials of all authors; do not write out the first name. There should be a space between the initials. Use the ampersand (&) rather than and between two authors or before the last author if there are more than two. Separate all authors with commas.
   b. All authors must be listed unless a work has eight or more; for works with eight or more, list the first seven, after the comma use ellipsis [. . . ], then give the last author (APA 6.27, 7.01, pp. 198-199, example 2).
c. When there is more than one work by the same author, the author’s name must be written out for each listing, and the listings should appear in chronological order, earliest first (APA 6.25, p. 182).

4. Titles for books, journals, and journal articles are all handled differently.
   a. For book titles, use italics and capitalize only the first word of the title, any proper nouns, and the first word following a colon which indicates the subtitle (e.g., *Writing from A-to-Z: The easy-to-use handbook*).
   b. For the titles of journal articles, capitalize only the first word of the title, any proper nouns, and the first word following a colon (subtitle) (APA 7.01, p. 198, example 1). Italics, of course, are not used; neither are quotation marks.
   c. The titles of journals are italicized and capitalized using title case (APA 7.01, p. 198, example 1).

5. Formatting is strict and specific for publication information.
   a. The abbreviations *Vol.* and *No.* are not used in identifying journals. The volume number should be italicized, and the issue number (for a journal with continuous pagination) should be in parentheses, followed by a comma and the page numbers. Include the issue number only if the journal is paginated separately by issue. (APA 6.30, p. 186).
   b. Page numbers of journal articles, WHICH MUST BE INCLUDED, should not be preceded by “p” or “pp” (APA 6.30, p. 186).
   c. Provide the city and state (or country) of publication followed by the publisher's name.
      • The standard two-letter U.S. Postal Service abbreviation should be used for the state (APA 6.30, p. 187). States must now be given for all US cities.
      • Two-letter postal abbreviations can be found online for other countries.

6. Retrieval date is no longer required on electronic sources unless the source is subject to frequent change.
   a. Do not use a period after the URL on the reference list. (It might be misinterpreted as part of the URL.)
   b. Remove all hyperlinks from citations.

7. Include the digital object identifier (DOI) for items that have this identification number, which will help readers find valuable materials online. The following example is quoted directly from the sixth edition of the APA manual (APA 7.01, p. 198).

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   a. Do not place a period after the DOI. As with the URL, readers might misinterpret the period as part of the DOI
   b. If an electronic source has a DOI, you need no further retrieval information.
Writing Style and Mechanics

APA does not treat a wide swatch of mechanics and style in depth and specificity, as does the 1026-page tiny-print Chicago Manual of Style. But the points that are treated by APA are points on which you need to be particularly careful. Although common problems with usage, grammar, punctuation, and basic accuracy are treated here, the manual should be consulted for ways in which these practices should be specifically applied.

General Items of Usage

1. Abbreviations
   a. Statistical abbreviations are usually italicized: n, t, SD, p. etc. Uppercase N is total sample; lowercase n is subsample. The correct form is t test—no hyphen, italicized t.
   b. Latin abbreviations such as “e.g.,” “i.e.,” and “cf.” should be used only in parentheses and are always followed by a comma. Outside parentheses, the English equivalent should be used: (e.g., a Tier 2 intervention) = for example, a Tier 2 intervention (APA 4.26, p.108).

2. Acronyms (APA 4.02, p.88)
   a. When using the acronym for the first time, write the words out completely and follow this with the acronym in parentheses (APA 4.23, p. 107).
   b. Afterward, use the acronym alone (don’t toggle back and forth).

3. Capitalization (APA 4.15-4.20, pp.101-104)
   a. Do not capitalize job titles unless they immediately precede a person’s name (John Doe, a professor; Professor John Doe).
   b. Do not capitalize the names of models, laws, hypotheses, theories, disorders, or diseases, but in most cases capitalize terms taken from a personal name (e.g., Down syndrome).
   c. If a complete statement (which could stand alone as a sentence) follows a colon, capitalize it (APA 4.14, p. 101).

4. Italics (APA 4.21, pp. 104-105)
   a. Italicize (not quote or bold) a key word or term introduced for the first time in the text.
   b. Italicize titles of long works (books, plays, journal titles (not article titles).
   c. Italicize words that anchor a scale [1 (never) to 5 (almost always)].

5. Numbers (APA 4.31-4.38, pp. 111-114)
   a. Write numbers below 10 as words. Write numbers 10 or above as numerals unless they begin a sentence (avoid this). Exceptions include a series including numbers both under and over 10 and numbers preceding elements of time or measurement (unless approximate). Other exceptions are found in (APA 4.31, 4.33-4.34, pp. 111-114).
   b. Use numerals in numbers like 6 million.
   c. Use a comma in numbers like 2,396.
   d. The percent symbol (%) is used only if it follows a numeral. If no number is involved, use the term percentage (APA 4.45, p. 118).
Writing Style (APA 3.05-3.23, pp. 65-86)

1. Use gender-neutral language (APA 3.12, pp. 73-74).
2. Be sure that verbs and pronouns agree with their subjects.
   a. Verbs must agree with their subjects (singular or plural). Data and media are plural nouns. (The data are. . .).
   b. Pronouns must agree in number and in gender with the nouns they replace (APA 3.19-3.20, pp. 78-79). Remember that the words each and every are singular; they can often be replaced with all, which is plural.

Punctuation (APA 4.01-4.11, pp. 87-96)

1. Placement and spacing of punctuation involve specific conventions.
   a. Commas must be used to separate items of a series consisting of three or more (including before and and or when they join series items) (APA 4.03, p. 88).
   b. Periods and commas go inside closing quotation marks (double or single); colons and semicolons go outside. Question marks and exclamation points go inside the quotation marks only when they refer directly to the quoted material. They go outside when the entire statement containing the quotation is a question or exclamation.
   c. Double space after periods ending sentences and after colons that are followed by a complete statement. Space once (a) after commas and semicolons, (b) after periods within a reference citation, (c) after the period before a page numbers (p. 21), and (d) after periods which follow the initials in personal names (e.g., J. F. Smith).
   d. Avoid common errors with apostrophes.
      • Add an apostrophe + s to form a possessive of a singular noun (e.g., Jones’s study, the child’s desk).
      • Add an apostrophe after the existing s to form possessives of plurals ending in s (e.g., the students’ projects) (APA 4.12, p. 96).
      • Do not use an apostrophe with plurals that are not possessive (not “assessments’ were completed” or “teachers’ were prepared”).
      • Do not use an apostrophe when forming the plural of a number (e.g., 1990s, 40s).
2. Distinguish between various formats for handling quotations (APA 6.01-6.05, pp. 170-172).
   a. Use double quotation marks around words taken directly from other sources, and cite the page of the text from which they were taken (APA 4.08, p. 92). DO NOT TAKE EVEN TWO SIGNIFICANT WORDS IN SEQUENCE WITHOUT QUOTATION MARKS; this is plagiarism. Use citations to indicate authors of ideas that are not your own but are in your own words. Failing to credit the original author is also plagiarism (APA 6.01, p. 170 and APA 1.10, pp. 15-16). Plagiarism is a serious violation of scholarly and
professional ethics. Careers have been ruined when plagiarism has been found.

b. Use *single* quotation marks for a quotation within a quotation that is in double quotation marks (the author you are quoting quotes someone else) (APA 4.08, p. 92).

c. Put quotations of 40 or more words in double-spaced block form, indenting the block the same width as a new paragraph (about .5 in.) (APA 6.03, p. 171).

d. Following a block quotation, place the citation after the closing period (APA 6.03, p. 170).

e. To indicate you have omitted words in a quotation, use ellipsis (three spaced periods). If the omission occurs between two sentences, use four periods (the fourth representing the period that was omitted). Do not begin or end a quotation with ellipsis (APA 6.08, pp. 172-173).

3. Avoid common misuses of hyphens (APA, 4.13, p. 97).

a. A hyphen is used for a compound modifier that precedes a noun—**except when it includes an *ly* adverb or a comparison or superlative**. So *typically developing child* does not take a hyphen, but *ten-year-old child* does. An at-risk child includes a hyphen, but a child who is at risk does not, since the phrase does not precede a noun.

b. Some words, such as the *self- words* (self-concept, self-conscious, etc.), always use a hyphen no matter where they are or what they do (APA 4.13, pp. 97-100).

c. If a compound adjective cannot be misread or if its meaning is *established* (widely known), a hyphen is unnecessary (e.g., health care reform, grade point average) (APA 4.13, p. 97).

d. Compound modifiers that share a base word can be placed in a series preceding the base word with the hyphens indicated (full- and part-time employees) (APA 4.13, p. 97). e. Many prefixes do not require hyphens, including *anti, non, inter, intra, extra, semi, mini, pseudo, and under* (e.g., nondisabled, extracurricular, international, pretest, posttest (APA 4.1- 4.2, pp. 98-99).

e. Do not confuse hyphen, dash, em dash, en dash (APA 4.13, p. 97).

- Use a hyphen (shortest line) to divide a word, indicate a relationship between parts of a compound adjective preceding a noun (e.g., “an at-risk child”); do not space before or after a hyphen.
- Use an en dash (about the length of an *n*) between equivalent words constituting a compound adjective; it has no space before or after (e.g., “an APA–MLA format question”).
- Use an em dash (about the length of an *m*) to set off an item for emphasis or to digress from the main clause; do not space before or after an em dash (e.g., “like this—or that”).
Style Matters

1. Paragraphing (APA 3.05-3.11, pp. 65-70)
   a. Paragraphs should be longer than a single sentence and no longer than one page (APA 3.08, p.68).
   b. Paragraph length should vary.
2. Attend to standards and clarity with regard to statistical and mathematical materials (APA 4.41-4.49, pp.116-124).
3. Appendices should be designated alphabetically in the text in the same order they appear in the Appendices section. Appendix A should be mentioned first in your text, followed by Appendix B, Appendix C, and so forth.

Completion

After you have completed your thesis/dissertation and have it approved by your advisory committee, graduate coordinator, and dean, you will upload it to the Electronic Theses and Dissertations website. Support is available for you as you prepare your work for approval and dissemination.

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

All theses and dissertations must now be submitted as Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD). See the BYU Graduate Studies Checklist for Preparing ETD (PDF) for Submission (ADV Form 11) for details.

Available Support

In addition to the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, you can consult the following:

1. American Psychological Association style manual website for APA style products, free tutorials, and an online course.
2. Other universities' websites (e.g., excellent online writing labs at Purdue and Indiana University)
4. Citation Builders: EndNote, RefWorks, Son of Citation Machine
5. MSE departments’ and programs’ graduate handbooks and web pages
6. Harold B. Lee Library resources, including the Education librarian, Rachel Wadham.
7. External editors, who have volunteered themselves to be employed to edit theses and dissertations, posted on the McKay School Website.
   a. Not endorsed by the MSE, but listed for students’ convenience
   b. Communicate thoroughness of edit desired