

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

**Directions.** The process for getting your thesis or dissertation approved typically takes more time than you expect, so plan accordingly. The flowchart found at [education.byu.edu/research/dissertation\\_aids.html](http://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation_aids.html) helps you to understand this process. 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 seventh 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. **Complete this checklist, in conjunction with revisions from your committee and graduate coordinator. When the graduate coordinator has approved your Word version, they will submit it and your completed checklist to [msegradsec@byu.edu](mailto:msegradsec@byu.edu) in the dean's office.**

**Name**

**Date Submitted**

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**BYU Format for Preliminary Pages and Organizational Components**

Line spacing

Accurate spelling of committee members' names and department name

Chair identified; committee members listed

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 (see further instructions on pages 4-5 of this document).

**Conventions**

1-inch margins

Double spacing, with no extra space between paragraphs (adjust Word to prevent extra spacing). Double spacing on blocked quotations, reference list, headings, and footnotes or endnotes

Times New Roman 12-point font, including page numbers, strongly preferred

Half-inch paragraph indentation

Items centered on the page appropriately (e.g., Level 1 headings centered without indentation)

Page details

Running head (Not required by MSE- only include 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

Single-space 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 numbers above and bolded; table titles a double-space below the table number and italicized  
 Figure numbers above and bolded; figure titles a double-space below the figure number and italicized  
 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.  
 Single, 1.5, or double spacing on tables  
 Tables conform to Table Checklist (APA 7, p. 207)  
 Figures conform to Figure Checklist (APA 7, p. 232)  
 Figure types selected and constructed according to APA 7 (pp. 233-250)  
 For figures, include the best quality images possible  
 All table and figure notes should be double-spaced (APA 7.14, 7.28, p. 204, 229).  
 See APA 2.14, p. 41 for instructions on numbering tables and figures in appendices.

**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 7 manual

**Writing Style and Mechanics**

Abbreviations  
 Acronyms (check APA for when/when not to use initial caps for acronyms)  
 Capitalization  
 Grammar and usage  
 Italics  
 Numbers  
 Punctuation (including appropriate hyphenation)  
 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

Include a copy of your stamped consent/assent form or your IRB Letter of Approval to Conduct Research (if applicable).

Listing in text and placement at the end of text designated in alphabetical order

**Formats and Conventions for Theses and Dissertations**  
**McKay School of Education**  
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Information in these guidelines, which is drawn from BYU Graduate Studies, MSE guidelines, and from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 7th 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-spaced, each paragraph indented, active voice used, verbs emphasized, digits used for all numbers, present tense used for results/conclusions, past tense used for study procedures and outcomes, study findings emphasized.
  - 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 four or five 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 (title instructions APA 7, p. 201)
3. *List of Figures*, with figure titles listed exactly as they appear in the body of the work, title case (title instructions APA 7, p. 227)
4. *Description of Thesis/Dissertation Structure* (only for theses and dissertations with journal-ready article(s), not for traditional five-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.

### **Conventions** (APA 2.16-2.25, pp. 43-46)

1. Margins should be one inch all around. (APA 2.22, p. 45)
2. The entire text should be double-spaced. (APA 2.21, p. 45)
  - a. Double spacing includes blocked quotations, reference list(s), headings, footnotes, figure captions, and table notes.
  - 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. Strongly preferred use of Times New Roman typeface and 12-point font.
4. Indentation for paragraphs should be set at ½ inch. See page 45 of the APA manual for directions about footnotes.
5. Some journals require authors to identify their manuscript with a running head (see p. 37 and sample manuscript p. 50); for theses/dissertations in the McKay School of Education, 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. See the BYU Graduate Studies Preliminary Pages Template found in the [ETD Instruction Packet](#).
  - 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 [https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation\\_aids.html](https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation_aids.html) for Word templates.
- 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 2.27, pp. 47-48)

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

THESIS/DISSERTATION LEVEL HEADING (CENTERED, NO BOLD, ALL CAPS)

**Level 1: Centered, Bolded, Title Case**

**Level 2: Flush Left, Bolded, Title Case**

*Level 3: Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case*

**Level 4: Indented, Bolded, Title Case, Paragraph Heading, Followed by a Period.** Paragraph continues.

*Level 5: Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case, Paragraph Heading, Followed by a Period.* Paragraph continues.

2. When you break information from a section to another level of headings/subheadings, be sure there are at least two subsections. You can't break something down and come out with just one.
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), all caps, and with a double-space between it and the chapter title heading. (see templates on [https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation\\_aids.html](https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation_aids.html))

### Tables and Figures (APA 7.1-7.36, pp. 195-250)

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.
  - c. Tables correct for data displayed (see APA 7, pp. 209–8-209 for list and numbers of sample tables)
  - d. Figures consistent with lists on APA 7 (pp. 225–226) principles and components

2. Follow placement and format conventions of APA, as well as those required by your department.
  - a. Tables and figures placed as close to the in-text reference as possible, or according to department standards (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. Avoid splitting tables between two pages whenever possible.
  - 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, between 8 and 14 points, may be used in figures. (APA 2.19, p. 44)
  - e. Tables conform to Table Checklist (APA 7, p. 207)
  - f. Figures conform to Figure Checklist (APA 7, p. 232)
3. Be sure that numbers and titles are handled correctly.
  - a. The number of the table goes above the table, flush left, and is bolded. The title of the table goes next, double-spaced under the table number, flush left, italicized, and title case. Table titles should be double-spaced if more than one line. (see example Table 7.1 on page 200 of APA manual)
  - b. The number of the figure goes above the figure, flush left, and is bolded. The title of the figure goes next, double-spaced under the figure number, flush left, *italicized*, and title case. Figure titles should be double-spaced if more than one line. (see example Figure 7.1 on page 226 of APA manual)
  - c. Tables and figures in the text 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 7.10, 7.24, p. 220-227).
  - d. All Tables and Figures must be referenced in the text prior to appearance in the document.
  - e. All table and figure notes should be double-spaced. (APA 2.21, p. 45)
  - f. 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 7.1-7.36, pp. 195-234).

### **Seriation/Lists** (APA 6.49-6.52, pp. 189-191)

1. When a series occurs within a sentence or paragraph, set off series items with lowercase letters in parenthesis: (a), (b), (c), etc.
  - a. Separate items with a comma, unless there is already a comma within one of the items. If that is the case, use semi-colons (APA 6.49, p. 189)
  - 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 (see example on next page and APA 7, p. 156)).

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., itemized conclusions, steps in a procedure; APA, 6.51, p. 189), use Arabic numerals followed by a period. Do not use parenthesis with an indented series.
- b. If ordinal position is not important (e.g., phrases), use bullets.
- c. 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 appropriate punctuation.

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.

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

Positive behavior support is based on three levels of intervention:

1. the universal level, which is considered to benefit all students
2. the more focused level, targeted for students who are at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD)
3. the intense level, designed for students who are currently displaying EBD

Series is formally introduced with a complete statement and a colon.

Series items are fragments; they are neither capitalized nor 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.

Positive behavior support has shown positive results:

- increase in student on-task behavior,
- decrease in student disruptive behavior, and
- increase in positive teacher-student relationships.

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; you may want to consider expressing the items as complete sentences. If items in the series are short, direct, and very closely related, they may fit easily into a horizontal list or into a numbered or bulleted list of brief fragments.

## References

Handling of references, including citations and reference lists, is among the most conspicuous aspects of APA format. With current increases in the number and availability of sources now available for research, many changes have been made in in the seventh edition of the APA manual. Do not use the outdated sixth edition for the references in your thesis or dissertation. Keep APA 7 close to you as you draft your text to help you with the nitty-gritty specifics.

### Citations (APA 8.1-8.36, pp. 253-278)

1. Used citations conscientiously to indicate information, ideas, research etc. taken from sources but paraphrased or summarized.
2. Check carefully for accidental plagiarism or self-plagiarism (APA 7, pp. 254-257).
3. 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 8.12, pp. 163-264).
4. 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 the ampersand (&; APA 8.17, p. 266).
5. When citing a work with three or more authors, use the surname of the first author followed by et al. (two separate words, period only after al.) on all citations, unless distinguishing between two or more sources (APA 8.18, p. 267).
6. 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 8.16, p. 265).
7. "If the first authors of multiple references share the same surname but have different initials, include the first authors' initials in all in-text citations, even if the year of publication differs." (APA 8.20, p. 267)
8. Group authors with abbreviation introduce abbreviation with brackets—only with first citation (Brigham Young University [BYU], 2019), with abbreviation alone used consistently thereafter. (APA 8.21)
9. Levels of citations correctly set up (APA 7, p. 253)
10. Interviews set up according to type (APA 7, p. 259)
11. Personal communications set up correctly (APA 7 p. 260)
12. Multiple works within the same parentheses layered and set up correctly ( APA 7, pp. 263-264)
13. Pages, time, stamps, and slide numbers given for quoted information (APA 7, p. 264)

## Reference List (APA 9.1-10.16, pp. 281-352)

Citations in the text must match references in the reference list (APA 8.4, 9, p. 257, 281). Check this very carefully.

1. Perspectives. Thinking in terms of types and components is easier than trying to remember each possible detail separately. This should be read so that individual changes are more meaningful and can be accessed and remembered more easily.
  - a. Specific formats can be more easily remembered if the references are considered in terms of groups, broken down by categories and types.
    - Textual works refer to “periodicals, books and reference works, edited book chapters and reference work entries, and dissertations and theses” (APA 7, p. 281, also 9.3).
    - Data sets, software and tests comprise another group.
    - Online media include websites, webpages, and social media (9.2).
    - Audiovisual media involve a wide range of media now more easily available than previously.
  - b. A reference list entry includes four components in the following sequence (APA 7, p. 283). Given the versatility of today’s sources, one or more of these components might not be available.
    - Who or what team, group, agency, department, etc. is responsible (i.e., author)?
    - When was this published, recorded, streamed, uploaded, or otherwise issued (i.e. date)?
    - What is it called? (title)
    - Where can the work be found? (source)
  - c. APA 7 (p. 283, Figure 9.1) shows where the components can be found on the first page of a journal article and where they go on the corresponding reference entry.
  - d. APA 7 (page 284, Table 9.1) shows what to do about missing information (e.g., title, date, publication information) on an in-text citation or reference list item.
2. Reference list checked carefully with text; nothing left off either and all details consistent
3. Format items checked carefully
  - a. double spacing both within and between items
  - b. hanging indent on all items (adapt margins, don’t use space bar)
  - c. author(s)’ surname(s) followed by comma, and initials followed by periods and single spaces
  - d. titles with only first word and first word following colon-subtitle capitalized
  - e. single spaced periods between major components of an entry (author[s], date, title, source); commas within parts of components (e.g., separating multiple authors, separating journal name, from volume/issue, and pages, separating editor[s] from title of edited book)
  - f. changes for missing information supplied as given in APA 7 (author, p. 289; date, 291; title, p. 292; source (including pages), p. 300)

## Helpful Reference Specifics

1. The reference list must be double-spaced with hanging indentation- adapt margins, don't use the space bar (approximately 5-7 spaces; APA 9.43, p. 330).
2. Be sure that authors are listed correctly.
  - a. Include the author(s)' surname(s) followed by a comma, and the first and middle (if any) initials followed by periods and single spaces; 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 21 or more; for works with 21 or more, list the first 19, after the comma use ellipsis [ . . . ], then give the last author (APA 9.8, pp. 286-287).
  - 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 (see APA 9.44-9.48, pp. 304-306 for more information).
  - d. "Author" position in reference extended to those with "primary roles" in a work, including "the director of a film, the principal investigator of a grant, a podcast host, and so on" (APA 7, p. 285)
    - chart for audiovisual media (APA 7 p. 341)
    - APA 7 page 286 for ways to infer an author not listed
    - page 287 for authors with just one name or a username, or an unusual capitalization
    - pages 287-288 for roles (e.g., editor, producer, director etc.)
    - page 288 for special challenges with group authors
3. Titles for books, periodicals, and periodical 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 10.1, pp. 316-321). Do not italicize or put in quotation marks.
  - c. The titles of journals are italicized and capitalized using title case (APA 10.1, p. 316-321).
4. Formatting is strict and specific for publication information.
  - a. The abbreviations *Vol.* and *No.* are not used in identifying periodicals. The volume number should be italicized, and the issue number should be in parentheses, followed by a comma and the page numbers. The issue number, parentheses, comma, and page number should not be italicized. Include the issue number for all periodicals that have one. (APA 9.25, p. 294).
  - b. Page numbers of periodical articles, which must be included, should not be preceded by "p" or "pp" (APA 9.25, p. 294).
  - c. For whole books, edited book chapters, reports, computer software and mobile apps, and data sets, provided the publisher's name. Do not include the publisher's location. (APA 9.29, pp. 295-296)

- “Do not abbreviate the publisher name unless it is shown in abbreviated form on the work.” (APA 9.29, p. 296)
  - Include the doi or url, as applicable. No URL or further retrieval information if there is a doi.
  - Every doi expressed as follows: <https://doi.org/1084239> no period afterward (APA 7, pp. 299-300). Do not use a period after the url on the reference list. (It might be misinterpreted as part of the url)
  - “Do not include designation of business structure (e.g., Inc., Ltd., LLC) in the publisher name.” (APA 9.29, p. 296)
5. Date stated is copyright date for books; copyright date of cited content, not site, for web reference; and year, month and when relevant day for things published more often (e.g., newspapers, blog posts).
    - a. ca. (circa) for approximate date (precise date not known; p. 290)
    - b. retrieval date only for websites very likely to change often
    - c. APA 7 p. 290 for other date challenges
  6. 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 10.1, p. 317).

McCauley, S. M., & Christiansen, M. H. (2019). Language learning as language use: A cross-linguistic model of child language development. *Psychological Review*, 126 (1), 1-51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000126>

- 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 (\*Very common errors—check manual carefully)

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*. (APA, pp. 182-187)
  - b. Latin abbreviations such as “e.g.,” “i.e.,” and “cf.” should be used only in parentheses and are always followed by a comma (except “cf.” and “vs.”). Outside parentheses, the English equivalent should be used: (e.g., a Tier 2 intervention) = for example, a Tier 2 intervention (APA 6.29, p.176).
  - c. Abbreviating group authors: When using the abbreviation for the first time, write the words out completely and follow this with the abbreviation in parentheses. Afterward, use the abbreviation alone (don’t toggle back and forth). If two different groups happen to use the same abbreviation, spell out the abbreviation each time. In the reference list, do not include the abbreviation- spell out the full name of the organization. (APA 8.21, p. 268)
  - d. Other guides on abbreviation (APA 6.24-6.45, pp. 172-188)
2. Capitalization\* (APA 6.13-6.21, pp. 165-169)
  - 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. When within a title or heading, a complete statement (which could stand alone as a sentence) follows a colon, capitalize it (APA 7, 6.17, p. 167).
  - d. Capitalize names of racial or ethnic groups (APA 7, 6.14, p. 165, see also APA 7, 5.7)
3. Italics (APA 7, 6.22-6.23, pp. 170-172)
  - 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) but not article titles or titles of book series (e.g., the Harry Potter series).
  - c. Italicize words that anchor a scale [1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*)].
4. Numbers\* (APA 7, 6.32-6.39, pp. 178-181)
  - a. Write numbers below 10 as words, unless they represent part of a statistical or mathematical structure, precise numbers such as dates, measurements, ages, or participants in a study (see exceptions in APA 7, pp. 178-181). Write numbers 10 or above as numerals unless they begin a sentence (avoid this).

- b. Use numerals in numbers like 6 million.
- c. Use a comma in numbers like 2,396.
- d. Use numerals to “represent statistical or mathematical functions, fractional or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, and percentiles and quartiles”. (APA 7, 6.32, p. 178)
- e. Use the percent symbol (%) only if it follows a numeral. If no number is involved, use the term percentage.

### **Grammar\* (APA7, Chapter 4)**

#### 1. Verbs

- a. Use past tense for something that happened in the past—research being cited or discussed, a condition from the past, your own study details (what you did or learned), event or happening from past; present perfect for something that began in the past and continued; present for something that remains true (chart in APA 7, 4.12, pp. 117-118).
- b. Use active voice (subject acting or being described) as much as possible; avoid too much passive (subject acted upon) as it is wordy and often imprecise (APA 7, p. 118).
- c. Verbs must agree with their subjects (singular or plural), regardless of what comes between them (APA 7, p. 119). Data and media are plural nouns. (The data are. . .).

#### 2. Pronouns (APA 7, p. 120)

- a. Pronouns must agree in number and in gender with the nouns they replace (APA 4.16-4.18, pp. 120-121). Remember that the words each and every are singular; they can often be replaced with all, which is plural.
- b. APA 7 allows use of third person plural pronouns (they, their, them) instead of singular (he, she, his, hers, him her) to avoid gender specificity when referring to a singular antecedent.
- c. Do not use the editorial “we” (e.g., we need to be aware of...). (APA 7, 4.17, p. 120)
- d. “Writers should always use the singular “they” to refer to a person who uses “they” as their pronoun. Also use “they” as a generic third-person singular pronoun to refer to a person whose gender is unknown or irrelevant to the context of the usage.” (APA7, p. 120). See APA 4.18, pp. 120-121 for more guidance.
- e. “Who” is for persons; “which” and “that” are for things.

### **Punctuation\* (APA 7, 6.1-6.10, pp. 153-161)**

In the manual these are explained and exemplified clearly. If you are uncertain about these uses, be sure to review this section.

- 1. Placement and spacing of punctuation involve specific conventions. The purpose of punctuation is to clarify the relationship of sentence elements; breathing has nothing to do with it unless something is going to be sung.

- a. Commas must be used to separate items of a series consisting of three or more (including before “and” and “or” concluding a series). Commas also connect independent ideas joined by “and,” “but,” “for,” “or,” “so” etc.; set off a long or parenthetical introductory sentence item; and set off a parenthetical item within a sentence. Commas should not be used when they separate subject from verb, verb from object (or complement), or preposition from object. (APA 6.3, p. 155).
  - b. Semicolons separate independent statements when there is no “and,” “but,” etc.; they also separate series items that have commas within them. Never use a semicolon between a dependent and independent statement.
  - c. An emdash (—), formerly and sometimes still referred to as “a dash,” is used to separate off complex explanations or modifiers as well as interrupters requiring emphasis. An endash (–) separates equivalent relationships, such as range of pages (pp. 214–220) or dates (2016–2020). Do not space before or after either (APA 7, p. 147). Do space before and after minus sign—the spacing sets it apart as a minus sign.
  - d. In American English texts, double quotation marks are used for direct quotations (APA under 40 words), and single quotation marks indicate a quotation within a quotation. 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.
  - e. APA 7 has made some changes in spacing with periods. Space once after all periods, including those that end sentences, those that follow name or pseudonym initials, those separating elements in reference list entries, and those used before page numbers (e.g., p. 21). Also, one space should be used after commas and semicolons. (APA 7, 6.1, p. 154)
  - f. APA 7 spaces only once after colons. Remember, a colon comes only after a complete statement (APA 7, p. 156).
  - g. 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).
    - 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).
  - h. “to enclose back-to-back parenthetical information; instead, place the information in on set of parentheses, separated with a semicolon.” (APA 7, 6.8, p. 160)
2. Distinguish between various formats for handling quotations (APA 8.23-8.36, pp. 269-278).
    - 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 8.25, pp. 270-271).
    - b. Check text carefully for accidental plagiarism or self-plagiarism (APA 7, pp. 254–257), as these are serious issues of academic ethics and morality; clearly identify all

- sources and indicate even two significant words in sequence taken from a source by using quotation marks.
- c. 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 8.33, p. 277)
  - d. Quotations under 40 words set up in the paragraph with quotation marks; quotations of 40 words or more blocked with left-margin paragraph indentation
    - Square brackets used to add information to quotation (e.g., clarify pronoun use or important information not in section quoted)
    - First letter of first word or final punctuation mark changed where necessary to fit context (no indication required; APA 7, p.p. 274-275)
  - e. 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).
  - f. Following a block quotation, place the citation after the closing period. (APA 8.27, pp. 272-273)
  - g. To “indicate you have omitted words within 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 8.31, p. 275)
3. Avoid common misuses of hyphens (APA 7, 6.12, pp. 162-164—very helpful charts on 163-164).
- a. A hyphen is used for a compound modifier that precedes the term it modifies—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. (APA Table 6.1, p. 163)
  - b. Some words, such as the *self-* words (self-concept, self-conscious, etc.), always use a hyphen regardless of function (APA Table 6.3, p. 164).
  - c. If a compound adjective cannot be misread or if its meaning is *established* (appears in the dictionary and is widely known), follow the dictionary’s usage of the hyphen (APA 6.12, p. 162).
  - 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 6.12, p. 163).
  - 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 Table 6.2, p. 164).
  - f. Do not confuse hyphen(-), emdash(—), and endash (–) (APA 6.6, p. 157). These are also explained under Punctuation in 1c above.
    - 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 endash (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”).

## Matters of Style

1. Use bias-free language (APA 5.1-5.10, pp. 131-149).
  - a. Be specific in designation and avoid labels (APA 7, pp. 131-134).
  - b. Be particularly careful with these common forms of bias:
    - Age (APA 7, p. 135)
    - Disability (APA, pp. 136-137)
    - Gender (APA 7, pp. 138-141)
    - Racial/ethnic identity (APA 7, pp. 142-145)
    - Sexual orientation (APA 7, pp. 145-147)
    - Socioeconomic status (APA 7, pp. 147-148)
    - Intersectionality (APA, pp. 148-149)
2. APA 7 does not specify sentence or paragraph length.
  - a. A paragraph will occasionally (but not often) be one sentence and should not exceed a double spaced page (APA 7, p. 115).
  - b. Short sentences or paragraphs are more emphatic (if not overused); longer ones emphasize relationships (if well-structured for clarity).
  - c. Avoid redundancy or other forms of wordiness. A sentence or paragraph is wordy not if it has a lot of words, but if it has a lot of unnecessary words. (APA 7, pp. 114-115).
  - d. Achieve emphasis correctly.
    - Do not use bold type for emphasis (use only for headings/subheadings or particular statistical and mathematical symbols (as listed on APA 7, p. 187).
    - Occasionally use italics for emphasis, particularly within a quotation (acknowledged as your own).
    - Achieve emphasis by effective choice of language and purposeful sentence and paragraph structure.
3. Attend to standards and clarity with regard to statistical and mathematical materials (APA 6.40-6.48, pp. 181-189).
4. 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 and graduate coordinator, and it has gone through the Dean’s Office Review and received the Associate Dean’s approval, you will upload the pdf to the [Graduate Progress 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 [ETD Instruction Packet](#) for details. You can also see the [Graduate Progress website](#) for further ETD instructions.

## Available Support

In addition to the seventh 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](#))
3. McKay School of Education's book *APA for Novices A Struggling Student's Guide to Theses, Dissertations, and Advanced Course Papers* written by Sharon Black, available at [https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation\\_aids.html](https://education.byu.edu/research/dissertation_aids.html)
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](#) and [Emily Darowski \(Counseling Psychology & School Psychology librarian\)](#).
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