Introduction:

The format for writing papers in the division of nursing is the American Psychological Association (APA) style. APA is a method of written communication that is acceptable and familiar to the many persons who will read your professional papers. The purpose of this supplementary outline is to provide you the basic guidelines of using APA format in writing papers. This handout is designed to answer questions that many students have in using the APA format. The APA manual is a required text, so please refer to the text for any alterations or needed answers that may not be included in this handout.

Be sure and clarify what your instructor expects you to do. If she states, APA format, then follow the rules as closely as possible. Remember that in the classroom setting, there can always be exceptions. For example; in the APA format, you should not insert page numbers unless you directly quote another author’s work. However, with some assignments it may be appropriate to insert specific page citations in the text. Check before-hand with the instructor that will be grading your paper to avoid losing valuable points.

Some of the common errors that occur are: 1) using Bold text; (don't use it), 2) Using one sentence as a paragraph, 3) When listing references; don't feel that you have to capitalize everything; follow APA format, 4) never single space; always double space, 5) Follow directions; Check all papers prior to handing in to your instructor to be sure you have followed the criteria. If the instructions are confusing, please feel free to ask for clarification.

Basic Format of the Report

- **Title Page:**

  The title of a report should give the reader an idea of what the report is about. The best way to ensure this is by naming both the independent and dependent variables of the study in the title, and stating the relationship between them. In addition, the participants used in the study should be a part of the title. That is, a very brief (perhaps two words) reference to what general group the research is considering. The title should contain enough information so that it can stand on its own. The recommended length for a title is 10 to 12 words. See Figure 5.1 (p. 306) of the manual for a sample Title Page. Include a title page with each report.

- **Abstract:**

  An abstract is a summary of the report. It should be as brief as possible. The APA places a 120 words limit on the length of the abstract. The abstract should be a concise synopsis of the experiment. It should be written so that it can stand alone (without reference to other parts of the paper, for example). It should contain a statement of the problem under investigation, the method used to
investigate the research question, the participants, the results, and conclusions. Only include material that is given in the main body of the paper. You will probably find it easier to write the abstract after the report is written. The abstract appears on a separate page, directly following the title page.

- **Margins:**
  
The top, bottom, left and right margins on each page must be uniform: at least one inch (2.54 cm).

- **Spacing:**
  
The report is double spaced; title, quotes, references and all parts of the table.

- **Justification:**
  
  Use the flush-left style and do not use the hyphenation function to break words at the ends of lines.

- **Indentation:**
  
  The first line of every paragraph is indented. Exceptions to this rule are: (1) the abstract, (2) block quotations, (3) titles and headings, (4) table titles and notes, and (5) figure captions.

- **Numbering of pages:**
  
  Pages are numbered, beginning with the title page (Page 1) in the upper right hand corner.
  
The abstract is page 2.
  
The introduction begins on page 3.

- **Widows/Orphans:**
  
  Prevent widows and orphan. (This is a single sentence at the bottom or top of the page.)

- **Paragraph:**
  
  Avoid using one sentence as a paragraph.

- **Grammar and punctuation:**
  
  Avoid personal pronouns (he, she, etc.). Use third person instead. Make sure subject and verb agrees. Use past tense when writing research Chapter 2 or a critique.

- **Headings:**
  
  The title of the paper or chapter is centered in upper and lower case letters.

- **Abbreviations:**
  
  Abbreviations are acceptable and useful in a written report especially for medical terminology and other long technical terms. In general, use an abbreviation only (1) if it is conventional and if the reader is more familiar with the abbreviation than with the complete form or (2) if considerable space can be saved and unnecessary repetition avoided. A general guideline to follow is; if the word is used more
than 3 times, it should be abbreviated.

To use abbreviations in your written report, first spell the word completely, and abbreviate in parentheses. Thereafter, in the report you may abbreviate. You should not switch between abbreviating and spelling the word because it is confusing for the reader. Instead be consistent.

EXAMPLE: Initial introduction of term:

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a collection of symptoms that are usually cyclic in nature and occur at the same time every month.

THEREAFTER, abbreviate:

Until a decade ago, PMS was considered a catchall term for the symptoms of discomfort.

APA Reference Format

• Corporate/institutional author:

• Reference for a book, one author:

• Reference for a book, more than one author:

• Reference for an edited book:

• Reference for a journal article without an issue number:

• Reference for a journal article with an issue number:

• Reference for a journal article, same author, multiple publications in a single year:

- **Reference for an ERIC Document:**


- **Newspaper reference, no author cited:**


- **Report reference:**


- **Videodisc or videotape:**


- **Videodisc or videotape, corporate author:**


- **Computer Software:**


- **Nonperiodical internet document:**


- **Article in an Internet-only journal:**


- **Personal communication:**

Indicate only in the text of the paper. (See Referencing in the Text: Personal communication)
REFERENCING IN THE TEXT

To avoid a cumbersome report, list only the essentials (last name of the author, and year of publication).

- **If the article or other reference source has one author, document as follows:**
  Dalton (1964) found that 45% of the 269 employees who were absent from work were either premenstrual or menstruation.

- **When the reference has two authors, list the last names of both authors. At the beginning of a sentence, use "and" to separate the authors’ names.**
  Lee and Tittenhouse (1993) described physical health, psychological well-being, role satisfaction, and social support reported by employed women with PMS as compared to employed women without PMS.

- **To reference at the end of a sentence, use an ampersand (&) to separate the authors’ names.**
  The indicators of psychological well-being were significantly lower for the group of women reporting perimenstrual symptoms as compared to the group of asymptomatic women (Lee & Rittenhouse, 1992).

- **To reference a personal communication within the text, include the first initial, last name, and the complete date of the interview or gathering of information.**
  Elementary schools have been provided with videos on good touch and bad touch. Each district school in the service area has copies of each of these videos (K. Wallace, personal communication, February 7, 1997).
  According to K. Wallace (personal communication, February 7, 1997), children who are residents of the shelter go to school or a nursery during the day unless contraindicated.
APA Format Checklist (with Reference Section and page #)

(Adapted and changed from “A Quick Guide To The 5th Edition Of The APA Publication Style” by G. William Hill, IV and Stephen F. Davis)

- Did you use double-spacing throughout the entire paper? (Section 5.03, p. 286)
- Did you start the pagination of your paper with a title page? (Section 5.05, p. 287)
- Have you carefully checked your paper for grammatical errors and misspelling? (use spell check, Section 5.23, p. 302) (Sections 2.05-2.12, pp. 40-66)
- Did you avoid biases (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, racial and ethical identity, disabilities, age) language? (Sections 2.13-2.17, pp. 66-76)
- Did you clearly explain theories, studies, or major points in your paper for your reader? Don't assume your reader knows everything that you have read and are writing about. (Section 1.08, pp. 15-17)
- Does your paper have a clear, logical progression? Did you make careful use of transitions within paragraphs, between paragraphs and sections of the paper? (Section 2.01-2.05, pp. 32-41)
- Do you have a clear thesis statement at the beginning of the paper? At the end of the Introduction? (Section 1.08, p. 17)
- Do you provide a summary and conclusions section at the end of the paper? Do you pull ideas together in your conclusion? (Section 1.11, pp. 26-27)
- Did you avoid starting a sentence with a number? If so, did you use a word, not the numeral, for the number? (Section 3.43, pp. 125-127)
- Did you use correct punctuation throughout your paper? (Sections 3.01-3.09, pp. 78-88)
- Did you start the following sections of your paper on separate pages: title page, abstract (Section 5.16, p. 298), reference list (Section 5.18, p. 299)?
- Is your abstract formatted correctly? Does your abstract concisely summarize your paper (no more than 120 words)? (Sections 1.07, 5.16; pp. 12-15, 298)
- Are all your margins on ALL sides of the page at least 1 inch? Is the right hand margin left ragged? (Section 5.04, pp. 286-287)
- Did you correctly use abbreviations where appropriate and explain any unusual abbreviations? (Section 3.20-3.29, pp. 103-111)
- Did you correctly use numerals/digits versus words for numbers in the text? Some requirements for when to use either are given below. Refer to the publication manual for a more complete discussion of numerals versus words for numbers. (Sections 3.42-3.49, pp. 122-130)
a. Use numerals for numbers greater than or equal to 10 unless the number begins a sentence.

b. Use words for numbers less than 10 unless they:
   1. are compared with a number greater than 10 in the same paragraph.
   2. precede a unit of measurement
   3. refer to one of the following: population or sample size, any measurement of time, amounts of money, or points along a scale.
   4. indicate a position in a sequence (e.g., Experiment 2).
   5. represent statistical or mathematical results (e.g., percentages, proportions, ratios, statistical test results).

c. Use all numerals in the abstract.

• Did you use metric units of measurements? (Section 3.50-3.52, pp. 130-136)

• Did you use capitalization correctly? Some requirements for capitalization are given below. Refer to the publication manual for a more complete discussion of capitalization. (Sections 3.12-3.18, pp. 94-100)

a. Capitalize nouns followed by a number or letter indicating a place in a series.

b. Capitalize book titles, test titles, and brand names referred to in the text of the paper.

• Did you use the correct format for the quotations in your paper? Quotations of less than 40 words are incorporated within a paragraph and set off by double quotation marks. Quotations of more than 40 words require that each line of the entire quotation be indented about ½ in. (1.3 cm of five spaces) from the left margin only, but do not require quotation marks. (Section 3.34-3.41, 5.13; pp. 117-122, 292-293)
Reference Citations in the Text of the Paper

- Are all published references cited in the text of the paper also listed in your reference section? (Section 4.01, p. 215)

- Did you only use the surnames of authors in references cited in the text? See section 3.98, p. 211 for citations of authors with the same surname.

- Did you list ALL authors of a reference the first time you used the reference in the text? Note: if there are more than six authors, you should use the first author's surname followed by the et al. for the first citation. (Section 3.94-3.95, pp. 207-209)

- Did you use the surname of the author followed by et al. for the second and subsequent references to a citation with three or more authors? (Section 3.95, pp. 208-209)

- Did you include authors' initials when a reference list includes two or more primary authors with the same surname? (Section 3.98, p. 211)

- If referring to a multiple author reference as part of a sentence in the text, did you use "and" between the last two author's names? (Section 3.95, p. 209)

- If referring to a multiple author reference in parentheses within a sentence in the text, did you use an ampersand (&) between the last two author's names? (Section 3.95, p. 209)

- When a reference is cited as a part of a sentence within the sentence, did you omit the year for all but the first citation of the same reference in the same paragraph? (Section 3.94, p. 208)

- Were you careful to reference ideas, theories, etc. that were not our own in the text? (Section 1.13, p. 28)

- When using a quotation (verbatim information from one of your references), did you include the page number(s) in parentheses at the end of the quote and the reference for the quote? (Section 3.34, pp. 117-118)

- Did you italicize any book titles used in the text? (Section 3.97, p. 211)

- Did you alphabetize the references cited within parentheses in the text by the first author's surname? (Section 3.99, p. 212)

- Did you use a lower case letter with the date to differentiate between references by the same author(s) in the same year in the text (e.g., 1999a, 1999b)? (Section 3.99, p. 212)
Reference List

- Are all references listed on your reference list cited in the text of the paper? (Section 4.01, p. 215)
- Did you list ALL authors for each reference in the reference list? (Section 4.02, p. 216)
- Did you list all references in the correct order? The following conventions should be followed in the ordering references: (Section 4.04, pp. 219-222)
  a. references should be alphabetized by the first author's name,
  b. articles with a single author should precede multiple authorship articles with the same author as the first author,
  c. if multiple author articles have the same first author, order alphabetically by the second author,
  d. articles with the same author(s) but different dates of publication are ordered from oldest to the most recent date,
  e. articles with the same author(s) and date of publication are ordered alphabetically by the first word of the title and include a lower case letter after the date to indicate their position in the date sequencing.
- Did you omit the issue number for a journal reference if the journal is continuously paginated throughout a volume? (Section 4.11, pp. 227-228)
- Did you capitalize only the first word or the first word after a colon of a book title or article title? (Section 4.10, pp. 226-227)
- Did you capitalize ALL major words of a journal title? (Section 4.11, pp. 227-228)
- Did you italicize the following in all references: journal title, book title, volume number? (Section 4.10-4.11, pp. 226-227)
- Did you list the article Title, book title and journal title EXACTLY AS ORIGINALLY PRINTED? That is, did not abbreviate something that was not originally abbreviated. (Section 4.02, p. 216)
- Did you use an ampersand, not the word "and", between the last two authors' names? (Section 4.08, p. 224)
- Did you put a comma after the last author's initials before the ampersand in a multiple author reference (i.e., two or more authors)? (Section 4.08, p. 223)
- Did you end each element (e.g., authors, date, book or article title, publication information) by a period? Did you put one space after the end of each element of a reference? (Sections 4.04-4.15, 5.11; pp. 219-231, 290-291)
- Did you put only one space after a colon used within a reference? (Section 5.11, pp. 290-291)
- Did you provide the city where a publisher of a book is located? Did you provide the two-letter post office abbreviation of the state, if the city and state relationship is not well known? (Sections 4.03, 4.14; pp. 216-219, 230-231)

- Did you put a space between the initials of an author's name? (Section 4.07-4.08, pp. 223-225)

- Did you include the page numbers for chapters or articles from an edited book? (Section 4.13, pp. 229-230)

- Did you flush the first line of each reference with the left margin and indent the second and subsequent lines (hanging indent format)? (Section 5.18, p. 299)