

APA WRITING CONVENTIONS TO USE

Suggestions from the Associate Editor of JISTE (Level 1 heading)

In this monograph I have explained some of the main issues I have seen with papers that have been submitted to be published in *JISTE*. It is by no means an exhaustive list. Please edit your paper prior to submission using these suggestions. I encourage those who wish to publish in the journal to use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

References and Citations (Level 2 heading)

References. (Level 3 heading) A reference list is placed at the end of the article. It should include every article/chapter/book that is cited in the body of the paper. Citations are placed in the body of the paper when someone else's writing/work is being used to make the point or support the concepts in the current paper.

Journal references are very specific. Here is an example:

Emerson, T. L. N., English, L. K., & McGoldrick, K. (2015). Evaluating the cooperative component in cooperative learning: A quasi-experimental study. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 46(1), 1–13. doi: 10.1080/00220485.2014.978923

Book chapter references are a bit different but are specific.

Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (2015). Dispositions: Critical pathways for deeper learning. In J. A. Bellanca (Ed.), *Deeper learning: Beyond 21st century skills* (pp. 55–82). Bloomington, IN, USA: Solution Tree.

Noteworthy items in the reference:

- Last (family) names are in order of who was first, second, and third author (or more authors). First (given) names become initials with a space between. Notice the commas and the & separating the names.
- The year of the publication is next in parentheses following by a period.
- The title of the article is next. Notice that only the first word and the first word after the colon is capitalized. If any proper nouns were in the titles, they would be capitalized.
- The journal title and its volume number are italicized and separated by a comma. The issue number is right next to the volume number, but it is in regular case in parentheses.
- The page numbers are separated with an “en dash” not a hyphen. You can find an en dash through the “Symbol” icon on the “Insert” tab, or you can create one by typing the first number adding a space, typing a hyphen, then a space, and the final number. When you then hit the space key after the last number, Word automatically creates an en dash. You just need to then go back and delete the extra spacing. It is easiest to create the en dash once, then do a copy and paste for the rest of the list.
- You must supply the doi (digital object identifier) if it is available. Type doi: and add a space after the colon. Word will automatically capitalize the D; make sure it is a “d”.
- When a book has different authors for individual chapters, please follow the sample above. The author of the chapter becomes the author listed first for both the reference

and the citation. The editors' names must be in the reference, but they are not in the citation.

- If the book was written by one author or a group of authors, do not cite individual chapters.
- Use a hanging indent on the reference list. Do not just tab over. The hanging indent tool can be found on the "Paragraph" tool in Word.

In-text citations. (Level 3 heading) To avoid being accused of plagiarism, please cite all information gained from other articles (even your own if you have published an article that you are using in a current article). APA uses in-text citations using authors' last names and the date. Usually these follow the information given in the body of the paper in parentheses (Saunders, 2019). [I am pretending that I authored a paper that said this information as an example.] Another way is as follows: According to Saunders (2019), citing the works used in a paper is vital.

If you are using a direct quote (or have copied and pasted) anything from another source, you must put the information in quotation marks and supply the page number, or if no page numbers are available, then use the paragraph number (you will need to count them). "In this computer era it is so easy to copy and paste. Please know that it is plagiarism if proper citations are not included" (Saunders, 2019, p. 23). [Again, I am making up this citation as an example. No such article exists.]

If you would like to use a figure or table from another source, you must have written permission from that publisher to do so. Without that permission, JISTE will not publish your article with that figure. Using the figure and changing the color or font of the words is not enough to be deemed publishable.

Writing Conventions (Level 1 heading)

Pronouns (Level 2 heading)

1. The use of "you" is never appropriate in academic writing. Please avoid it. When you is used, it sounds as if the writer is telling the reader what to do. (It sort of jumps off the page and slaps me as I am reading it.)
2. When summarizing articles, please use third person (he, she, they, them, etc.); however, with that said, it is better to use the plural form of the pronoun, which makes it important to use the plural form of the people noun that precedes it. Examples below:
 - a. The **teacher** should teach concepts **he or she** thinks are most important. (Incorrect – singular noun with both genders listed is tedious. Plus, it does not consider those who do not want to be gendered.)
 - b. The **teacher** should teach the concepts **they** think are most important. (Even more incorrect – singular noun with a plural pronoun. In the near future, APA may allow this version because of the "gender neutral" debate.)
 - c. **Teachers** should teach concepts **they** think are most important. (Correct version – the easiest way to remedy the problem is to make sure that both the noun and the pronoun are in plural form. Easy!)

Verb Tense (Level 2 heading)

1. When referring to *articles*, use past tense verbs because the article was written in the past.
2. Verbs should use active rather than passive voice.

Other Writing Conventions (Level 2 heading)

Although the APA manual has pages of very specific writing conventions, I will list a few mistakes that are made on a regular basis.

1. **Oxford comma** – an Oxford comma is a comma that comes before the conjunction (and, or, but) when there is a series of three or more items. (Example: The teacher told the students to bring their notebooks, textbooks, and writing utensil. The comma in blue is the Oxford comma.)
2. APA does not use **contractions**. (Don't, doesn't, I'm, etc. are all incorrect.)
 - a. It's is the contraction for the two words – it is, and is therefore, not allowed in APA.
 - b. "Its" is the possessive form, such as: The dog lost its collar. If you put an apostrophe in the word, the sentence would read – The dog lost *it is* collar, which of course, does not make sense.
3. APA uses letters to denote a list in a paragraph, not numbers. Also, the letters should have full parentheses — (a) (b) etc.
4. The required font in APA is Times New Roman, 12 pt., which is what was used for this paper.
5. Headings were created for this document, and each level was named for that heading in red. Please use these headings for any articles submitted (e.g., Introduction, Purpose, Method, Results/Findings, and Discussion should be a level 1 heading). It is centered on the page, in bold, and uses upper- and lower-case letters. The title of the article should be in all caps.

Tables and Figures (Level 1 heading)

Tables (Level 2 heading)

Tables should be concise and contain information that is best displayed in table form, generally, numeric or statistical data. The table number should be above the table in regular font with the title of the table below the number and in italics. Each individual piece of data should be in its own cell within the table; however, most of the lines should be deleted. (If you are unsure how to do this step, please submit the tables with all the cells with the lines. If I know where the data should be in the table, I can delete the unnecessary lines.) Table 1 shows the lines, and Table 2 shows the correct format.

Table 1

Number of Participants by Gender and Grade Level

	7	8	9	10	11	12
Female	37	57	39	36	54	38
Male	42	49	40	51	48	43
Undisclosed	3	2	1	3	2	4

Table 2
Number of Participants by Gender and Grade Level

	7	8	9	10	11	12
Female	37	57	39	36	54	38
Male	42	49	40	51	48	43
Undisclosed	3	2	1	3	2	4

Note. If the data need more explanation or if symbols or abbreviations need to be explained, they can be listed after the table in the *note*.

Figures (Level 2 heading)

Figures show data in flow charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, etc. The headings go below the figure. Figures are numbered, but instead of having a heading, the figure is described. The word *Figure* is italicized and followed by a period. The description is in sentence form. The flow chart below shows how a figure should be designed and labeled. (One hint to keep the chart stable within the paper is to put it in a textbox. Here I have a textbox surrounding the chart, but I made it invisible on the page.)

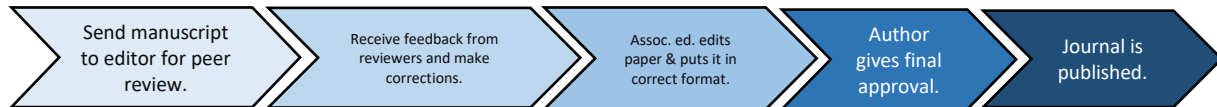


Figure 1. This flowchart shows the basic steps of publishing a paper in *JISTE*.

References (Level 1 heading)

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.