

Tips on Using APA Headings

APA uses headings so that the reader can quickly determine the organization of your paper. There are five levels of headings, but unless you are writing a lengthy literature review, monograph, or study of multiple experiments, using more than three levels is probably unnecessary. **The reverse side of this document shows simplified guidelines for determining which level to use when.**

Where to Begin:

- Because the numbering system in the *APA Publication Manual's* (*PM*) section on headings can be confusing, the only number you should worry about is **how many** headings your paper requires, not whether you should use "Heading One" or "Heading Three."
- Determine how many levels of headings you will need by locating the place in your paper that divides into the most levels.
- After you have determined the number of heading levels required, format your paper according to the guidelines on the reverse side of the handout.
- Note:** Each heading must have a counterpart at the same hierarchical level if subordinated under another heading.

Don't . . .

- Include a heading labeled *Introduction* (or any other heading before the introduction¹) as it would be redundant (following APA style, readers will expect an introduction to come on the third page of your paper, and remember that only the Abstract and Reference sections and headings begin on a new page of their own).
- Number or letter the headings.

If the material on both sides of this handout does not answer all your questions on APA headings, turn to the *PM*, section 5.10 (pp. 289-290): These pages are useful and are less confusing than the longer and more detailed explanation of headings in section 3.31-3.32 of the *PM*.



Created by The University of Delaware Writing Center, Alison Klaum and Dee Baer, , November 2005. Adapted from The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) Web Site available at:
<<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/apa/parts/headings.html>

¹ Within the introduction paragraph(s), however, you can use headings (See 3.31; p.113 in *PM*).

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(← Indicates the heading most recently added)

One Level:

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading ←

Two Levels

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading ←

Three Levels:

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Italicized paragraph heading with only the first line indented, only the first word capitalized, and ending with a period. ←

Four Levels (Note the placement of this new heading):

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Centered Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading ←

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Italicized paragraph heading with only the first line indented, only the first word capitalized, and ending with a period.

Five Levels (Note the placement of the new heading):

CENTERED UPPERCASE HEADING ←

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Centered Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Italicized paragraph heading with only the first line indented, only the first word capitalized, and ending with a period.
