



THE BASIC FEATURES OF RESEARCH STYLES

An Introduction to Research Documentation and Style by Dr. Abel Scribe PhD - Early Fall 2009

A research paper is part of a conversation, part of a long-running dialogue with like-minded people who share your interests. It is linked to that conversation by invoking the thoughts, ideas, and discoveries of others through the process of documentation, the use of citations and references to their work. A paper becomes a *research paper* by virtue of this process of documentation. It is essential to get your references right.

A second objective of research writing is clear concise communication. There are ambiguities in language, and practices may differ even among communities that share the same language. For example, if you are told it is 22,5 outside do you bring a coat or wear shorts? *Le Système International d'Unités (SI)* or International System of Units is a style guide for numbers. It would have you write the temperature 22.5 °C. It is customary for Europeans to use a comma where American use a decimal point, but the SI follows American practice. It is also essential to identify the units of measure. A temperature of 22.5 °C (degrees centigrade) is 72.5 °F (degrees Fahrenheit). A research style has rules for reducing these uncertainties in communication.

Put your thoughts on paper? Most research styles have definite thoughts about how a research paper should look. They have preferences for the width of margins, how pages are numbered and text lines are spaced, even how and where tables and figures are presented. Most styles have a unique look and feel to them. When you capture that look and feel you convey a sense of competence and maturity to your reader.

It's not hard to get it right. When a style guide runs to nearly a thousand pages, as do the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *American Medical Association Manual of Style*, it may seem a hopeless task to master all the details. Even the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or the *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, at less than three hundred pages, can appear formidable. Nonetheless, the essential features of these styles can readily be summarized in just a few pages. It is helpful to understand the priorities, what you must get right.

1. DOCUMENTATION

■ The story is well known. Galileo was an early empirical scientist, that is, he based his theories on direct observation of the world around him. He even built his own research instruments, his telescopes. When his findings ran afoul of the beliefs of the dominant authority he was forced to renounce them on pain of death.

We pronounce, judge, and declare, that you . . . Galileo . . . have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy, that is, of having believed and held the doctrine (which is false and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures) that the sun is the center of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move, and is not the center of the world. . . . [However,] it is Our pleasure that you be absolved, provided that with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in Our presence, you abjure, curse, and detest, the said error and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church or Rome. . . .¹

So the story goes. Then again, how do we know it actually happened? How do we know the quotation above is a reliable translation of the original indictment? How do we know there even was an indictment? How do we know this is not a hoax, like the government cover-up of UFO sightings and captured alien remains? A careful scholar will want to read and authenticate the original source document, written in 1630, in church Latin.

The quoted text above is from Joseph Campbell, *Creative Mythology: The Masks of God* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 574. However, Campbell quoted in turn from J. J. Fahie, *Galileo, His Life and Work* (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 313-314. We can go to Campbell's work to verify the quotation, and then on to Fahie's for his source. Eventually, we can follow the trail back to the source. Centuries of scholarship are linked through this process of documentation.

Libraries are organized to complement the process of documentation. If a work is in the library's collection we can find it in their catalog by the author's name or by the title of the work. Though less important today, in an earlier age we might have traced a work by going to the publisher. The essential parts of a reference are self-evident to anyone familiar with a library: author, title, publisher, date, page number or numbers. Research styles have different ways for formatting this information, but the content remains the same.

There are just three basic reference styles. These are the *author-date* style favored by the American Psychological Association among many, many, others; the *endnote-footnote* style favored by historians, and with some variation, the medical community; the *bibliography* style used creatively by the Modern Language Association.

APA (*American Psychological Association*) Author-Date Style

Campbell, J. (1978). *Creative mythology: The masks of God*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Citation in the text (Campbell, 1978, p. 574).

Chicago-Turabian Endnote-Footnote Style

¹Joseph Campbell, *Creative Mythology: The Masks of God* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1976), 574.

MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliography Style

Campbell, Joseph. *Creative Mythology: The Masks of God*. New York: Penguin, 1976.

Citation in the text (Campbell 574)

Whatever the style, the essential parts of a reference are the author, title, publisher, date, and page. This can get complex when referencing some sources, for example, a reprint of a chapter in a book edited by some one not the author of the chapter, but essential question remains the same—How does some one find the work you have referenced, whether in print in a library, or online as a webpage or PDF?

There are just two or three basic reference formats in any style. Everything else tends to be a variation around these basic forms. The first basic form is for books, as in the example of references to Campbell's *Creative Mythology*. The second basic form is for references to articles in journals.

APA (American Psychological Association) Author-Date Style

Wheelis, M. (2002). Biological warfare at the 1346 siege of Caffa. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 8(9): 971–975. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/>

Chicago-Turabian Endnote-Footnote Style


²Mark Wheelis, "Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 8, no. 9 (September 2002): 971–975, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol8no9/> (December 9, 2003).

MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliography Style

Wheelis, Mark. "Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa." *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 8.9 (Sep. 2002): 971–975. Web. 9 Dec. 2003. <<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol8no9/>>.

Once again the information remains the same, just the format changes. A careful observer will note differences in the way the volume and issue number are presented—APA, 8(9) [note the "8" is in italics, an APA trademark]; Chicago, 8, no. 9; MLA, 8.9 [this is an MLA trademark]. What purpose do these trivial differences serve? None. They are just examples of the enduring curse of Babel, where variation found just for the sake of variation.

Other variation are found in how the author's name is presented, the capitalization of the title and use of quotation marks, and the presentation of the URL. The form changes, the information stays (mostly) the same.

 You **MUST** get your documentation right!

2. TEXT RULES (MECHANICS OF WRITING)

■ There are ambiguities in common usage of language that can foil clear communication. For example, "The SS scale is featured in many APA publications, much less so in APA publications." What the hell is the "SS scale," and how can it be both featured and not featured by the same journal? The abbreviations are not defined. The sentence should read: "The sensation-seeking (SS) scale is featured in many American Psychiatric Association publications, much less so in APA (American Psychological Association) publications."

The example illustrates a basic rule in the use of acronyms (or initialisms) in research writing. You must (1) introduce every acronym with its full spelling, and (2) use acronyms sparingly, no more than a handful in a paper for terms used many times. Terms used less frequently are always spelled out. If there is a lot of text between the first usage and the second, the full term must be reintroduced. The goal is clarity in communication. It is better to err on the side of redundancy than that of chaos and confusion.

There are just five sets of text rules featured in Doc Scribe's guides. These cover those areas where a person knowledgeable in style might notice you are not following it. As for the rest, you are generally OK as long as you are consistent in your usage throughout the text.

1. *Abbreviations*. The acronym rule is shared by all styles—you must define the term the first time it is used with its full spelling. Never begin a sentence with an acronym. There are other rules.
2. *Capitalization*. This is almost always conventional. However, many titles and headings are placed in *headline* or *heading caps*, others in sentence caps. Each style has its own rule for what gets capitalized in heading caps. This is where you capitalize every major word in a title or heading. There are different rules for doing this.
3. *Emphasis (Italics-Quotation Marks)*. Use italics for emphasis, not quotation marks. Mostly. Quotation marks used in this context are called *scare quotes* (use italics when presenting *terms*, scare quotes for "wild stuff!").
4. *Numbers (Numerals or Words)*. There were 10 students who failed the course, or was it ten students? When do you write numbers as numerals and when as words? Is this the 21st century, or the twenty-first century. Style have different preferences. Some styles (e.g., APA) require careful use of the metric system.

5. *Quotations*. Long quotes are set off from the text as *block quotations*. But how long is long? Some styles define this in terms of how many lines in the text the quote requires, another counts the number of words, and still another just wants it to look good. There are rules for editing quotes, correcting quotes, abridging quotes, clarifying quotes, as well as formatting quotes.

The rules are not onerous or difficult to apply. The problem comes from knowing when there is a rule that needs to be followed. Most style guides are misnamed. They are references. A reference answers every question you think to ask, a guide answers the questions you didn't think to ask.

3. PAGE FORMAT

■ This refers to putting the words on the page. How wide should the margins be, where does the page number go, is page 1 the cover page or the first text page, what typeface is required, if any (APA style requires a *serif* typeface)? Page formatting is really noticeable when you get it wrong. To make it even more interesting some style manuals are geared to preparing papers for publication in a format designed for copy editors (APA), while others are focused on formatting papers to be read, like the MLA *Handbook*. Some instructors are ignorant of the difference. You will be, however, if you use Doc Scribe's guides. The options are always explained so you can ask your instructor what he or she requires. You can make it look good or dumb it down for the prof.

- *Margins*. Research papers need a one-inch margin around the page. Only the page number and header are permitted in the margin space. Everything else, including footnotes, goes in the text space.
- *Page Numbers*. Number every page, whether the page number is shown or not.
- *Double Space*. Double space everything, including block quotes, references, and tables. The last edition of the *APA Publication Manual* (2003) recommended block spacing for college papers. Block quotes, references, and tables are single spaced within, double spaced from the rest of the text.
- *Ragged Right Margin*. Do not hyphenate words at the ends of lines to fit or justify the line against the right margin. Turn autohyphenation and right justification off. Leave the right margin *ragged*.
- *Typeface (font)*. There are *serif* and *sans serif* typefaces. APA requires, Chicago prefers, a serif typeface such as Times or Palatino. MLA accepts a sans serif type such as Arial or Helvetica. "For most papers use at least a ten-point and preferably a twelve-point type" (Turabian [Chicago] 2007, 374).

		Author-Lastname 1
<p>Andy Scribe Professor Gonzo Rhetoric 403 1 April 2009</p>	<p>Main Title Centered on the Page</p> <p>The MLA <i>Handbook</i> makes no provision for headings (or "subheadings" if you prefer) in research papers. However, headings (subheadings) are used in about half the articles published in <i>PMLA</i>, the <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>, the MLA's own journal. A casual survey of recent issues found that about half the articles made use of headings, following one of two styles. The most basic style places roman numerals in brackets to indicate a break in the flow of the text, signaling a shift in focus. Headings do away with tedious bridge paragraphs that are otherwise required. This style is so austere that even pedantic professors can hardly object; a student need explain they are just following the example of the MLA's own journal.</p>	

Figure 1. Classic title page for MLA papers. The format is not followed by other styles, though one-inch margins around the page are common.

Most styles give you the choice of typeface (font). The noted exception is APA style where a serif font, such as Times Roman or Courier is required.

<p>1" Margins</p>	<p><u>Serif Typeface Only!</u></p> <p>APA Style Final Manuscripts ← Short Title Page Header</p>	<p>Number EVERY Page!</p> <p>2</p>	
<p>Space 2x</p> <p>Space 1x</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">APA Style Final Manuscripts for College Papers ← NO "Introduction"</p> <p>1/2" → The "Publication Manual [of the American Psychological Association] is not intended to cover scientific writing at an undergraduate level . . . Instructions to students to 'use the <i>Publication Manual</i>' should be accompanied by <i>specific guidelines for its use</i> [italics added]" (APA, 2001, p. 322). These guidelines are provided by <i>APA Lite for College Papers</i>, a free online webpage that is also available in printable PDF format. An important feature of these guidelines is the sharp distinction drawn between <i>copy manuscripts</i> and <i>final manuscripts</i> in the <i>APA Manual</i>.</p> <p>1/2" → Copy manuscripts have been described throughout the <i>Manual</i>. Their life span is short; they are normally read by editors, reviewers, and compositors only and are no longer usable after they have been typeset. Copy manuscripts must conform to the format and other policies of the journal to which they are submitted.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Space 1x: Block Quotes - Tables - References</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Final manuscripts, however, reach their audiences in the exact form in which they are prepared. . . . A number of variations from the requirements described in the <i>Manual</i> are not only permissible but also <i>desirable</i> [italics added] in the preparation of final manuscripts. (APA, 2001, pp. 321–322)</p> <p>The <i>APA Manual</i> advises students to <i>adapt</i> the style for their class papers. It offers several suggestions for preparing "theses, dissertations, and student papers" in a chapter entitled "Material</p>		<p>Ragged Margin</p>

Figure 2. First text page with block paragraph spacing in APA style. The text is double spaced, block quotes and references are single spaced.

<p>Margins 1 inch around the page.</p>
<p>MAIN TITLE CENTERED IN FULL CAPS</p> <p>Centered First-Level Heading: Headings Caps</p> <p>The Turabian <i>Manual</i> presents second-level heading in the same format as the one above, but without the bold font.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Centered Second Level Heading: Plain Text</p> <p>Third-Level Side Head in Bold Heading Caps</p> <p>Fourth Level Side Head in Plain Text</p> <p>A fourth-level follows the same format as the third, without the bold font.</p> <p>Fifth-level run-in paragraph heading. The heading is set in a bold font and sentence caps, ending with a period. It need not be a complete sentence.</p>

Figure 3. Chicago-Turabian style headings. Each style has its own preferences.



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