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**Title:** Why We “Speak” APA in Academics

**Introduction:** *The American Psychological Association, or APA, is the organization that created the language used and understood by academics around the world. APA format is the expected standard in higher education and research papers to ensure sources are cited properly. Despite its universality, the many nuances of academia can make it a difficult language to master.*

*In today’s post, Dr. Audra Spicer, CSU-Global’s writing center coordinator, outlines the two main things controlled by APA: page format and source citation. If you have an APA format question that needs expert advice, ask our writing coaches in the comments section below.*

When you get your first job you learn that industries, employers, and organizations have specialized vocabularies. Universities and academic publications are no different. Developing new ideas is the purpose of higher education, and knowing APA lets us take part in that ongoing, worldwide conversation.

APA controls two things: best practices for formatting a page and using sources.

**Formatting a Page**

APA provides writers with a consistent format to be used every time you’re writing in APA format.  Consistency helps authors organize their arguments or research efficiently, while readers familiar with the format will know what each of the different sections mean. From the information on the title page to the headers that divide information in the discussion, each section has a pre-determined format.

APA formatting also helps authors organize ideas along the same lines that researchers use, with a spin-off benefit: when you are familiar with the different parts of APA, you become a more able reader of the resources you find in the library.

All APA-formatted papers, from the paper you turn in for class, to papers published in journals, contain most of the following parts, always in the same order:

* Title page.
* Abstract.
* Introduction.
* Review of the literature.
* Methods.
* Results.
* Discussion.
* Conclusion.
* References.

While you might not include all nine parts in academic papers, you still use a majority of these sections to order and present your ideas.

**Using Sources**

<h3>Protection from Plagiarism</h3>

To plagiarize something is to take someone else’s idea or direct quote as your own without properly citing the original source. Protect yourself from suspicion or allegation of plagiarism by using the APA citation basics below:

* In-text citations in a paper and the References page should always match. Keep in mind that both in-text and reference citations should start with the same author’s name. If there is no named author, the title of the work should come first.
* In-text citations should be used any time you use information from a source, even if you paraphrase or summarize it in your own words.
* Direct quotations are a special case. Any time you take three or more consecutive words from a source, put quotation marks around those words and add the in-text citation and the page number.

Learn more about in-text and reference citations in the [CSU-Global Library’s APA Resources](http://csuglobal.libguides.com/apacitations).

<h3>Credibility as a Writer</h3>

Writing in solid APA format gives you credibility because of the format’s association with publication.

When your paper is in perfect APA format, and your instructor or reviewer can look at your References page and see authoritative sources cited correctly, you’ve proven that you can “speak” the language of academia. Using the APA language gives your ideas the credibility necessary to be taken seriously.

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

--Sir Isaac Newton, discoverer of the Laws of Gravity, 5 February 1675

Further along, if you pursue publication, APA citations allow your readers to cross-reference your sources easily. Any work of academic writing is based on the ideas that other people have shared through publication, and people working together in a field want to understand the origins of ideas.

**APA Services**

Many universities provide APA services as a student resource. At CSU-Global, our [writing center coaches](https://csuglobal.mywconline.com/) specialize in all things APA: from using our university template, to in-text citations, and proper References page format. We also host regular [APA Workshops](https://csuglobal.mywconline.com/) and provide recordings for reference.

Whether you’re currently using APA format as a student or with the hopes of being published, mastering the language of academia is an essential first step to getting your ideas heard and respected. Ask us your burning APA questions in the comments section below and we’ll have our coaches get you the answers.