

APA Guide to Headings

Most professors expect that the layout or format for your written assignments will be clear, concise and consistent. We recommend that you consult your course syllabus or professor for the format preferred or required for your course. If no format guidelines are specified or available, the following information provides one basic document format, adapted from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed. (2009), published by the American Psychological Association (3.31).

Why have headings?

Many academic papers on broad or multiple topics will necessitate organizing the material into subtopics of varying importance. Headings organize and introduce the subheadings (levels) of a paper.

What are headings?

The APA Format recommends that these various topics and subtopics be divided into levels and individually identified to show the differences in importance of each level.

How do headings work?

The size and type of font correspond with the subtopic's importance. In this way, you can indicate which topics or sections are most important and which are of lesser importance or contain supporting information.

Note:

- The introduction does NOT need a heading. The first section of a paper is assumed to be the introduction.
- Avoid headings with letters or numbers unless instructed by your professor.
- Use whole words or phrases.
- See *APA Guide to Headings: Level Breakdown* on the next page for specific guidelines, and the Sample Paper for an example.

APA Guide to Headings: Level Breakdown

One Level:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Two Levels:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Three Levels:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Four Levels:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Five Levels:

Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading, ending with a period, with following text starting on same line.

Remember, not all papers will require the same number of headings, and you should organize and format your paper according to your needs (3.31).

Sample Paper

This is an example of how a paper with 4 levels of headings will appear.

Dyslexia ← [Level 1](#)

Signs of the Learning Disorder ← [Level 2](#)

Indent → **Emotional and cognitive indications.** ← [Level 3](#)

Indent → *Frustration and poor academics.* ← [Level 4](#)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ← [Level 1](#)

Signs of the Learning Disorder ← [Level 2](#)

Indent → **Physical and cognitive indications.** ← [Level 3](#)

Indent → *Inability to sit still and problems concentrating.* ← [Level 4](#)

If you are writing a paper about the different learning disorders among children, “Dyslexia” and “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” should have equal headings. In this case, under the “Dyslexia” heading, you might use the heading “Signs of the Learning Disorder.”