



Academic Writing in Psychology

Academic writing in psychology should be clear, concise, and precise. Avoid flowery language where possible and cite peer-reviewed academic papers to support your statements. Psychological science is a science, so write like a scientist! Keep your writing simple, impartial, and focused on the evidence.

Most commonly, academic writing in psychology follows APA style—which stands for American Psychological Association style—but be sure to follow whichever style and formatting guidelines your instructor asks you to.

There is no single right way to write a paper in psychology, but the following process is generally an effective one:

1. Identify a general topic. If you pick a topic that interests you, your paper will be easier to write.
2. Read peer-reviewed academic journal articles on that topic and take careful notes.
3. Put together everything you have learned from your reading, then begin to figure out what you want your paper to be about. Try talking to family and friends (or a writing tutor!) about your ideas to help clarify what you want to say in your paper.
4. Write a detailed outline. Think of your outline as a map to make sure you are going in the right direction as you write your paper.
5. Start writing! Remember that you can always do some additional reading or make changes to your outline as you go.
6. Edit, edit, edit! Carefully review your paper to make sure that your ideas are logical and easy to follow and that your writing is clear and free of errors.

Here are some other tips for writing in psychology:

- If you use any jargon or technical terms, be sure to define them.
- Make sure you cite evidence to support all of your arguments.
- Start early! It takes a long time to write a good paper.
- If you feel unsure about your instructor's expectations for a paper, ask them to clarify.

The internet is full of helpful resources with more detailed information about academic writing in psychology. Here are a few of them:

- The University of Regina has an excellent resource on APA format.
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab has a great overview of academic writing in psychology, a sample psychology paper in APA style, and a detailed guide to APA style.
- Harvard College's Writing Center has an excellent, brief resource on writing psychology papers.
- Southwestern University has a very helpful guide for writing in psychology.
- A YouTube video by "ProfPash" includes some very helpful information on finding reliable academic sources, writing papers, and avoiding plagiarism in psychology