

What is APA?

APA stands for "American Psychological Association." Outside the field of psychology, "APA" is shorthand for the writing style manual published by the APA, *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

What is a style manual and who needs one?

Style manuals are used throughout the academic and professional world. *The New York Times*, for example, has a journalistic style manual that each of its editors and writers must follow religiously so that folks who read *The Times* find consistency in its format and presentation of news. Smaller newspapers adopt *The New York Times* style or that of another journalistic stylebook such as *The Los Angeles Times* or the *Columbia School of Journalism*.

Just as newspapers require consistency of style, so do academic disciplines. English, foreign language, and linguistic professionals use the MLA (Modern Language Association); other humanities professionals use *Chicago Manual of Style*. Medical professionals use the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*, of course. Psychologists and others in the human behavioral sciences, including educators, have adopted the *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, "the APA," as their guide.

Why so many guides? Why can't everyone use the same one?

The research and writing for one academic discipline may require a style that does not meet the needs of other disciplines or professions. A professor of French literature, for example, might require a set of stylistic guidelines different from those of a chemist or neurosurgeon.

Saint Mary's University has adopted the APA as the official style manual for its Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs. (SMU medical students use the AMA.) Use of the APA ensures that SMU students have a solid stylistic foundation for their academic and professional writing..

To help you use the APA manual, the Twin Cities Writing Center has developed an introductory guide called *Introduction to the APA and Other Writing Tips*. This booklet is available in the Twin Cities campus bookstore and is available as a download from the Writing Center's Web site. It is not a replacement for the APA manual, but it will help you get started, and it also provides some useful information about using Microsoft Word® for APA formatting.