

# 15. AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (ASA) STYLE FORMAT AND CITATIONS

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“Give credit where credit is due.”

–Rahim Moore

## THE PURPOSE OF WRITING STYLE GUIDES

The major purpose of writing style guides is to help people organize and express their ideas clearly. Regardless of students’ discipline or academic department, writing style guides provide a standardized way to present and document content. In other words, guides enable students to communicate material consistently and effectively. Writing style guides include formatting rules about paper structure and arrangement, grammatical and mechanical construction, in-text citation of ideas and quotes, and reference page composition. Not only do writing style guides help students with organization and communication in papers, they also assist with the prevention of plagiarism—the intentional or unintentional use of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas without crediting the original source. That is, guides provide the strategies and resources for students to legally and appropriately integrate others’ work into their own.

There are several writing styles that students are expected to use throughout their educational careers (for example, ASA, APA, MLA, Chicago, and Harvard). Probably for this reason (among others) is why the American Sociological Association (ASA) style is one of the most

challenging aspects of sociological writing for students to master. However, ASA style is essential for the student completing a Bachelor Degree in Sociology. Just as one would not use American Psychological Association (APA) style in a legal document submitted to an appellate court judge, one should not use APA style in a paper submitted to a sociology course instructor—unless otherwise specified. Although ASA style might be daunting at first, never fear! Like any new language, ASA style simply takes a bit of time and practice to learn. This chapter will help students navigate their way through the formatting and citation process for any sociology course paper.

## ASA STYLE

### **Paper Format**

Consider all of the following guidelines when formatting a paper.

- All text should be double-spaced, 12-point-font, in a standard font (for example, Times New Roman or Arial), and on 8 and ½ by 11 inch white paper.
- The margins of the document should be no smaller than 1 inch on each side and no larger than 1 and ¼ inches on each side.

- Number the pages in consecutive order beginning with the first page (choose the “different first page” setting option if the instructor tells you to omit the number on the first page).
- Although not all instructors require title pages, when required, the title page should include: paper title, author name, university name, instructor name, course title, and date.
- Include a running header and an abstract (150-200 words) only if the instructor requires these ASA formatting components.
- Abide by any other ASA formatting requirements of the course instructor.
- When unsure about any ASA formatting, ask the course instructor for advice.

### **Paper Structure and Headings**

After the title page (if required), the first page of the paper should begin on the second page. On the second page, the first section generally begins with a heading, such as “Introduction.” However, this is a stylistic choice and some ASA style formatting writing guides instruct students not to head the first section. When in doubt, ask the course instructor for guidance. The very first paragraph in sections is not indented, but subsequent paragraphs are. Headings and subheadings help to organize the paper clearly. ASA format has guidelines for heading sections. The first-level heading is in all caps; the second-level heading is capitalized and italicized; the third-level heading begins with a capital letter, is italicized, and ends with a period. For fourth-level headings and beyond, consult the course instructor.

### **Paper Grammatical and Mechanical Construction**

Headings Example:

FIRST LEVEL HEADING: INTRODUCTION

[Insert text]

*Second Level Heading: ASA Style*

[Insert text]

*Third level heading: paper format and citation.*

[Insert text]

Appropriate grammar and mechanics seem obvious when writing, but it is important to reiterate that these affect the readability of the paper and thus the grade. When instructors receive papers with grammatical and mechanical errors, it is difficult for them to focus on and evaluate the students’ arguments. Rather than concentrating on the paper substance, the instructors end up fixating on the numerous distracting writing issues—which benefits no one. The following list will help students avoid some of the most common grammatical and mechanical errors. This list is not exhaustive, so students should seek other writing guidance as questions arise.

- Use standard dictionary spelling and usage in papers. Consult the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary—the dictionary that the ASA uses.
- Do not abbreviate in formal papers. One exception is with acronyms. However, before abbreviated acronyms, spell them out the first time they are used, followed by the acronym in parentheses. For example, “American Sociological Association (ASA) style format is fun.” Moreover, do not use etc., e.g.,

or i.e., unless used in a parentheses. For example, "(i.e., ASA is easy)."

- Do not use contractions in a formal paper (e.g., spell out "do not" instead of writing "don't").
- Spell out numbers 1 through 10 (one, two, three, four...).
- Place punctuation inside quote marks ("I drank coffee."). There are exceptions to this rule, such as with in-text citation: For example, "CSUS is the best" (Jones 1963:25).
- Use United States instead of America (America is a continent and not a country). Spell out United States when it is a noun (for example, "In the United States..."). One may use U.S. when it is an adjective (for example, "The U.S. economy...").
- Avoid the affect and effect mistake. Affect is a verb or a word used to describe an action. Affect means to influence something else (for example, "The dog affects the human's happiness."). Effect is a noun or a thing. In the case of most sociology classes, an effect is an outcome or a result (for example, "A low GPA is the effect (or result) of not studying the correct material.>").
- Avoid passive voice. Use active voice. This rule helps writers with clarity and limit wordiness. Active: They ate the food as they scraped the plate. Passive: The food was eaten by them as they scraped the plate. Hint: it is passive voice when the reader cannot immediately identify who is doing the action (for example, who ate the food?).
- Use concrete rather than vague language.

- Use transition sentences and concluding sentences to help the flow of the paper.
- Use sentence variation rather than overusing the same phrases repeatedly. For example, do not start every sentence with The, There is, It was, and so on.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Avoid pompous, vague, and convoluted language or jargon. Make direct and concise arguments.
- Above all, be consistent with grammatical and mechanical construction in papers.

### **ASA Citation**

There are two major components of ASA style citations to master. First, students must cite or document the academic and nonacademic sources they use in the text of the paper (that is, in-text citations). Second, students need to include a list of references they used as sources at the end of their papers (that is, reference page). This section discusses both.

### **In-Text Citations**

In order to give appropriate and rightful credit to the authors of references, students must cite them in their papers. Whenever students use the words, thoughts, or ideas from a source, they must cite the author's last name or authors' last names of that source. To reiterate, even when students use only an idea or thought but not a direct quote of another, they must still cite that source. There are a few ways to cite in the text of a paper. However, each time a source is cited, students must include the author(s) and the year of publication.

Whether a source has one author, two authors, three authors, or four or more authors, the following table provides helpful examples for in-text citation of thoughts, ideas, and direct quotes.

When citing three authors, list all three authors the first time. Afterwards, the citation will include the first author followed by an et al., which means “and others” in Latin. If a reference has four or more authors, the in-text citation should include only the first author followed by et al. Students must provide the page number or numbers where they found the direct quote in addition to the author(s) and the publication year. When integrating a short quote into the rest of the text, it should have quotation marks around it. For long quotes (that is, quotes longer than 40 words), set them in a separate, single-spaced, fully indented paragraph without quotation marks. For example,

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst...No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within society has completed its intellectual journey. (Mills 1959:6)

**Reference Page**

Students need to include a reference page at the end of their papers providing a list of all the sources they used. This list should be double-spaced and in alphabetical order by the first author’s last name. Include full first names and last names for all authors and include only the initial for middle names. Do not abbreviate

<b>Authors</b>	<b>In-text Citation after Sentence</b>	<b>In-text Citation in Sentence</b>
One author	People are...(Jones 2019).	According to Jones (2019), people are...
Two authors	Research says...(Smith and Wesson 2017).	Smith and Wesson (2017) say that...
Three authors	One study shows...(Jo, Lo, and Po 2014). One study shows...(Jo et al. 2014).	Jo, Lo, and Po’s (2014) study shows... Jo et al.’s (2014) study shows...
Four authors	Findings indicate...(Wang et al. 2013).	When Wang et al. (2013) examined...
Two references	Past studies show...(Do 2005; Liu 2003).	Do (2005) and Liu (2003) found that...
Author and quote	“[Insert quote]” (Luis 1999:235).	Luis (1999) stated, “[Insert quote]” (p. 235).
Author, no date	Studies highlight...(Jeb n.d.)	Jeb (n.d.) highlighted how...
Institution	There are 10 million...(U.S. Census 2010).	According to the U.S. Census (2010), ...

titles or journals. Indent the second line of the reference forward.

## Type of Source

### Books

#### One author:

Author last name, first name middle initial. Year of publication. *Title*. City, State Abbreviation: Publisher.

#### Two or more authors:

Author last name, first name middle initial and first name middle initial last name. Year of publication. *Title of Book*. City, State Abbreviation: Publisher.

#### Book chapter/encyclopedia entry:

Author last name, first name middle initial. Year of publication. "Title of Chapter." Pp. inclusive page numbers in *Title of Book*, edited by First initial. Middle initial. Last name. City, State Abbreviation: publisher.

### Examples:

Barajas, Manuel. 2009. *The Xaripu Community across Borders: Labor Migration, Community, and Family*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Wehr, Kevin. 2009. *Hermes on Two Wheels: The Sociology of Bicycle Messengers*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Aspesoa-Varano, Ester C. and Charles S. Varano. 2014. *Conflicted Health Care: Professionalism and Caring in an Urban Hospital*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Migliaccio, Todd and Juliana Raskauskas. 2016. *Bullying as a Social Experience: Social Factors, Prevention and Intervention*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Brooks, Jacqueline, Heidi Sarabia, and Aya Kimura Ida. 2019. *Race and Ethnicity: The Sociological Mindful Approach*. San Diego, CA: Cognella Academic Publishing.

Correll, Shelley J. and Cecilia L. Ridgeway. 2003. "Expectation States Theory." Pp. 29-52 in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by J. Delamater. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Luna-Gordinier, Anne. 2016. "Violence Against Women Act Title IX: Safety for Indian Women, 2013." Pp. 762-781 in *50 Events That Shaped American Indian History*, edited by D. Martinez and J. L. Williams Bordeaux. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.

### Journal Articles

One author (more than one author same as above):

Author last name, first name middle initial. Year of publication. "Title." *Journal Title* Volume (Number or issue): inclusive page numbers.

### Examples:

Al-Qazzaz, Ayad. 1973. "Arm and Society in Israel." *The Pacific Sociological Review* 16(2):143-165.

Barajas, Manuel. 2014. "Colonial Dislocations and Incorporation of Indigenous Migrants from Mexico to the United States." *American Behavioral Scientist* 58(1):53-63.

Berg, Ellen C. 2004. "The Effects of Perceived Closeness to Custodial Parents, Stepparents and Nonresident Parents on Adolescent Self-Esteem." *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 40(1-2):69-86.

Sarabia, Heidy. 2018. "'Felons, not Families': Criminalized Illegality, Stigma, and Membership among Deported Criminal Aliens in Mexico." *Migration Letters*. 15(2):4561.

Shigihara, Amanda M. 2019. "'I Mean, Define Meaningful!': Accounts of Meaningfulness among Restaurant Employees." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 15(1):106-131.

Ida, Aya. and C. Andre Christie-Mizelle. 2012. "Racial Group Identity, Psychosocial Resources, and Depressive Symptoms: Exploring Ethnic Heterogeneity among Black Americans." *Sociological Focus* 45(1):41-62.

Liu, Amy Q. and Terry Besser. 2003. "Social Capital and Participation in Community Improvement Activities by Elderly Residents in Small Towns and Rural Communities." *Rural Sociology* 68(3):343-365.

Migliaccio, Todd and Jacqueline Carrigan. 2017. "Producing Better Writers in Sociology: A Programmatic Approach." *Teaching Sociology* 45(3):228-239.

Morris, Patricia and Tammi Arford. 2018. "'Sweat A Little Water, Sweat A Little Blood': A Spectacle of Convict Labor at an American Amusement Park." *Crime Media Culture* 00(0):1-24.

Berg, Ellen C., Todd A. Migliaccio, and Rosemary Anzini-Varesio. 2014. "Female

Football players, the Sport Ethic and the Masculinity-Sport Nexus." *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 17(2): 176-189.

Rogers, Richard, Jacqueline A. Carrigan, and Mary G. Kovar. 1997. "Comparing Mortality Estimates Based on Different Administrative Records." *Population Research and Policy Review* 16(3):213-224.

### Websites

One author (more than one author same as above):

Institution title or last name, first name of institution author. Date of publication. "Title of website or website article." Retrieved Month Day, Year (URL).

### Examples:

American Sociological Association. 2019. "ASA Topics." Retrieved March 7, 2019 (<http://www.asanet.org/topics>).

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2019. "Unemployment Rate 3.6 Percent in April 2019, Lowest Since December 1969." Retrieved May 8, 2019 (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2019/unemployment-rate-3-point-6-percent-in-april-2019-lowest-since-december-1969.htm>).

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2019. "Vaccines & Immunizations." Retrieved April 22, 2019 (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html>).

National Institute of Mental Health. 2016. "Major Depression." Retrieved June 6,

2016 (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression.shtml>).

### **Newspapers**

One author (more than one author same as above):

Author last name, first name. Year of publication. "Title of News Article." *Newspaper Name*, Month Day of Publication, p. or pp. inclusive page numbers (not required of online articles).

### **Examples:**

Jackman, Tom. 2019. "Denver Voters Approve Decriminalization of 'Magic Mushrooms.'" *The Washington Post*, May 8.

Winton, Richard. 2019. "Lori Loughlin Feels Wronged in College Admissions Scandal, Looking to Fight Charges, Source Says." *Los Angeles Times*, May 8.

### **ASA Style Format Resource Website Links**

ASA: Quick Tips for ASA Style [http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick\\_Tips\\_for\\_ASA\\_Style.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Quick_Tips_for_ASA_Style.pdf)

Purdue OWL: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/formatting\\_in\\_sociology\\_asa\\_style/references\\_page\\_formatting.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/formatting_in_sociology_asa_style/references_page_formatting.html)

CSUS ASA Style Guide Help: <https://csus.libguides.com/c.php?g=768251>

Trinity University: [https://lib.trinity.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ASA-Style-Citations-5th-ed\\_rev.pdf](https://lib.trinity.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ASA-Style-Citations-5th-ed_rev.pdf)

ASA Style Lite for Research Papers (Colorado Mesa College): <https://www.coloradomesa.edu/tutoring/documents/asalite.pdf>

Harvard ASA Style Guide Help: <https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/asastyleguide.pdf>