110 Final Paper Guideline

**Due Date:** May 3\(^{th}\) (the last day of class). Please hand in at the front of the room when you come to class. Late or handwritten assignments will not be accepted.

**Overall Point Value:** 45 points

**Overall Page length:** 10 pages MAX. Points will be taken off for papers that exceed this length. Page length does **not** include title page, abstract, or references.

**Spacing:** The entire paper must be typed and double-spaced.

**Format & Writing Style:** All papers MUST be in APA format. Please refer to the links on Blackboard for more information APA format and style. When writing, your ideas should be organized into complete sentences and paragraphs, ideas should be fully developed, sentences should be written in a concise manner, and smooth transitions should be included between paragraphs. Unless specified, both uppercase and lowercase letters are used. For this course, please use a 12-point “Times New Roman” font. Current APA format dictates that you must italicize (and not underline) for emphasis when appropriate.

**Overall Structure:** The typical structure of APA manuscripts includes the following sections listed in the order they need to appear in your paper.

1. Title Page
2. Abstract
3. Introduction
4. Method
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. References

In addition, each group is responsible for turning in each of the following items (clearly labeled) in a secure folder or **clasped** envelope:

- Copies of consent forms for the participants (if applicable)
- Copy of instruments used
- Copy of instructions given if only summarized in method section
- Copy of original data (preferably on an Excel spreadsheet)
- Copy of your statistical calculations

**Examples:** Samples of papers are available for preview in the 110 TA office only. Samples of proper paper format can be found on the APA website at http://www.apastyle.org

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Final Paper is YOUR OWN WORK AND NO ONE ELSE’S. Only Method sections are allowed to be identical among groupmates. Identical or unusually high similarities between student papers will be treated as accounts of plagiarism and referred to the Center for Student Ethics and Standards accordingly.
Title Page

The title page consists of a running head, the title, and the authors’ names and affiliations.

Page Numbers: Page numbers appear on every page of the manuscript.

Key Features:
- Located in the right hand corner/header.
- On every page of the manuscript starting with the title page.

Running Head: This is a shortened version of your title and in publications is used as the header throughout the article.

Key Features:
- Located in the upper left hand of the page in the header.
- 50 character max.
- On the title page, must include the words “Running head:” and the words that follow must be in all UPPERCASE letters.
- Only the shortened version of the title, but not the words “Running head:”, are included on every page after the title page.

Title: This is the actual title for your paper and APA recommends that it is between 10-12 words long. The title should be a simple summary of the main idea of the study and should identify the IV and DV of your study. It should not contain any “extra” or superfluous information (e.g., “A study of…” ) or have the words “method” or “results” in it. The line after the title contains the name of the author(s). For purposes of the final paper you may include the names of your group members, but your name should be underlined and come first so we know who to give points to. The line after the author contains your affiliation (The University of Vermont).

Key Features:
- Located in the middle of the page, center alignment.
- In upper and lowercase letters.
- Title is roughly 8-12 words long.
- Title gives an adequate summary of the main idea and contains reference to the variables being examined (IVs + DVs).
- Title, name(s), and affiliation are in correct order and on separate lines.

Good Title: Parenting Styles and Children’s Ability to Delay Gratification
Bad Title: A Study of Memory

**NOTE:** Students will lose credit for unnecessary extra information such as fancy coversheets or graphics.
Abstract

The abstract is a brief paragraph that provides an accurate summary of your study. While the abstract is in the early part of the paper, it is often easier to write once you have written the rest of the paper. The abstract is self-contained so any person reading it should quickly get the “gist” of your study. The abstract is probably the most important part of your manuscript because it is often what determines whether someone will read your study or not. Think back to when you did your literature search on PsycINFO. The studies with clear and concise abstracts were likely to have been very helpful in determining if you should read the article and the confusing abstracts probably left you scratching your head!

Key Features:
- Is on a page that is separate and between the title page and introduction.
- Is 120 words or less.
- Is accurate, self-contained, nonevaluative, clearly written, and to the point.

Listed below is a helpful guideline on what to include in your abstract (taken from www.psy.umassd.edu/psy580/proposals.html).

1. The problem under investigation, in one sentence, if possible.
2. The participants, in as much detail as is important to the interpretation of your results.
3. The experimental method, including materials (tests by full name) and procedure.
4. The proposed findings, including statistical significance levels.
5. The conclusions and implications or applications
Introduction

The introduction is typically divided into 3 parts: (1) the problem under investigation, (2) the literature review, and (3) the purpose and rationale.

1. The introduction introduces the problem under investigation. This usually occurs in the first paragraph. It answers the following questions:
   - What is the point of the study?
   - Are there any theoretical implications?

1. The introduction also includes a discussion of previous literature including prior relevant findings, relevant methodological issues, and continuity between prior research and your work. This is typically the “bulk” of the introduction.

2. The purpose and rationale for your study is also included in the introduction. Here you define your independent and dependent variables and make your statement of hypotheses. Some researchers save this information for the end of the introduction (usually a page after the literature review discussing the present study). Other researchers will intersperse their hypotheses throughout the literature review and contain a summary paragraph of them at the end of the introduction. The purpose and rational should answer the following questions:
   - What variables did I plan to manipulate?
   - What results did I expect and why?
   - What is the logic behind the hypotheses?

When writing your introduction you should start with more general information and then become more specific. Try to visualize the picture of a funnel. Your literature review starts out with a larger, general review of prior research and then gradually narrows ending up with your very specific hypotheses. For a 10 page paper, the length of your introduction should be between 3-4 pages. If you are greatly under or over this page length, you are either including not enough prior research or too much. Furthermore, students will lose credit for superfluous information. An example of this would be would be the inclusion of literature unnecessary to the problem your study investigates.

This is the only section of your paper where the name of the section is not used as the heading. That is, the word “Introduction” is not used as a heading. Instead the title of your study is center-aligned at the beginning of your introduction.

For the rest of your paper, use correct APA style headings as necessary to organize your paper. Below is the formatting for the different levels of headings. Use as many levels as necessary to organize your paper. You will need headings to label your paper sections (Method, Results, etc.) and subsections (Participants, Materials, etc.) to make your paper easy to follow for your readers.
Method

The method section explains what you did and how you did it. It may seem like a lot of detail, but you want to include enough information so that another researcher could replicate your study. Your method section should be written in the past tense. This section is divided into three sub-sections: (1) participants, (2) materials, and (3) procedure.

IMPORTANT: Because you are working on your method section in lab as a group effort, it is only fair to allow you to use this in your paper even though all members of the group will have the same methods section. Your method section is the ONLY part of your paper that is allowed to be identical to that of other members in your group.

Participants/Subjects: If you are collecting data from humans, you will use the heading participants (subjects is usually used with animals). The purpose of this section is to describe your sample. The participants section is usually only one paragraph. You want to include detailed information about your participants but not information that is so detailed that the reader could figure out the identity of your participants. You should answer the following questions:

- How many participants?
- Are they male or female, or some of each?
- How old are they?
- Are they of different races/ethnicities? If so, what percentage?
- Any other demographics relevant to your study? (e.g., 60% were involved in a romantic relationship for two months or greater)
- Where did they come from? How were they selected?
- What are the conditions of participants (e.g., payment, extra credit, nothing)?
Materials: In this section you describe what types of things you needed to run your study so that another researcher could replicate it. Here is where you would include any information on surveys and any other equipment that you used.

Because many of you are using psychological measures as your only materials you could title this section “Measures”. You should devote 1 paragraph for EACH measure and should include the following information:

- The full name of the measure
- Where it came from / who created it
- What it assesses
- Are you using the full measure, a short form, or a sub-set of items?
- Information on how items are measured (e.g., 7 point Likert scale)
- Example of a sample item

Method continued

Measure Example:

Storm and Stress Scale, General and Target (Holmbeck & Hill, 1988). This measure assesses the extent to which one holds the belief that adolescence is a time of storm and stress primarily in terms of the parent-child relationship. Items are presented in a 7-point Likert format ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). A sample item is “Teenagers fight a lot with their parents.”

Procedure

In this section you need to explain exactly what you did and how you did it so your study could be replicated (sort of like a narrative from start to finish). This section needs to be written in paragraphs. If you are doing a questionnaire study your procedure might only be 1-2 paragraphs. If you are doing a manipulation or coding behavior your procedure could be a page or more in length. This section includes the following information:

- Type of research design (e.g., experimental, correlational)
- Identify IV + DV + how they were measured + scored
- Subjects assignment (e.g., random, matched pairs)
- Your instructions to participants
- If you are doing an experimental manipulation you need to describe the manipulation(s), manipulation checks, and any special control features.
- Debriefing (primarily used with experiments)
Results

The results section summarizes the data you collected and the statistical treatment of it (both differential and inferential). Here you are stating the main results and findings, even if they did not come out the way you thought they would. You should also restate or reference the hypothesis you are testing (e.g., “With respect to the hypothesis that X will affect Z we found that…” or “There was support for the hypothesis that hypothesis that X has an effect on Z”). Remember, you are writing in a way that is reporting the data and statistics as a way to substantiate your claims.

Key Features:
- Present group data and not data on individual participants.
- Include means, standard deviations, and/or standard errors.
- Make reference to your hypotheses.
- Make reference to your tables and figures (see Table 1).
- Present statistics (in text) including degrees of freedom and the probability level (e.g., \( p < .05 \)).

Remember the format for writing up your results for the Betta fish lab? Follow it for writing your results section. It is likely that you will only need to write one or two paragraphs for the results section. We are looking for concise and to the point writing.

We analyzed our results using a (fill in stat test here). There appears to be/does not appear to be a significant effect for (fill in independent variable) for (dependent variable). The subjects in the ___ condition showed more_____ (\( M=\#, \ SD=\# \)) than subjects in the ____ condition (\( M=\#, \ SD=\# \)). This does/does not support the hypothesis that (fill in with your hypothesis). [REPEAT AS NECESSARY].

Discussion

The discussion section is the conclusion of your research paper. You are explaining your findings in relation to prior research and current theory. You also need to include any limitations of your study (e.g., validity). Your discussion section should be at least one page; it is likely that it will be longer.

Key Features:
- Include a clear statement of support or nonsupport of hypotheses.
- Similarities or differences of results to prior research (refer back to lit. review).
- Evaluate and interpret results in reference to current theory.
- Discuss the validity of your experimental results. Did your study accurately test your hypotheses? Do your findings generalize to others?
- Suggest the “next step”: What needs to be done in future experiments.
- Comment on the importance of your findings.
References

References are usually used to develop your introduction and discussion. You MUST include at least 4 references in your paper. However, you can only include a reference if you have cited it somewhere in your paper. All references must be in APA format, and begin on a new page after the discussion section. Watch out! Many but not all psychological journals will use APA format for references.

Key Features:
- MUST BE IN APA STYLE!!!
- Must be in alphabetical order.
- Must be double-spaced.
- Must have a hanging indent.

The APA Manual has an excellent chapter on how to construct your reference list. It also shows you how to do references for almost any source including journal articles, book chapters, monographs, technical reports, audiovisual media, internet articles, etc. Listed below are a few examples for sources that students typically use. Please refer to your labs for more information on references.

Journal Article

Book Chapter

Good Luck on Your Paper! 😊

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Example of good + bad titles taken from Leary, Chapter 15