Sixth Edition APA Made Simple
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The other day, while chatting with a friend about the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), he could only reply with skeptical disbelief. “You mean there’s a sixth edition now?” In a moment of self-revelation, I realized over the past few weeks that I have heard this echoing sentiment. The sixth edition is little over a year old, yet I started to contemplate what I thought should be common knowledge for any social science professional. However, it then occurred to me casual writers and researchers may not know the standard has changed and that perhaps their beautiful ebony volume of text is now obsolete.

But fear not! If you have never heard of APA, if you did not realize there was a new edition of the *Publication Manual*, or you just haven’t had the time to explore it, this article is for you. This article will discuss the purpose of APA Style, major changes in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, and resources to help you navigate proper grammar and citation.

**APA Basics**

The *Publication Manual* is a source of guidance and frustration for many scholarly writers and researchers, ever since its first publication in 1929. Bentley et al. (as cited in American Psychological Association, 2010a, p. 3) note the spirit of the *Publication Manual* is to be a “standard of procedure, to which exceptions would doubtless be necessary, but to which reference might be made in cases of doubt.” The publication manual serves as a tool for proper source citation, the ever-necessary authority on how many spaces to put between a period, and a champion for clearer and more concise writing. By providing assistance with not only grammar, but with style, the *Manual* is an essential tool for any writer in the social sciences.
What’s New?

The sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* provides writers with many helpful updates from the last edition published in 2001. While the full listing of updates can be found on the APA website (APA, 2010b), here is a brief outline of some of the emphasized major changes:

- Reorganization of the manual to follow the publication process. The new manual leads you from developing an initial topic all the way to publishing your work. It includes expanded discussions and examples of ethics issues (i.e. self-plagiarism, language bias, and piecemeal publication), data reporting, and detailed discussion of the peer review process.

- More social and behavioral science disciplines are featured, providing a broader context for use of APA outside of psychology.

- New standards for headings have been introduced for manuscripts and journals to provide organizational clarity for authors and readers.

- The return of a two-space recommendation after periods, instead of just one (a long awaited victory for space enthusiasts everywhere).

- An emphasis on the importance of citing electronic resources, especially with the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), a new coding system for online journal articles similar in function to an ISBN or card catalogue number (DOI numbers are found in the citation pages for many recently published journal articles).

The sixth edition does not avoid controversy. Soon after the first printing of the *Publication Manual*, it became the talk of bloggers and faculty distribution lists across the country. Many scholars noted APA errors in the text, which APA has since addressed to reflect
proper formatting. So if the first printing of the sixth edition has a home on your shelf, look up the corrections linked below, so not to be caught in a writing gaff yourself.

**Resources**

Finally, now that you are familiar with some of the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, some resources to assist you with your APA-related quandaries may be helpful, as they are a great supplement to your already beefed up knowledge of APA. (It’s also a handy reference if you don’t have the cash for a new edition).

- The APA Website ([http://www.apastyle.org/](http://www.apastyle.org/)): Overflowing with resources to help you grasp APA, this site’s Frequently Asked Questions, APA tutorials, and other great information about publishing using APA style can lend you a hand when writing.
- Sixth Edition Corrections ([http://supp.apa.org/style/pubman-reprint-corrections-for-2e.pdf](http://supp.apa.org/style/pubman-reprint-corrections-for-2e.pdf)): This site will lead you to information about the reprints and corrections of the sixth edition. It is also accessible via the APA Website!
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) ([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)): The OWL, one of the most famous online resources for navigating APA, features up-to-date information on sixth edition standards, and provides you with the basics needed for writing in APA, style without using the *Publication Manual* itself.
- Citation Machine ([http://www.citationmachine.net](http://www.citationmachine.net)): If you get tripped up on your reference pages, the Sixth Edition Citation Machine page will help you master proper formatting.
- APA Style Blog ([http://blog.apastyle.org/](http://blog.apastyle.org/)): Hear from the experts on this useful blog! Learn about professional opinions on handling exceptions not covered in the printed manual. (Just how do you cite a Kindle?)
Conclusion

With this primer on the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, you have the tools you need to begin transforming your writing and to pump the brakes on style faux pas in your workplace. The most important thing to keep in mind is that while the *Publication Manual* is a great tool, there are always gray areas in writing. With every rule comes an exception, so my best advice is to try your best to ensure that you are giving credit where it is due. And remember, when in doubt, Google it.

References
