A Guide to APA Formatting

All information on this handout comes from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th edition. Please consult this manual for more information and/or detailed examples (each Writing Center location has a copy of it if you do not have your own). Note that the writing center does have a separate handout for citations titled "A Guide to APA Style."

General Formatting
o   APA requires an essay to be double-spaced with 1" margins on all sides
o   APA recommends using 12 pt. Times New Roman font
o   A page header should be included on every page
o   Page numbers should be flush right

Notes About Writing Style
o   Active voice is preferred, although passive voice may be acceptable in some cases*
o   Eliminate wordiness and redundancies*
o   Avoid poetic language such as figurative language, rhyming, or alliteration
    o   Use simple, plain language that your audience will understand
o   Reduce bias in your writing*
o   Avoid using contractions

*The writing center has a variety of handouts on similar topics that may be useful to you. Handouts can be found in print in the Writing Center (LOH120) or online at www.gvsu.edu/wc/helpful-handouts-32.htm

Title Page and Headers
o   The paper title, your name, and the name of your university needs to be centered
o   The term "Running head:" will appear on the left side of the header, followed by a shortened version of your title in ALL CAPS, and a page number on the right
o   The header on the subsequent pages will be identical to the header on your title page, except you will NOT include the term "Running head:"
o   You will need to make your first page different when editing the header

Abstract
An abstract is a short summary of your entire paper (150-250 words). Your audience should be able to look at this and understand what you discuss without reading the whole paper. The label "Abstract" should be centered and not bold. The first line of the abstract should not be indented.

Footnotes
o   Footnotes should follow any punctuation mark, formatted in superscript fashion
o   Footnote numbers should not follow dashes (-)
o   If a footnote appears in a sentence in parentheses, it should be inserted within the parentheses
o   Footnotes should be placed at the bottom of the page where they appear, following normal paragraph spacing rules and double-spaced throughout

Headings

Level	Format
1	**Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Headings**
2	**Left-aligned, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading**
3	**Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with a period.**
4	***Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.***
5	*Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with a period.*

Note: Do not use a heading for the introduction of your paper. It is assumed that the beginning is the introduction.

Tables and Figures
- They should only be included if it adds some sort of value to the paper
- They should be sequential as you refer to them in the text (Table 1, Table 2, etc.) (Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.)
- They should be concise and consistent
- Only discuss highlights of tables and figures in the text
- You do not need to use a table or figure if all of the data you discuss is contained in the body of the paper
- Do not refer to a table or figure's location ("…in the table below…" or "…in the figure on the next page…") when discussing it in your text: just refer to it by name ("… in Table 7…")
- Figure notes must be placed below the table
- Text in a figure should be in san serif font between eight and fourteen point
- Graphs should always include a legend to explain symbols, abbreviations, and terminology

Appendices
- If you only have one, just label it "Appendix"
- If you have more than one, label them with capital letters (e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.)
- The label is centered and not bold, just like "References" on your Reference page
- Appendices should appear in the order you refer to them in the body of the paper
- Each appendix should be on a separate page
- The first paragraph of the appendix should be flush with the left margin. Additional paragraphs should be indented