

APA 7TH HEADING LEVELS

APA 7th heading levels are used to highlight sections of a paper, which aid readers by emphasizing the organization of the work. This handout will help with understanding how to use headings, what each heading level should look like, and when to use headings for student papers.

For more in-depth information and examples, see the official APA 7 Publication Manual in Chapter 2, subsections 2.26-2.28.

OVERVIEW

1. **Level 1 Headings** are used for main topic sections.
2. **Level 1 Heading Format:** Level 1 Heading (main topic) sections should be bolded, centered, and placed on a separate line at the top of the page where the section begins.
 - a. Common section labels in student papers: Abstract, Paper Title, Main Topic, Conclusion, References, etc.
3. **Levels 2 through 5 Headings** are used to label subsections of the main topic section (or your Level 1 Heading).
4. **The number of heading levels varies** based on the complexity of the paper you are writing.

WHAT NOT TO DO

5. **Do not label headings with numbers or letters** – The headings you use should be short titles for each section that help readers understand what the section or subsection is about.
6. **Do not add unnecessary headings** – Use only the number of headings necessary to highlight the distinct sections in your paper.
7. **Do not use the label “Introduction”** – It is assumed your introductory paragraph is an introduction, so instead label the introduction paragraph with the title of your paper. Format it as a Level 1 Heading.
8. **Do not use long titles for sections/subsections** – Try to keep your titles short yet clear, so readers can easily identify what each section of the paper is about.

EXAMPLE 1: HEADINGS IN ACTION

Level 1 Heading

Level 1 Headings are centered, bolded, with title case capitalization. The text following will begin as a new indented paragraph.

Level 2 Heading

Level 2 Headings are flush left, bolded, with title case capitalization. The text following will begin as a new paragraph. Do not press the “Return/Enter” key twice when making a Level 2 Heading, just press it once as shown.

Level 3 Heading

Level 3 Headings are flush left, bolded, italicized, with title case capitalization. The text following will begin as a new paragraph.

Level 4 Heading. Level 4 Headings are the first few words of the paragraph and are bolded, with title case capitalization, and a period at the end (like the heading is its own sentence). Still indent the new paragraph. The text following will come directly after the heading’s period and continue like a regular paragraph would.

Level 5 Heading. Level 5 Headings are the first few words of the paragraph, bolded, italicized, with title case capitalization, and a period at the end (like the heading is its own sentence). Still indent the new paragraph. The text following will come directly after the heading’s period and continue like a regular paragraph would.

EXAMPLE 2: HEADINGS IN STUDENT PAPERS

Title of Paper

The “Title of Paper” uses a Level 1 Heading, as it is a main topic section. In the paragraph(s) following, you will write your introduction.

Main Topic 1

Here, you will write your paragraphs about the first main topic of your paper using a Level 1 Heading to label it.

Subtopic 1

Here you will write your paragraphs about your subtopic for main topic 1 here using a Level 2 Heading to label it.

Subtopic 2

Here you will write your paragraphs about your subtopic for main topic 1 here using a Level 2 Heading. Note that it is good to have more than one subsection if implemented.

Main Topic 2

Here, you will write your paragraphs about the second main topic of your paper using a Level 1 Heading.

Conclusion

Using a Level 1 Heading, label the “Conclusion” section and write your conclusion paragraph following the heading.

References

On a new page, your references section will begin under the “References” header, which uses a Level 1 Heading. Student papers typically only use levels 1-2, but if your paper requires more subsections, Example 1 can be used as a guideline for formatting those subsections of your paper.

PRACTICE NOW