MLA and APA: What’s the Difference?

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Fall 2016 Update
Outline of Presentation

- The writing prompt/assignment
- The writing assignment and the tutorial
- Styles and disciplines
- Decoding style
- Elements of style – MLA and APA
- MLA and APA differences
- Features of MLA style
- Features of APA style
- Works Cited
- Resources
- Activities
Consider this:

“The writing prompt should be considered a valuable aspect within the composing process because it is a text produced by a member of the academic discourse community, a community that students must try to appropriate.”

(Kendall 4)
An assignment for a formal essay should be on a page of its own and available electronically. Include the following:

- **Task** – what the student should write about (the topic), the purpose for writing, a rhetorical pattern, the writing process (prewriting and research, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading)
- **Audience** – specify beyond yourself
- **Format** – specify paper length, preferred style and format, and sources that can and/or cannot be used
- **Expectations** about the process to be followed – due date(s), saving drafts and sources, Turnitin.com information
- **Criteria for evaluation** – how the final product will be graded, criteria/rubric, weight for different features
- **Resources** – writing handbook, Library, Academic Skills Center, Writing Center, online information

Activity (Bean 84)
Consider this:

“Time spent interpreting the assignment, as well as understanding the rhetorical situation, is far more valuable than the time spent evaluating a finished product.”

(Kendall 4)
Tutors and tutees working together:
- critically reading the writing assignment and interpreting it

Tutors aiding tutees with
- understanding the explicit rhetorical situation before composing
- understanding the implicit rhetorical situation before composing
- using the assignment sheet as a significant planning aid for the writing process
- guiding tutees through different stages of the writing process

(Kendall 4)
Various Styles and Disciplines

http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc//writing/onlinematerials.html

- **MLA** – English and the humanities (art, music, theater, dance, film, philosophy, religion, world languages)
- **APA** – psychology, nursing, education, business
- **Chicago (CMS)** – history, education, business
- **CSE** – biology
- **ACS** – chemistry
- **APS** – journalism
- **ASA** – sociology
- **AMS** – mathematics
- **SAA** – anthropology
Expectations and conventions for writing unique to different disciplines:

- purpose for writing and conducting research
- questions asked by scholars and practitioners
- types of evidence used
- language and writing conventions
- citation style

The challenge for students is to become familiar with the distinctive features of writing for a certain discipline.

Activity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLA</th>
<th>APA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-referencing</td>
<td>Cross-referencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript guidelines</td>
<td>Manuscript guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-text (parenthetical) citations</td>
<td>In-text (parenthetical) citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited (not a bibliography)</td>
<td>References (not a bibliography)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting documents (if required):
- annotated bibliography
- footnotes and/or endnotes
- author note
- abstract
- footnotes
- appendix: brief materials (descriptions, lists, details, etc.)
### Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLA</th>
<th>APA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>author-page method of citation</td>
<td>author-date method of citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>created for scholars in English composition and literature</td>
<td>created for researchers in the social sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>author’s full name on first mention</td>
<td>authors’ last names only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of the “right” language for the audience being addressed</td>
<td>objective tone, scientific writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present tense verb in signal phrase vs. past tense</td>
<td>economy of expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium of publication designation (ex. Print, Web, etc.)</td>
<td>past or present perfect tense verb in signal phrase*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many purposes for writing and research</td>
<td>DOI (digital object identifier) or document number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two purposes for writing and research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Present tense is used “to discuss implications of the results and to present conclusions” *(APA 66).*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for writing and conducting research</th>
<th>MLA</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>APA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● to analyze, argue, compare, contrast,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>define, describe, discuss, evaluate,</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>explain, illustrate, inform, interpret,</td>
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<tr>
<td>narrate, report, show cause and effect,</td>
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<tr>
<td>summarize, trace, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- To report original research (your own)
- To review literature previously written about a research topic

Note: A review of literature might also be included in an original research report in relation to the writer’s own research.
Features of MLA Style

- Title page not required
  [http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc/writing/onlinematerials.html](http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc/writing/onlinematerials.html)

- All borrowed material is cited in-text, page number required

- Short quotations are four lines or less

- Long quotations are over four lines

- Thesis statement
  An assertion about the topic that you must show, explain, or prove; an argument
  [http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc/writing/onlinematerials.html](http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc/writing/onlinematerials.html)

- Types of evidence: examples, facts, statistics, testimonies from experts, opinions, opposing argument, definitions, historical evidence, charts, graphs, maps, other visuals, etc.
Features of APA Style

- Title page required with running head
  [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

- Abstract

- Use of headings to help readers follow the organization of the paper. “For an original research report: Method, Results, Discussion. The introduction is not given a heading. For a literature review, headings will vary” (Hacker 416).

- Page numbers for quotations, paraphrases, and summaries.

- Short quotations, fewer than 40 words; long, 40 words or more

- Thesis statement—answers a research question or hypothesis. For an original research report, what the experiment has proven. For a literature review, conclusions made by researchers about the topic. Note: The writer of the report or review also argues a position.
  [http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc//writing/onlinematerials.html](http://www.avc.edu/studentservices/lc//writing/onlinematerials.html)

- Types of evidence: reports of empirical (experimental) studies; reviews; case studies, meta-analyses, etc.

Activity
Style is important!

- Select the style appropriate to your discipline.
- Consider the purpose of your writing assignment.
- Consider the kinds of sources you want your students to use.
- Consider that letting students choose for themselves which style to use potentially does these things:
  1. Confuses them.
  2. Makes more work for you.
  3. May result in an inferior final product.


Resources

- **APA Website**  
  (Tutorials—The Basics of APA Style, What’s New in the Sixth Edition)

- **AVC Writing Center Website**  
  [http://www.avc.edu](http://www.avc.edu)  
  (for research and documentation online, model papers, etc.)

- **MLA Website**  
  [http://www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)  
  (full text of MLA Handbook, research project narratives)

- **OWL at Purdue**  
  [http://owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)  
  (PPTs for MLA and APA)