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Resources for Teaching Research and Statistics in Psychology

<b>Title of Resource</b>	Activity: Honing APA-style writing skills with a focused in-class assignment
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<b>Brief Description:</b>	This exercise will help teach the material on concise writing and mechanics that is covered in chapters 3 and 4 of the APA manual. This exercise contains sentences that violate specific rules of these chapters, and students correct the sentences.
<b>Keywords:</b>	Communicating Science, APA formatting
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<b>Additional Information:</b>	

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**Instructors:**

We believe that this exercise works best as an in-class assignment with students working in pairs or groups of three, although it could also work as a take-home assignment.

The exercise takes students 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

**For each sentence below, identify how the sentence violates an APA rule, and then suggest how to improve the sentence. For your help, the specific section of the APA manual that describes a rule that is violated is given in parentheses after the sentence.**

### **APA Ch 3 exercises**

Evert et al. (2000) failed to inform their audience that the test they used is biased. (3.07).

The study examined people with dementia. (3.09).

We conducted a survey on the eating habits of autistic and normal controls. (3.15).

The participants were boys and girls aged 15 to 16 years old. (3.16).

Alzheimer's disease was looked for in elderly participants. (3.16).

A survey was sent to one third of the student body. (3.18).

Di Lorenzo et al. (2008) explains that taste is encoded by the brainstem. (3.18).

The stimulus were pairs of faces. (3.19).

The data was analyzed in SPSS. (3.19).

The data can take the theory farther since the experimental data extend the broader theory. (3.22).

### **APA CH 4 exercises**

The arena was 10 c.m. wide X 20 c.m. long. (4.02).

Participants were asked if they had taken codeine in the past week, month or year. (4.03).

Respondents were asked how often they had taken MDMA or 'Molly'. (4.07).

Participants rated the intensity of the taste stimulus from 1 'very weak' to 7 'very strong'. (4.07).

Results revealed a significant difference between groups,  $p < 0.05$ . (4.09).

The experimental and control groups were significantly different, see Figure 2. (4.09).

We describe an easy way to modify standard laboratory glasses/goggles to simulate the various perceptual deficits that accompany common visual disorders. (4.11).

These stimulus were used in the next phase of the experiment. (4.12).

The data was collected from students in psychology courses. (4.12).

One-half of participants were randomly assigned to the control group. (4.13).

Tukey post-hoc tests revealed differences between groups. (4.13).

The inter-stimulus interval during the pre-test was 2 min. (4.13).

Their study examined the effect that these two compounds had on excitation in three test groups: Heterosexual men, gay men, and heterosexual females. (4.14).

Brain activity was measured with an Electroencephalogram. (4.16).

On day 2, rats underwent extinction trials. (4.17).

Data indicated that rats in the Experimental and Control groups did not differ in performance. (4.19).

Trials were 5 min to 10 min long. (4.27).

Intertrial intervals were 0.5 sec long. (4.27).

The lever was 3 cms long. (4.29 and 4.40).

Subjects were two years old. (4.31).

48 participants participated in the study. (4.32).

Cognitive speed was examined in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. (4.34).

### APA Ch 3, Instructor Answer Key

Evert et al. (2000) failed to inform their audience that the test they used is biased. (3.07). Sounds combative and unprofessional. Rephrase to avoid this, as Evert could very well be a reviewer of your paper. Correct: Author X (2005) showed that the test Evert (2000) used could be biased. Or, Author X (2005) suggested that the test is biased.

The study examined people with dementia. (3.09). This anthropomorphizes 'the study'. In fact, the study did not examine people, but rather the experimenters did. Correct: The experimenters examined people with dementia. Or, The study involved giving people with dementia assessments.

We conducted a survey on the eating habits of autistic and normal controls. (3.15). This sentence unduly labels people with autism, and further suggests they those with autism are not normal. Correct: We conducted a survey on the eating habits of people with and without autism.

The participants were boys and girls aged 15 to 16 years old. (3.16). People in this age range are better described as young men and young women or adolescents. Correct: The participants were adolescents aged 15 to 16 years old.

Alzheimer's disease was present in elderly participants. (3.16). 'Elderly' can be pejorative, and it should be 'older adults', or simply give the actual age range. Correct: Alzheimer's disease was present in older participants.

A survey was sent to one third of the student body. (3.18). Use active voice! Correct: We sent a survey to one third of the student body.

Di Lorenzo et al. (2008) explains that taste is encoded by the brainstem. (3.18). A past study (that is, all studies you discuss) should be discussed in the past tense. Correct: Di Lorenzo et al. (2008) explained that taste is encoded by the brainstem. Another correct option, in active voice: Di Lorenzo et al. (2008) explained that the brainstem encodes taste.

The stimulus were pairs of faces. (3.19). Subject and verb agreement: 'stimulus' is singular whereas 'stimuli' is plural. Correct: The stimuli were pairs of faces.

The data was analyzed in SPSS. (3.19). Subject and verb agreement: 'data' is plural and 'datum' is singular. Correct: The data were analyzed in SPSS.

The data can take the theory farther since the experimental data extend the broader theory. (3.22). 'Since' should only be used in reference to time, otherwise use 'because'. Additionally, 'farther' is used with physical distance and 'further' refers to conceptual distance (unless it is used as an alternative to 'In addition', which is not the case here). Correct: The data can take the theory further because the experimental data extend the broader theory.

## APA Ch 4, Instructor Answer Key

The arena was 10 c.m. wide X 20 c.m. long. (4.02). You do not need periods with abbreviations of units of measurement. Correct: The arena was 10 cm wide X 20 cm long.

Participants were asked if they had taken codeine in the past week, month or year. (4.03). Use the Oxford comma in APA-style writing. Correct: Participants were asked if they had taken codeine in the past week, month, or year.

Respondents were asked how often they had taken MDMA or ‘Molly’. (4.07). You should use double quotation to introduce slang or a newly coined word or phrase. Subsequent usage should be presented without quotation marks. Correct: Respondents were asked how often they had taken MDMA or “Molly”.

Participants rated the intensity of the taste stimulus from 1 ‘very weak’ to 7 ‘very strong’. (4.07). Anchors of a scale should appear italicized in parentheses. Correct: Participants rated the intensity of the taste stimulus from 1 (*very weak*) to 7 (*very strong*).

Results revealed a significant difference between groups,  $p < 0.05$ . (4.09 and 4.35). Parentheses should be used to enclose statistical values. Additionally, a zero is not needed before a statistic when the value cannot be greater than 1. Correct: Results revealed a significant difference between groups ( $p < .05$ ).

The experimental and control groups were significantly different, see Figure 2. (4.09). Parentheses should be used to set off structurally independent elements such as references to figures and tables. Correct: The experimental and control groups were significantly different (see Figure 2).

We describe an easy way to modify standard laboratory glasses/goggles to simulate the various perceptual deficits that accompany common visual disorders. (4.11). Use the word or instead of dashes wherever possible. Correct: We describe an easy way to modify standard laboratory glasses or goggles to simulate the various perceptual deficits that accompany common visual disorders.

These stimulus were used in the next phase of the experiment. (4.12). Stimulus is singular and stimuli is plural. Correct: These stimuli were used in the next phase of the experiment.

The data was collected from students in psychology courses. (4.12). Datum is singular whereas data is plural. Correct: The data were collected from students in psychology courses.

One-half of participants were randomly assigned to the control group. (4.13). Common fractions do not need a dash. Correct: One half of participants were randomly assigned to the control group.

Tukey post-hoc tests revealed differences between groups. (4.13). Phrases like *post hoc* and *a posteriori* do not need dashes. Correct: Tukey post hoc tests revealed differences between groups.

The inter-stimulus interval during the pre-test was 2 min. (4.13). Table 4.2 shows a list of prefixes that do not require a hyphen after them. Some common prefixes include co, inter, intra, non, post, pre, re, super, and under. Correct: The interstimulus interval during the pretest was 2 min.

Their study examined the effect that these two compounds had on excitation in three test groups: Heterosexual men, gay men, and heterosexual females. (4.14). The word after a colon should only be capitalized if the clause after the colon is a complete sentence. Correct: Their study examined the effect that these two compounds had on excitation in three test groups: heterosexual men, gay men, and heterosexual females.

Brain activity was measured with an Electroencephalogram. (4.16). Although electroencephalogram may be a key word in the paper, it is not a proper noun, and should not be capitalized. Correct: Brain activity was measured with an electroencephalogram.

On day 2, rats underwent extinction trials. (4.17). Nouns that precede a number that denotes a specific place in a numbered sequence get capitalized. Correct: On Day 2, rats underwent extinction trials.

Data indicated that rats in the Experimental and Control groups did not differ in performance. (4.19). The names of groups in an experiment do not get capitalized. Correct: Data indicated that rats in the experimental and control groups did not differ in performance.

Trials were 5 min to 10 min long. (4.27). Do not repeat units of measurement. Correct: Trials were 5-10 min long.

Intertrial intervals were 0.5 sec long. (4.27). The proper abbreviation for seconds is just s. Correct: Intertrial intervals were 0.5 s long.

The lever was 3 cms long. (4.29 and 4.40). Do not make standard units of measurement plural. Correct: The lever was 3 cm long.

Subjects were two years old. (4.31). Any number with a unit of measurement (unless it starts a sentence) should be presented in numerical form. If this were not a unit of measurement, the two should be spelled out because it is less than 10. Correct: Subjects were 2 years old.

48 participants participated in the study. (4.32). The '48' should be written out because it starts the sentence. Correct: Forty-eight participants participated in the study. Correct and even better: There were 48 participants in the study. Also correct: Participants ( $N = 48$ ) completed the study.

Cognitive speed was examined in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. (4.34). You should treat ordinal numbers like cardinal numbers. Correct: Cognitive speed was examined in first and third graders.