

Literature Review or Experiment

There are two common types of papers written in fields using APA Style: the literature review and the experimental report. Each has unique requirements concerning the sections that must be included in the paper.

Literature Review

A literature review is a summary of what the scientific literature says about your specific topic or question. Often student research in APA fields falls into this category. Your professor might ask you to write this kind of paper to demonstrate your familiarity with work in the field pertinent to the research you hope to conduct.

A literature review typically contains the following sections:

- title page
- introduction section
- list of references

Some instructors may also want you to write an abstract for a literature review, so be sure to check with them when given an assignment. Also, the length of a literature review and the required number of sources will vary based on course and instructor preferences.

NOTE: A literature review and an annotated bibliography are **not** synonymous. If you are asked to write an annotated bibliography, you should consult the *Publication Manual* for the APA Format for Annotated Bibliographies.

Experimental Report

In many of the social sciences, you will be asked to design and conduct your own experimental research. If so, you will need to write up your paper using a structure that is more complex than that used for just a literature review. We have a complete resource devoted to writing an experimental report in the field of psychology here.

This structure follows the scientific method, but it also makes your paper easier to follow by providing those familiar cues that help your reader efficiently scan your information for:

- why the topic is important (covered in your introduction)
- what the problem is (also covered in your introduction)
- what you did to try to solve the problem (covered in your methods section)
- what you found (covered in your results section)
- what you think your findings mean (covered in your discussion section)

Thus an experimental report typically includes the following sections:

- title page
- abstract
- introduction
- method
- results

- discussion
- references
- appendixes (if necessary)
- tables and/or figures (if necessary)

Make sure to check the guidelines for your assignment or any guidelines that have been given to you by an editor of a journal before you submit a manuscript containing the sections listed above.

As with the literature review, the length of this report may vary by course or by journal, but most often it will be determined by the scope of the research conducted.

Other Papers

If you are writing a paper that fits neither of these categories, follow the guidelines about **General Format**, consult your instructor, or look up advice in the Publication Manual.

When submitting a manuscript to a journal, make sure you follow the guidelines described in the submission policies of that publication, and include as many sections as you think are applicable to presenting your material. Remember to keep your audience in mind as you are making this decision. If certain information is particularly pertinent for conveying your research, then ensure that there is a section of your paper that adequately addresses that information.