

## Guidelines for Preparing a Research Brief Submission

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For writing guidance for all sections of your **Research Brief**, please see chapter 3 of the APA Publication Manual (7th edition). Also, visit this resource on the American Psychological Association's website: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

### **Overall Format** -

1. Research Brief length: Five (5) pages. Your reference page(s) and table or figure do NOT count against the 5-page limit.
2. Use 10 point, Times New Roman font, 1.5 line spacing.
3. Do not have an Introduction heading.
4. Use the following section headings in your Research Brief: Method and Procedure, Results, Discussion, and References. Most headings are positioned left flush, the first letter of each word capitalized, and in bold. See 2.27 (pages 47-49) in the APA Publication Manual. The reference heading is centered.

**Title** - The title is a concise statement of the main topic of your research study. In your title, try to include the variables or theoretical issues you have investigated and the relationship between them.

5. Keep your title focused and concise. (See APA manual 2.4 for additional guidance.)

**Abstract** – Provide an overview of your study. The APA manual 2.9 provides additional guidance on the abstract.

6. The abstract should not exceed 250 words.
7. For our journal, the abstract should be written as a single paragraph without headings or indentations.

**Keywords** – These are words, phrases, or acronyms that describe key aspects of your paper and are used to help others find your article during a search.

8. Provide three to five keywords that describe your content.
9. Write the label “Keywords:” (in italics) one line below the abstract, indented 0.5 in., followed by the keywords in lowercase and separated by commas. Capitalize any proper nouns.
10. Do not use end punctuation after the last keyword. (See APA manual 2.10.)

**Introduction** - Present the problem investigated, the central hypothesis, and questions or theories investigated.

11. Do not use a heading for the introduction.
12. Begin - State the research problem and theoretical and or practical implication(s).
13. Review the most relevant scholarship - Cite previous fundamental research studies (at least five citations). All citations must conform to APA style.
14. End your introduction by stating one or more specific hypotheses, aims, and objectives.

**The Study's Procedure and Methodology** – Tell us what you did and how you did it.

15. Participant characteristics – Summarize your sample's relevant demographic characteristic(s) (e.g., sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) and any essential specific characteristics related to the research topic.
16. Sampling procedure(s) – Describe the sampling method, percentage of sample approached that participated, any self-selection that occurred, settings where you collected data, data collection dates, and any agreements or payments made to participants.
17. Sample size – Report the achieved sample size.
18. IRB - Describe the institutional review board approval, how the study satisfied research ethics requirements (i.e., informed consent, participant anonymity, maintaining data confidentiality, debriefing if necessary).
19. Measures – Name and cite all primary measures. Provide an APA style reference citation for each measure or scale adapted from a journal article, book, or other sources. Try to provide psychometric information (e.g., reliability, validity) of the instruments, including any ad hoc instruments created for this study, but be brief.
20. Data collection – Describe the method(s) used to collect data.
21. Quality of measurements – If relevant, describe any method(s) used to enhance the quality of the measures (e.g., training data collectors to improve reliability, the use of multiple observations, and so on).
22. Conditions and design – State whether conditions were manipulated or naturally observed. Identify the type of design (see “Conditions and Design” Table 3.1, page 80 of the APA publication manual).
23. Masking – If you used an experimental design, were those who administered the experimental manipulation(s) and those assessing the outcomes “blind” to the condition assignments? If so, how was masking conducted?

**Present Your Results** – Present your findings, and just the findings, using narrative to report statistics in proper APA format (i.e., italicize statistical symbols like *t*, *r*, *df* that you report). But hold off on interpreting the relevance of your finding to the hypotheses (do that next, in the Discussion section).

24. Present descriptive statistics: e.g., number of cases, mean(s), standard deviation(s), range(s) that characterize the data. Consider using an APA style table if you have a lot of descriptive statistics to present.
25. Use sentences to present results of all inferential tests conducted, including *p* values if doing NHST and statistical tests (e.g., *df*, *t*, *f*, *r*, and so on). Report effect size estimates and, when possible, confidence intervals that correspond to each inferential statistical test conducted.
26. Note that complex data analyses (e.g., multivariate analyses, hierarchical linear models, structural equation modeling) are a “red flag” because these methods are not taught until upper-division or graduate school. Psi Beta does not expect or accept complex data analyses in a journal submission.
27. If applicable, describe any problems with statistical assumption violations or data distributions that could affect the validity of the study’s findings.

**Discussion – What Do the Results Say About Your Hypotheses? Close with Limitations and Implications.**

28. Provide a statement(s) describing support or nonsupport for your primary hypotheses (and any secondary hypotheses if applicable).
29. The similarity of your results – Discuss similarities and differences between your results and the results of the research studies cited in your introduction. As always, be sure to use APA style citations when referring to work by others.
30. Interpretation – What do your results mean in terms of your study’s primary research question?
31. Limitations – If relevant, mention:
  - a. source(s) of possible bias and threats to internal and statistical validity, imprecision of the measurement tools or strategies, and adequacy of the sample size;
  - b. generalizability, i.e., the external validity of the findings in terms of representativeness of the target population or other contextual issues (e.g., the setting, measurement, time, ecological validity); and
  - c. other possible limitations.
32. Implications – Discuss implications or suggestions for future research, programs, or policy decisions.

### **Overall APA Style Reminders**

- Try to use perfect grammar and spelling throughout your Research Brief.
- Seek precise word choice. Work on clear and concise sentences, paragraphs, or sections. Avoid wordiness.
- Format your reference section as described in the APA manual chapters 9 and 10. Your reference page(s) do NOT count against the Research Brief’s five-page limit.
- Only the articles cited in the Research Brief paper should appear on your reference page.
- Reference page entries must have been cited in the Research Brief’s narrative. If a reference is not mentioned in your paper’s narrative, do not include it as a reference.
- Use 1-inch margins all around.
- Use 10-point Times New Roman and 1.5 line spacing.
- If you add a table, be sure to number, caption, and format the table correctly (see publication manual Chapter 7). If you provide a table, limit your Research Brief to one table.
- If you add a figure (e.g., a data summary graph), be sure it is appropriately numbered, captioned, and labeled (see the APA publication manual Chapter 7). If you provide a figure, limit your Research Brief to one figure.

### **Research Ethics to Mention in Your Research Brief**

- Evidence that an Internal Review Board (IRB) approved the study.
- Informed consent – Your Research Brief should describe how you obtained informed consent from your participants.
- Debriefing – If you debriefed, describe how you debriefed participants. If you deceived participants in any way, debriefing is required.