

What Are the Unique Characteristics of the AMA Style Guide?

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What is the AMA Format?

The American Medical Association (AMA) was founded in 1847 to encompass all aspects of the medical profession from advances in medicine to fundraising for education. The *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, first published in 1883, is the most widely read medical journal in the world, with a network of 11 specialty journals. Given that JAMA was first an in-house publication, AMA provided its editors and authors with the first style manual in 1961, the AMA Manual of Style (AMA Style).

Now published by Oxford University Press, the guide has expanded in coverage from only 68 pages to more than 1,000 with its current 11th edition, published in 2020.

Who Uses the AMA Manual of Style?

AMA Manual of Style is the go-to guide for authors of academic research in the fields of medicine, health, and other life sciences. Although all scholarly science-based journals

have author guidelines, most follow specific AMA rules, especially those for citations and references. The AMA Manual of Style offers guidance on topics including punctuation, capitalization, and grammar to use while drafting a medical or other life sciences related manuscripts. Furthermore, it helps in navigating the dilemmas that authors, researchers and their institutions, medical editors and publishers, writers, and members of the scientific research news media confront on a daily basis.

Unique Characteristics of the 11th Edition of the AMA Style Paper

Written by an expert committee of JAMA Network editors, the 11th edition of the AMA Manual of Style covers the following:

1. Ethical and legal issues
2. Authorship
3. Conflicts of interest
4. Scientific misconduct
5. Intellectual property
6. Preparation of publication ready articles

AMA Writing Format Guidelines

While AMA Manual of Style does not have a specific style for formatting papers, instructors and professors provide general guidelines when it comes to margins, line spacing, fonts, indents, title papers, etc.

Always refer to the assignment guidelines provided by your university or the targeted journal when you format your manuscript. If your assignment does not specify any formatting, follow these general recommended AMA guidelines:

- Space-out one inch margins from all four sides of the paper. around the text.
- The text must be left-aligned and must not be formatted in columns.
- Double-space the main text paragraphs.
- Use single space only within the abstract, notes, titles and headings, block quotes, tables and figures, and references.
- Maintain a 12-point Times New Roman font.
- The standard for new paragraphs is half-inch indents.
- Place page numbers in the top right-hand corner throughout the manuscript including the title page.
- Place the title of your document in the top left-hand corner of the page
- The title page of your manuscript, assignment, or book must include the following in the center alignment:
 - Title of document
 - Your name
 - Your Instructor's name
 - Course title (for assignments)

- Due date
- If the journal or assignment guidelines mention that it does not require a title page, you must include the following in the right-hand corner of your first page:
 - Your name
 - Your instructor's name
 - Course title (for assignments)
 - Due date

AMA Citation Style Guide

Sources can be cited in AMA Manual of Style in two forms:

1. In-text AMA Citation/In-text Numbered Citation
2. Reference Page

In-text AMA Citation/In-text Numbered Citations

AMA Style uses a superscript Arabic number placed immediately after the referenced author or material—there is no author name or date in parentheses. The citations are then numbered in sequence and the reference section follows that numbering. For example:

Johnson et al.² provided the results of their studies in 1975.

In the references, this would appear second in the list. If this work is cited again in the paper, the same number is used. The entry in the references would then be as follows:

2. Johnson AB, Smith CD, Houser EF. Shifts in alcohol consumption in pre-teens. Am J Clin Nutr. 1975;83(3):600–650.

Specific to AMA Style is the format of author initials, punctuation, and italics. Also, journal names are abbreviated according to the [PubMed Journal Database](#).

Reference Page

1. The reference page is a separate page at the end of the manuscript, assignment, or a book.
2. It is important to list each citation in the text in the list on the References page. Furthermore, each listing on the References page must appear in the text.
3. All the references must be left-aligned.
4. Double space and start your list with number 1. Place a period after each number.
5. References are listed numerically in the order of being cited in the text of the paper.
6. While spacing, maintain single space for each reference.

Citing from Different Sources

Citing Journal Articles

Print Journal Citing Format

Author AA. Title of article: lower case letter for subtitle. Abbreviated Title of Journal. Year; Volume number (Issue number): page numbers.

Online Journal Citing Format

Author AA, Author BB, Author CC. Title of article: lower case letter for subtitle. Abbreviated Title of Journal. Year; Volume number (Issue number): page numbers. Date published. Date accessed [if using URL]. DOI or URL

- Remember to use the NLM Catalog Journal Search to find the abbreviation for most journal titles.
- In addition, AMA recommends providing a DOI (Digital Object Identifier), when it is available. DOIs provide stable, long-lasting links for online articles

Citing Books

Print Book Citing Format

Author AA, Author BB, Author CC. Title of Book: Subtitle of Book. Edition. Name of publisher; Year of publication.

E-Book Citing Format

Author AA, Author BB, Author CC. Title of Book: Subtitle of Book. Name of publisher; Year of publication. Date accessed. URL

Differences from Other Style Guides

1. The American Psychological Association ([APA](#)) is geared toward those in the behavioral and social sciences. APA uses the author and date [method for in-text citations](#) as follows:

After the intervention, children increased in the number of books read per week (Smith & Wexwood, 2010).

Smith and Wexwood (2010) reported that after the intervention, children increased in the number of books read per week.

The author(s) name and date of publication are enclosed in parentheses at the end of the text. The second sentence uses the author names in the sentence so only the publication date is in parentheses. Note that in the citation, the ampersand (&) is used, but not in the text itself.

The [references are listed alphabetically](#) by author name as follows:

Wegener, D. T., & Petty, R. E. (1994). Mood management across affective states: The hedonic contingency hypothesis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66, 1034-1048.

The order of the names and the specific punctuation are very different from that of AMA Style, but still consistent with AMA Style. The article name is not in initial caps and the journal name is italicized; however, it is not abbreviated.

2. The Modern Language Association ([MLA](#)) is used mainly in the liberal arts and humanities disciplines for documenting sources in [scholarly writing](#). MLA style uses the author's name and the page number from where the cited text has to be pulled for in-text citations. For example:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

In the works cited section (not called the "references" section) of the MLA style, the author's last name is listed alphabetically; however, the full first name (and middle names or middle initials if available) is also listed. For example:

Poniewozik, James. "TV Makes a Too-Close Call." Time, 20 Nov. 2000, pp. 70-71.

The title of the article is not only initial capped, but also enclosed in quotation marks. Note also the format of the date and page numbers.

3. Both APA and MLA use the same reference format for electronic media, including the DOI or URL.
4. Two other styles are worth mentioning here. Both the Council of Science Editors (CSE) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) have their styles for in-text citations that are similar to that of AMA but with subtle differences. Both use Arabic numerals after in-text citations, but the formats for each are different.

Follow these rules and guidelines while formulating your next manuscript, assignment, or book that expects AMA manual of Style format. Let us know how this article helped you in drafting your manuscript in the comments section below! You can also visit our

[Q&A forum](#) for frequently asked questions related to different aspects of research writing and publishing answered by our team that comprises subject-matter experts, eminent researchers, and publication experts.

Cite this article

Uttkarsha Bhosale, What Are the Unique Characteristics of the AMA Style Guide?. Enago Academy. 2021/09/04. <https://www.enago.com/academy/unique-characteristics-of-the-ama-style-guide/>