

Why Learn APA Style?

There are clearly advantages to learning any style manual. As a graduate or a student, when you submit any kind of manuscript to any kind of publication you will run up against some publication's house style. So having that concept under your belt can make the working relationship far more satisfying for you as an author--and will endear you to editors.

Learning APA's citation system (or any rigorous system) teaches you that author and title are not enough. Whoever reads your work needs enough information to be able to locate your sources.

It is also valuable to learn the kind of consistency in writing style that APA urges. Readers are distracted -- and some are consciously annoyed, others subconsciously uneasy -- when they

- see "nine subjects" on one line and "9 subjects" in the next paragraph
- notice a word that's capitalized on page 1 is in lower case on page 3
- can find no discernible logic for a switch, for example, from Fahrenheit to Celsius

A reader -- even the professor who assigned you a paper -- can choose among any number of other activities instead of reading your paper. As an author, it is your job to make sure that readers don't lay down the paper and decide to walk the dog or make an omelet. Otherwise, that reader can easily mutter to her- or himself, "I'll finish reading this after I have supper/weed the garden/wash the car."