

APA Definition Essay Template (7th Edition)

Document Setup for Microsoft Word:

1. Set font: **Times New Roman 12pt or Calibri 11pt**
2. Set margins: **1 inch** all sides
3. Set line spacing: **Double**
4. Set paragraph alignment: **Left-aligned** with **first line indent 0.5 inch**
5. Set header with **running head** and **page numbers**
6. Save as: LastName_FirstInitial_DefinitionEssay.docx

APA 7TH EDITION TEMPLATE

[Double-click header area to open Header/Footer tools]

[Type: Running head: **SHORTENED TITLE IN ALL CAPS**] [Press Tab multiple times to right-align] [Insert → Page Number → Current Position → Plain Number]

[Note: "Running head:" appears ONLY on title page. Subsequent pages show **SHORTENED TITLE** without "Running head:"]

[Click below header to begin document]

[Press Enter 3-4 times to center vertically]

[Center-align text for title page]

The Complete Definition of [Your Term]

[Press Enter twice]

Your Full Name

[Press Enter]

University or Institutional Affiliation

[Press Enter]

Course Number and Name

[Press Enter]

Instructor's Name

[Press Enter]

Assignment Due Date (Month Day, Year format)

[Press Enter twice]

[Press Ctrl+Enter to insert page break]

[On Page 2, the header should now show: **SHORTENED TITLE IN ALL CAPS**] [Right-aligned page number 2]

[Center-align text] **Abstract**

[Press Enter, return to left alignment]

[Do not indent abstract paragraph] [Type your abstract here. An abstract is a 150-250 word summary of your entire paper. For a definition essay, include: the term being defined, why it needs redefining, your main definitional approach, key characteristics, and the significance of your definition. Write in a single paragraph without indentation. Use the third person and avoid citations in the abstract.]

[Press Ctrl+Enter to insert page break]

[On Page 3, header shows: SHORTENED TITLE IN ALL CAPS] [Page number 3]

[Center-align text] **The Complete Definition of [Your Term]**

[Press Enter, return to left alignment, press Tab to indent first line]

[Begin introduction here. Start with the significance of the term or a compelling opening about why definition matters. Provide background context. Introduce the term formally. State the purpose of your essay and preview your definitional approach. End with a clear thesis statement that presents your refined definition. Example: "This essay argues that [term] is best understood not as [common misconception], but as [your definition] characterized by [characteristic 1], [characteristic 2], and [characteristic 3]."]

[Press Enter, press Tab to indent] [Begin first body paragraph here. Start with a topic sentence introducing the first aspect of your definition. Typically, this paragraph covers the formal or dictionary definition, etymology, or historical context. Include citations where appropriate. For example: According to Merriam-Webster (2023), [term] is defined as " _____ " (para. #). Or: The term derives from the Greek word _____, meaning _____ (Etymology, n.d.). Analyze this basic definition, noting its limitations or evolution. Conclude the paragraph by transitioning to your expanded definition.]

[Press Enter, press Tab to indent] [Begin second body paragraph here. Introduce the first key characteristic of your refined definition. Use a clear topic sentence. Provide examples, evidence, or analogies that illustrate this characteristic. Analyze how these examples support your definition. Use transitions like "for example," "specifically," or "to illustrate." Integrate citations properly. For example: This characteristic is demonstrated in research by Smith and Jones (2022), who found that _____ (p. #). Conclude by reinforcing why this characteristic is essential to the term.]

[Press Enter, press Tab to indent] [Begin third body paragraph here. This paragraph should address the second key characteristic or distinguish your definition from common misconceptions. Start with an appropriate topic sentence. Use contrast if clarifying misconceptions: "Unlike the popular view that

[term] involves _____, true [term] requires _____. " Provide evidence and analysis. Consider using compare/contrast structure. Conclude by summarizing this distinction's importance.]

[Press Enter, press Tab to indent] [Begin fourth body paragraph here. This paragraph can explore a third characteristic, discuss the implications of your definition, or examine the term in specific contexts. Use a strong topic sentence. Provide the most compelling evidence or analysis here. Consider discussing practical applications or consequences of understanding the term your way. For example: "When [term] is understood through this framework, it enables _____ and prevents _____. Conclude with a sentence that ties back to your overall thesis.]

[Press Enter, press Tab to indent] [Begin your conclusion here. Start by restating your thesis in fresh language. Synthesize the main characteristics you've discussed, showing how they interconnect. Discuss the broader significance of your definition. Why does this refined understanding matter? What implications does it have for practice, policy, or further research? End with a final, impactful statement that leaves the reader considering the importance of precise definition. Avoid introducing new information or citations in the conclusion.]

[Press Ctrl+Enter to insert page break]

[On References page, header shows: SHORTENED TITLE IN ALL CAPS] [Page number continues]

[Center-align text] **References**

[Press Enter, return to left alignment]

[Format references with hanging indent (0.5 inch). Alphabetize by author's last name. Use DOI or URL when available.]

[Sample references - replace with your actual sources:]

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). *Title of book* (Edition). Publisher. DOI or URL

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, Volume(Issue), Page range. DOI or URL

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). *Title of webpage*. Website Name. URL

Group Author. (Year). *Title of work*. Publisher. DOI or URL

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). [Term]. In [Merriam-Webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com) dictionary. Retrieved Month Day, Year, from URL

[Additional page for appendices if needed - use only if necessary]

APA 7TH EDITION FORMATTING GUIDE

Word-Specific Formatting Instructions:

To Create Running Head:

1. Double-click top of page
2. Check "Different First Page"
3. On first page header: Type "Running head: SHORTENED TITLE" (max 50 characters, all caps)
4. Tab to right, insert page number (Plain Number)
5. On second page header: Type SHORTENED TITLE (without "Running head:")
6. Tab to right, insert page number

To Set First Line Indent:

Home → Paragraph → Indentation → Special → First line → 0.5"

To Create Hanging Indent for References:

1. Highlight reference entries
2. Right-click → Paragraph
3. Indentation → Special → Hanging → 0.5"

To Insert Page Breaks:

Ctrl+Enter or Insert → Page Break

APA 7th Edition Rules for Definition Essays:

Title Page:

- Title: Bold, centered, title case
- Author: First name, middle initial, last name
- Affiliation: Department, University
- Course: Course number: Course name
- Instructor: Instructor's name
- Due date: Month Day, Year format

Abstract:

- Page 2
- Label "Abstract" centered, bold
- Single paragraph, 150-250 words
- No indentation
- Keywords line optional (if required)

Headings (if needed):

Level 1: **Centered, Bold, Title Case**

Level 2: **Flush Left, Bold, Title Case**

Level 3: **Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case**

Level 4: **Indented, Bold, Title Case, ending with period.**

Level 5: **Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case, ending with period.**

In-Text Citations:

- One author: (Smith, 2020) or Smith (2020)
- Two authors: (Smith & Jones, 2020) or Smith and Jones (2020)
- Three or more: (Smith et al., 2020) or Smith et al. (2020)
- No author: Use title in quotation marks: ("Defining Resilience," 2023)
- Direct quote: Include page number: (Smith, 2020, p. 45) or paragraph: (Smith, 2020, para. 5)

Numbers:

- Use numerals for 10 and above
- Spell out numbers zero through nine
- Exceptions: Always use numerals for measurements, percentages, ages, times, dates

Writing Style:

- Third person preferred (avoid "I" and "you")
- Active voice
- Concise, clear language
- Avoid bias in language

Thesis Statement Formulas for APA Definition Essays:

Analytical Approach:

"This analysis defines [term] as [your definition], distinguishing it from [common misconception] through examination of [characteristic 1], [characteristic 2], and [characteristic 3]."

Operational Approach:

"Operationally defined, [term] comprises three essential components: [component 1], which involves _____; [component 2], which requires _____; and [component 3], which results in _____."

Comparative Approach:

"Contrary to [incorrect definition], [term] is more accurately understood as [your definition], as evidenced by [evidence 1], [evidence 2], and [evidence 3]."

Transitional Phrases for APA Style:

Introducing aspects: *Fundamentally, Essentially, Primarily*

Adding points: *Furthermore, Additionally, Moreover*

Contrasting: *However, Conversely, In contrast*

Exemplifying: *For example, Specifically, To illustrate*

Concluding: *Therefore, Consequently, Thus*

Summarizing: *In summary, In conclusion, Ultimately*

APA CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMISSION

Title Page:

- Running head formatted correctly (first page only)
- Title bold, centered, title case
- Author name, affiliation, course, instructor, date
- Page number in top right (starting on title page)

Abstract Page:

- "Abstract" centered, bold
- 150-250 word single paragraph
- No indentation
- Keywords line if required

Main Body:

- Title repeated (centered, bold) at top of page 3
- Double-spaced throughout
- 0.5" first line indent for each paragraph
- In-text citations formatted correctly
- Headings used consistently if needed
- Third-person academic tone maintained

References Page:

- "References" centered, bold
- Hanging indent for each entry
- Alphabetized by author's last name
- DOI or URL included when available
- All references cited in text appear here

Overall Formatting:

- 1-inch margins on all sides
- Times New Roman 12pt or Calibri 11pt
- Double-spacing throughout
- Left alignment (not justified)

- Professional, objective tone
- Free of contractions and colloquialisms

COMMON APA ERRORS & SOLUTIONS

Error: Running head appears on every page

Solution: Check "Different First Page" in header. Remove "Running head:" from second page onward.

Error: References not alphabetized

Solution: Sort entries manually or use Word's Sort function (A-Z).

Error: Multiple spaces between sentences

Solution: Use Find/Replace to change double spaces to single spaces.

Error: Incorrect DOI/URL formatting

Solution: DOIs should be formatted as: <https://doi.org/xxxx>

URLs should be direct links without "Retrieved from" unless needed for archival content.

Error: Inconsistent heading levels

Solution: Use Word's Styles feature to apply consistent heading formatting.

Error: First line indent not working

Solution: Set in Paragraph settings (Special: First line, By: 0.5"). Do not use tabs or spaces.

APA 7TH EDITION UPDATES TO NOTE

1. **DOIs and URLs:**
 - Present as hyperlinks (blue, underlined)
 - No "Retrieved from" unless needed for archival content
 - DOIs format: <https://doi.org/xxxx>
2. **In-text citations for 3+ authors:**
 - Always use "et al." after first citation
 - No exceptions for multiple works with same author/date
3. **Publisher location:**
 - No longer required for books
4. **Ebook sources:**
 - Include DOI or URL if available
 - No need to specify "[Kindle edition]" or similar
5. **Student papers:**

- No running head required unless instructor specifies
- Include course number and instructor on title page

TEMPLATE CUSTOMIZATION NOTES

For Shorter Essays (2-3 pages):

- Abstract may be optional (check requirements)
- Fewer body paragraphs (3 instead of 4)
- Combine characteristics in paragraphs

For Longer Essays (5+ pages):

- Use formal headings to organize sections
- Include more examples and evidence
- Consider adding tables or figures (with APA formatting)
- May include appendices for supplementary material

For Literature-Focused Definition Essays:

- Emphasize literary examples as evidence
- Use close reading to support definition
- Cite literary texts properly (author, year, page)

For Psychology/Social Science Definitions:

- Emphasize empirical research
- Use operational definitions
- Include measurement considerations