

## Levels of Heading

### Why Use Headers

As APA 6th Edition (American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 62-63) indicates, we use headers for our papers as a way of providing structure. Not every paper will use the many levels that APA allows. Longer papers may use all of the headings allowed by APA, but shorter papers may only use one or two.

APA recommends use of headers as a way to establish a hierarchy for the topics in your paper (American Psychological Association, 2010). Topics that are of equal importance will be on the same level heading; whereas, subtopics will be indicated on a different level heading. APA recommends that subheadings be used only if you intend to use two or more subheadings.

### When To Use Headers

It is easy to overuse headers, so be conscious of when or if you are planning to use them. A good rule of thumb is that if you are changing topic or perspective in the paper and a visual cue would help your reader to understand the difference, headers would benefit. However, if the flow of your paper is such that you are easily moving from one section to another without any major change in focus, headers are not required. Headers should be placed strategically so that your argument appears logical and organized in order to assist the reader's understanding. Headers should be used to help make your argument appear logical and organized but should not affect the overall flow of the paper. The title of the paper does not use bold face and is presented on the second page (after the cover page). Do not use the word "introduction" as a header.

### How to Use Headers

The order of headings and methods of use in your papers is indicated below:

Level	Format
1	<b>Centered Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading</b>
2	<b>Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading</b>
3	<b>Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading with a period.</b>
4	<b><i>Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.</i></b>
5	<b><i>Indented, italicized, lowercase, paragraph heading ending with a period.</i></b>

(Based on figure 3.1 in APA (2010))

The heading levels generally resemble an outline and are similar in fashion to how an outline is created. Although there are no firm rules on the exact use of headers, the actual number of headers that you use depends upon several factors including:

- The length of your paper and the amount of detail required
- The kind and amount of topics covered in the paper
- How you intend to organize your content.