

Running Head: Idea Paper: APA STYLE REFERENCING

APA Style Referencing: A Web-Based Module

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American Psychological Association or APA style is widely used and essential for publishing journals. Professionals need to gain a good grasp of APA style for that reason, but most students will also use APA style at one point in their studies. It can be frustrating and overcoming that hurdle may help them produce better quality research. Web-based instruction is gaining popularity due to accessibility, engagement, and interactivity. Therefore, this question will be addressed: Is a web-based module an effective means of instruction of APA style referencing for college students? This question will be answered by creating and implementing a web-based module on APA style referencing. The purpose of this instructional module will be to provide a Flash-based tutorial on APA style references for students who conduct research at the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Using a web-based module will make available many options in instruction. However, many options do not always lead to more learning. It will be ensured that the information is presented in a way that is conducive to learning and the user interface is not so complicated that it impedes learning (Chandler, 2009). The decisions to use or not to use dynamic representations available in hypermedia can substantially impede performance. This is because the cognitive load it takes to make these decisions takes away from the ability to problem-solve later (Gerjets, Scheiter, Opfermann, Hesse, & Eysink, 2009). Creation of a web-based module for APA style referencing is meaningful for many learners. Although APA style is widespread, when asked, few researchers can answer some common APA style questions (Li & Cunningham, 2005).

College students will find the instructional module useful since they are usually just getting acquainted with APA style. They range in age and fields of study. They may have experience in APA style formatting but the module will be simple enough for those with no experience as well. They must have basic computer skills such as navigating a website.

APA formatting can be complicated and extensive, so content-wise, there will be a focus on instruction for the most common types of references such as journal articles, books, and websites. Learners will be tested on whether they can correctly write APA style references through the following steps. Given a set of reference data, the learner will identify the type of source (journal, website, etc.), identify the components (which part is the author, title, date, etc.), and arrange them in the correct sequence. Each question will be worth one point and pre-test, embedded test, and post-test scores will be compared to check for effectiveness of instruction and retention.

A simple Adobe Flash instructional design module will be created, starting with a video on proper APA style referencing followed with an interactive pre-test, embedded test, and post-test. The video will include animation to engage learners and enhance retention. After the creation of the web-based module, it will be tested on the target audience.

The data from the learners' pre-tests, embedded tests, and post-tests will be analyzed using Excel. Graphs will illustrate areas learners did or did not do well on. Data arranged by objective on a hierarchy chart will display pre-test and post-test scores to show learners' progress after completing the module. A conclusion will follow, discussing what areas the learners did or did not do well on and why. Data from demographic surveys, attitude surveys, and notes will also help theorize why learners performed the way they did. Based on this data, appropriate steps will be taken to revise the module.

A web-based instructional module on APA style referencing will give students easy access to learning a skill needed for academic success. Acquiring skills to write in APA style may help them produce better quality research, which benefits students and the academic community.

## References

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