

## APA Spacing and Indentation

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to apply rules of spacing and indentation within paragraphs and references following APA guidelines. The APA guidelines for spacing encompass margin widths, line spacing, and spacing with punctuation. Indentation refers to the way paragraphs are indented from the left margin.

### Reference Location(s) in the APA Manual

Refer to the following sections of the APA manual for specific formatting guidelines for spacing and indentation:

Section	Content
3.51 Style for Metric Units	Guidelines for spacing with metric units of measure
3.59 Spacing, Alignment, and Punctuation	Guidelines for spacing statistical and mathematical information
5.03 Double-Spacing	Guidelines for line spacing
5.04 Margins	Guidelines for setting page margins
5.08 Paragraphs and Indentation	Guidelines for indenting paragraphs
5.11 Spacing and Punctuation	Guidelines for spacing before and after punctuation.
5.13 Quotations	Guidelines for formatting block quotations
5.14 Statistical and Mathematical Copy	Guidelines for spacing statistical and mathematical information
5.16 Abstract	Guidelines for formatting the abstract
5.21 Tables and Table Titles, Notes, and Rules	Guidelines for spacing table titles, headings, and notes
5.22 Figures and Figure Captions	Guidelines for spacing in figure captions

### Overview of the Formatting Guidelines

- In an APA-formatted document, the margins should be set at no less than 1 in. on the top, bottom, left, and right of every page. Although it is technically acceptable to have wider margins, it is recommended to use the default setting of 1 in.
- With a few exceptions, most of the paragraphs in the body of the document should have a first-line indent of 0.5 in. A first-line indent means that the starting position of the first line of the paragraph is to the right of the starting position of subsequent lines in the paragraph.
- The inverse of a first-line indent is a hanging indent. In a paragraph with a hanging indent, the starting position of the first line is to the left of the starting position of the subsequent lines. Subsequent lines are then indented 0.5 in.

<b>First-Line Indent</b>	The first line of a paragraph with a first-line indent begins to the right of where the subsequent lines begin. The 5th edition of APA requires that most paragraphs in the body of a manuscript be formatted with a first-line indent.
<b>Hanging Indent</b>	The first line of a paragraph with a hanging indent begins to the left of where the subsequent lines begin. The 5th edition of APA requires that references in the reference list be formatted with a hanging indent.

- The reference position for indents is the left margin (that is the 0.5 in. is measured from the left margin). The subsequent lines of most paragraphs are left-aligned (not right justified) at the left margin.
- There are exceptions to the indentation rule for the abstract, block quotations, headings, tables, and figures captions. Refer to your APA manual.
- Within a paragraph, the general rule for line spacing is double-spacing. The same rule applies to line spacing within tables, headings, quotations, captions, and references.
- The general rule for horizontal spacing between words and punctuation is one space. For example, there should be one space (not two) following a period at the end of a sentence.
- Certain types of punctuation require deviation from the spacing rule. For example, there should not be a space on either side of an em dash, en dash, or hyphen (when not used as a minus).

## Examples of Spacing and Indentation

### *Correct Spacing within a Paragraph*

Below is an example of correct spacing within a paragraph.

Analysis of the results of the midterm examinations revealed that the male students scored significantly higher (an average of 7.6%) on the multiple-choice sections. At a significance level of  $p = .001$ , though, the gender difference was not significant. Based on the results, Weaver and Raptis (2001) concluded that the multiple-choice questions provided a positive bias for the performance of male students and suggested several conditions—risk taking and verbal ability—as possible factors in the gender differences.

### *Correct Spacing within a Reference*

Below is an example of correct spacing within a reference.

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Longman.

### *Incorrect Spacing within a Paragraph*

Below is an example of incorrect spacing within a paragraph.

**Incorrect spacing**

○ Analysis of the results of the midterm examinations revealed that the male students scored significantly higher (an average of 7.6%) on the multiple-choice sections. □ At a significance level of  $p=$ 001, though, the gender difference was not significant. □ Based on the results, Weaver **Missing spaces** is (2001) concluded that the multiple□□choice questions provided a positive bias for the performance of male students and suggested several conditions□—□verbal ability and risk taking—as possible factors in the gender differences.

□ = **Incorrect spacing**

### *Incorrect Spacing within a Reference*

Below is an example of incorrect spacing within a reference.

**Incorrect spacing**

Anderson, L. W. & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: □ A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York□ Longman. **Incorrect spacing**

**Incorrect spacing**

## **Common Mistakes Made with Spacing and Indentation**

Listed below are common mistakes made with spacing and indentation:

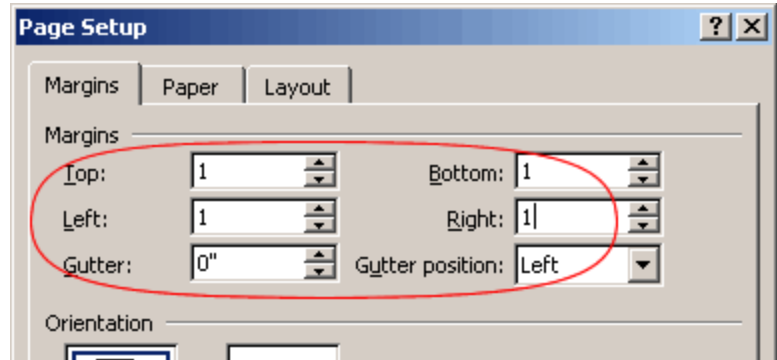
- Using the spacebar to indent paragraphs rather than setting indentation.
- Adding extra line spacing before or after headings.
- Following periods with two spaces at the end of sentences.
- Incorrectly spacing around dashes.
- Incorrectly spacing initials.
- Incorrectly spacing statistical information.

## Applying the Guidelines in MS Word

Unless the settings have been customized, the default settings in MS Word are 1.25 in. for the left and right margin and 0.5 in. for tabs. The default line spacing is single-spacing.

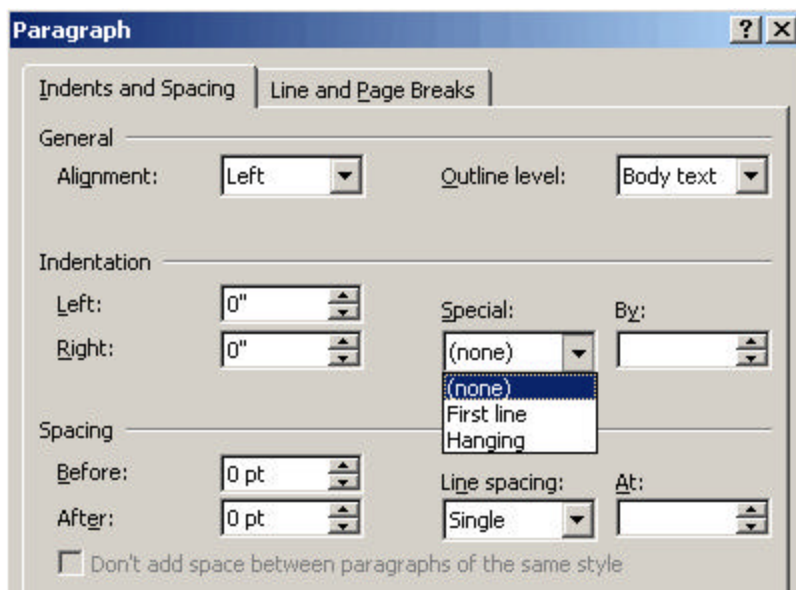
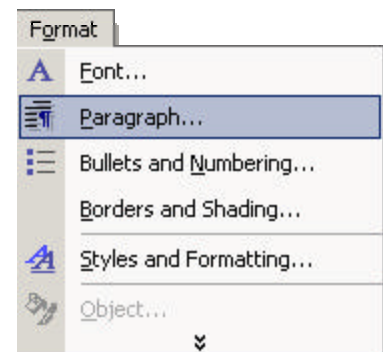
*To set or change the margins of the document:*

1. Select *page setup* from the *file* menu.
2. Enter *1* for the top, bottom, left, and right margins. Enter *0* for the gutter (to avoid adding extra space to the margin). Then click the *OK* button.



*To set a paragraph indent:*

1. Place the cursor in the paragraph in which you want to set the indent (or highlight the paragraphs if you want to format multiple paragraphs at once).
2. Select the *paragraph* command from the *format* menu.
3. In the *paragraph* dialog box (shown below), enter the width of the desired indent (e.g., 0.5) in the indentation box, and select the desired type of indent from the *special* list. (*Note:* An indentation of 0" is the same as not having an indent.) Then click the *OK* button to apply the indent and close the dialog box.



*Note:* Using this method to set a first-line indent eliminates the need for using the tab key to indent a paragraph.

## **Reference**

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.