

APA Format Quick Reference

Building a correctly formatted References list in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint

APA (American Psychological Association) style is the citation format most commonly required in nursing, education, business, and the social sciences. This guide covers the parts of an APA reference, the formatting rules behind them, and the exact settings to use in both Word and PowerPoint to get the hanging-indent References list right the first time.

Anatomy of a Reference

Every APA reference follows the same basic pattern:

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of work in sentence case. Source or Publisher. URL or DOI (if applicable)

- **Author(s)** — Last name first, followed by initials (e.g., Smith, J. A.). Multiple authors are separated by commas, with an ampersand (&) before the final author.
- **(Year)** — The publication year in parentheses, followed by a period.
- **Title** — Sentence case — capitalize only the first word of the title, the first word after a colon, and any proper nouns. Italicize titles of standalone works (books, reports); article titles within a journal are not italicized.
- **Source** — The journal name (in Title Case and italics) with volume/issue and page numbers, or the publisher name, or the URL/DOI for a webpage.

Formatting Rules

- **Font** — APA 7 does not mandate a single font. Pick one and use it consistently throughout the whole document (title page, body, and references alike): Times New Roman 12 pt, Calibri/Arial/Georgia 11 pt, or Lucida Sans Unicode/Computer Modern 10 pt. The guiding principle is legibility. (APA does not set a font or size for slides — for a References slide, keep whatever body font size the rest of the deck uses.)
- **Line spacing** — The entire References list is double-spaced, with no extra space before or after each entry.
- **Hanging indent** — The first line of each reference is flush left; every following line of that same reference is indented 0.5".
- **Order** — References are listed alphabetically by the first author's last name.

Building It in Word

1. Type or paste each reference as its own paragraph (press Enter between entries).
2. Select the entire block of references (Ctrl+A within the text).
3. Go to Home > Paragraph group > click the small arrow to open the full Paragraph dialog.
4. Apply the settings below, then click OK.

Word — Paragraph Settings

- Left: 0", Special: Hanging, By: 0.5"
- Before: 0 pt, After: 0 pt, Line spacing: Double

Paragraph

? X

Inheritance

Paragraph & Spacing | Line and Page Breaks

General

Alignment:

Left

<

Outline level:

Body Text

<

☐ Collapsed by default

Indentation

Left:

0"

<

>

Right:

0"

<

>

Special:

Hanging

<

>

Bg:

0.5"

<

>

☐ Mirror indents

Spacing

Before:

0 pt

<

>

Line spacing:

Double

<

>

After:

<

>

☐ Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style

Preview

Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur elipsum velit. Molestiae pariatur sequae massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

Refined... Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph Previous Paragraph

Tabs...

Set As Default

OK

Cancel

Building It in PowerPoint

1. On your References slide, click into the content placeholder and turn off its bullets (Home > Bullets > None).
2. Type or paste each reference as its own paragraph.
3. Select all the reference paragraphs, then open Home > Paragraph group > click the small arrow to open the full Paragraph dialog.
4. Apply the settings below, then click OK.

PowerPoint — Paragraph Settings

- Before text: 0.5", Special: Hanging, By: 0.5"
- Before: 0 pt, After: 0 pt, Line Spacing: Double

Paragraph ? X

Indents and Spacing

General

Alignment:

Indentation

Before text: Special: By:

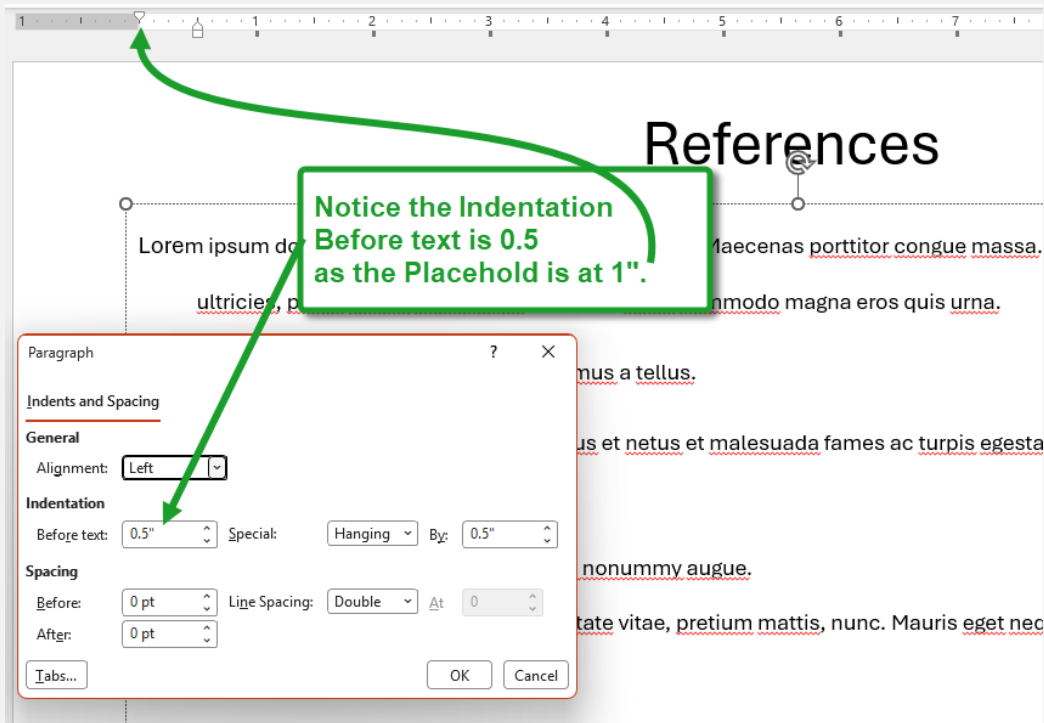
Spacing

Before: Line Spacing: At

After:

Tab... **OK** **Cancel**

Note — Why is "Before text" 0.5" in PowerPoint but 0" in Word?



PowerPoint calculates a hanging indent differently from Word. In Word, the Left indent of 0" combined with a 0.5" hang works fine. But in PowerPoint, that same 0" setting produces no visible hang at all — the first line and wrapped lines unfortunately land in the same spot. The fix, as shown above, is to set the "Before text" to match the hanging amount (0.5").

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