

Formatting APA Tables

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to appropriately format tables using APA guidelines. Using tables to present tabular or numerical data can help make the information more readable and understandable. On the other hand, if the information being presented is not conducive to a tabular format, it may not be appropriate to use tables or it may require a special type of table.

Reference Location(s) in the APA Manual

Refer to the following sections of the APA manual for specific formatting guidelines for tables:

Section	Content
3.13 Major Words in Titles and Headings	Explains the guidelines for capitalizing words used in table headings
3.21 Explanation of Abbreviations	Explains the guidelines for explaining abbreviations in table notes
3.54 Selecting Effective Presentations	Provides guidance for using tables to display information
3.62 Tabular Versus Textual Presentation	Explains the rationale and for presenting information in tables and provides guidance for using tables
3.63 Relation of Tables and Text	Describes the role of tables in relation to text
3.64 Relation Between Tables	Provides guidance for tables containing related information
3.65 Table Numbers	Explains the guidelines for numbering tables
3.66 Table Titles	Provides guidance for table titles
3.67 Headings	Provides guidance for table headings
3.68 Body of a Table	Explains the guidelines for addressing alignment of numbers with decimals, formatting blank cells, and presenting information concisely
3.69 Presenting Data in Specific Types of Tables	Explains the guidelines for the format and content of ANOVA tables, regression tables, linear structural relation tables, and word tables
3.70 Notes to a Table	Explains the guidelines for using and formatting table notes
3.71 Ruling of Tables	Explains the guidelines for lines and spacing in a table
3.72 Size of Tables	Explains the guidelines for sizing tables
3.73 Tables from Another Source	Explains the guidelines for reproducing tables from another source
3.74 Table Checklist	Provides a checklist for helping to ensure that tables are formatted correctly
3.92 Tables as Appendixes	Explains the guidelines for using tables in appendixes
5.21 Tables and Table Titles, Notes, and Rules	Summarizes the guidelines for formatting tables
9.03 Suggested Reading	Suggested resources for using tables

Overview of the Formatting Guidelines

There are numerous guidelines for formatting APA tables. Some of the guidelines, which are broad and apply to tables in general, address details such as citing, numbering, titles and headings, line spacing, notes, and ruling. For specific types of tables (such as analysis of variance [ANOVA] tables, regression tables, linear structural relation tables, and word tables), there are also additional formatting guidelines.

- All tables should be cited in the narrative of the paper. The intent of citing the table is to direct the reader's attention to the table and key information. If the narrative explains each piece of information in the table, consider eliminating the table or revising the narrative to eliminate the duplication of information.
- When citing a table, refer to it by the label (Table) and the table number (which is determined by the order in which the table is mentioned in the narrative of the paper). Table numbers should not include suffix letters (except when the table is part of an appendix that contains multiple tables). An example of a table citation is "see Table 7".
- In addition to having a number, each table should also have a title. The purpose of the title is to give the reader a clear indication of what the table contains. A good table title is neither too broad nor too detailed.
- Like the table title, the heading of each column in the table should clearly identify the corresponding content. Both the column headings (also called *column heads* and *column spanners*) and row headings (also called *row heads* and *row spanners*) should be descriptive but brief.
- Like the body of the paper, all lines of an APA table are to be double spaced. The font used in the table should match the typeface used for the body of the paper (12-pt Times Roman or 12-pt Courier are preferred).
- Table notes, which appear below the table, should also be double spaced. There are three types of table notes: general, specific, and probability; each note has a slightly different function and requires a slightly different format.

Type of APA Note	Function	Format
General	Applies to the whole table	Designated by the word <i>Note</i> (italicized with the initial letter capitalized) and a period. The note itself also ends with a period. A general note appears one line below the table, starting at the left margin. There should only be one general note per table.
Specific	Refers to a particular row, column, or cell	Designated by a superscripted lowercase letter. The letter is determined by the order of the note (starting at the top left of the table and going from left to right and top to bottom). The note itself also ends with a period. Specific notes appear one line below general notes (if the table contains general notes), starting at the left

		margin. If there are multiple specific notes, they appear on the same line.
Probability	Used to indicate statistical significance	Designated by an asterisk (*) or dagger (†, if needed) and the alpha level. Probability notes appear one line below specific notes (if the table contains specific notes), starting at the left margin. If there are multiple probability notes, they appear on the same line. There are also guidelines for formatting the notes to distinguish between one-tailed and two-tailed statistical tests.

- Horizontal rules (lines) are used to improve the visual clarity of information in the table. However, rules should be used sparingly. Generally a horizontal rule appears above and below rows of column headings and below the last row of the table. A horizontal rule should not appear on every row; vertical rules should be avoided.
- There are additional guidelines that govern the formatting and content of specific types of table such as ANOVA tables, regression tables, linear structural relation tables, and word tables. There are also additional guidelines to follow when using tables in appendixes.

Examples of Tables

There are numerous examples of properly formatted tables in the APA manual. See the above reference locations within the manual.

Improperly Formatted Tables

Below is an example of an improperly formatted table with several errors.

	Missing table number		
Test Results	Title too broad and not italicized		Borders on all rows
Test Treatment	Group 1	Group 2 ^a	Group 3
Multiple-choice	497	218.06	51.46
Constructed response	596	132.2	49.11
Formatting of specific note			Treatment of decimal values
^a Data collected online.			
Note. Q	Incorrect order of notes se to question 1		Missing period

Common Mistakes Made with Tables

Listed below are common mistakes made when formatting tables.

- Single-spacing the lines of the table
- Applying borders to all cells of the table

- Incorrect placement and ordering of table notes.
- Incorrect numbering and titling of tables.
- Incorrect capitalization of table and row headings.
- Incorrect alignment of decimals and other elements in columns

Applying the Guidelines in MS Word

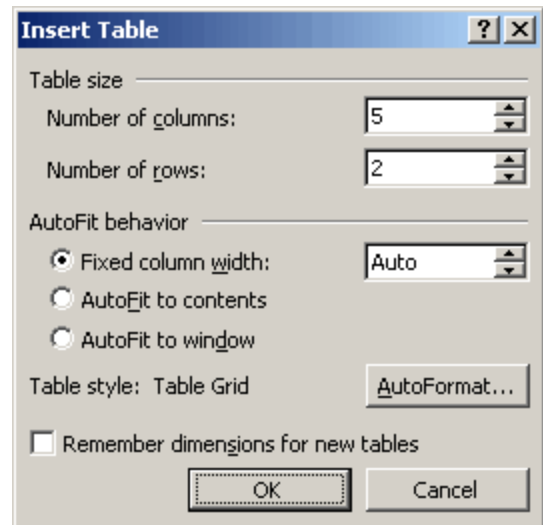
Inserting a Table

To insert a table in a document:

1. Position the cursor where you want to start the table.
2. Select the *table* command from the *insert* submenu on the *table* menu.



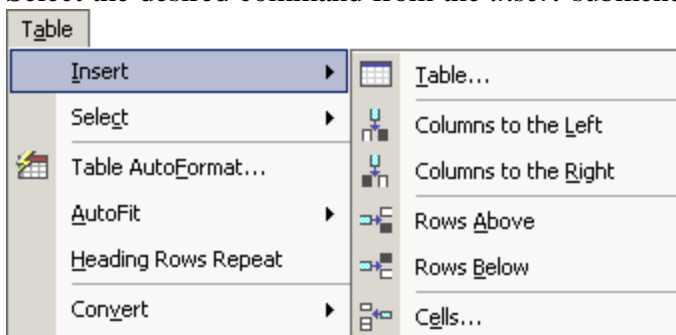
3. Enter the desired number of columns and rows for the table size. Then click the *OK* button. A table with the number of rows and columns that you specified should appear in the document.



Adding Rows or Columns

To add new rows or columns to the table:

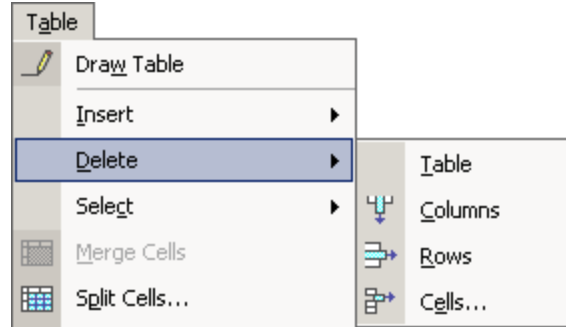
1. Position the cursor in a cell adjacent to where you want to add the new row or column.
2. Select the desired command from the *insert* submenu.



Deleting Rows or Columns

To delete rows or columns from the table:

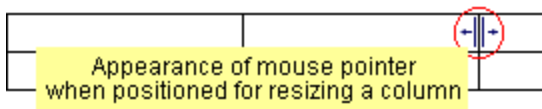
1. Position the cursor in a cell in the row or column you want to delete.
2. Select the desired command from the *delete* submenu.



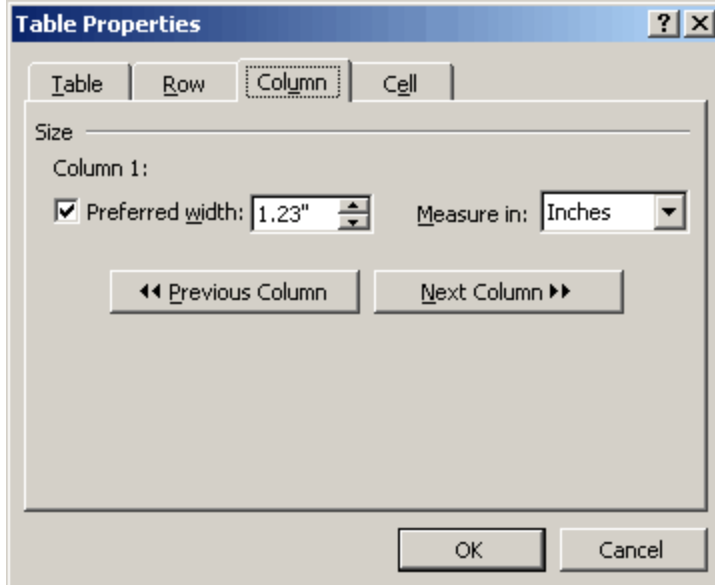
Resizing Rows or Columns

You can resize the columns or rows of a table by clicking and dragging the cell borders or by using the dialog box to set specific sizes. To resize the columns of a table:

1. Drag the right border of the column you want to resize, or drag the bottom border of the row you want to resize. (*Note: The mouse pointer will change appearance when it is positioned for resizing.*)



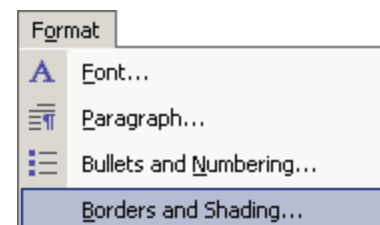
2. To set specific sizes, it may be easier to use the dialog box to enter the exact size of the column. Click in a cell in the row or column you want to resize.
3. Select *table properties* from the *table* menu.
4. Enter the desired column width. Then click the *OK* button.



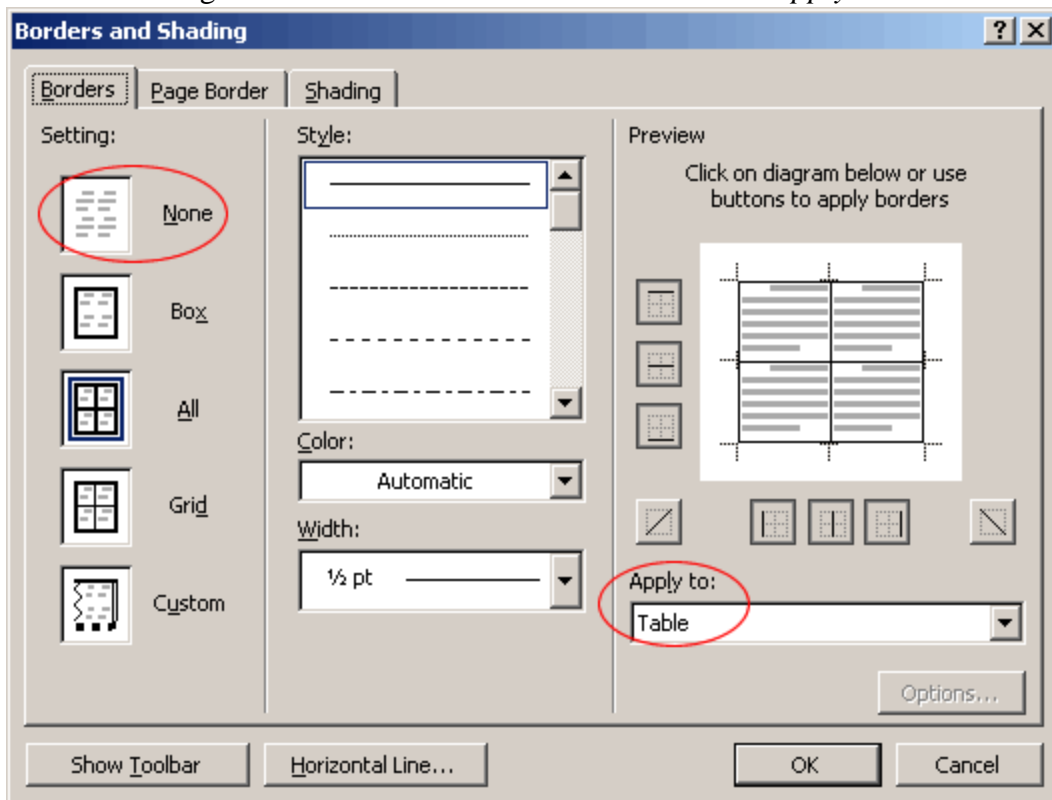
Formatting Borders

When working with borders, it may be easier to remove them from the entire table, and then reapply them to the desired cells or rows.

To remove all the borders from the table:

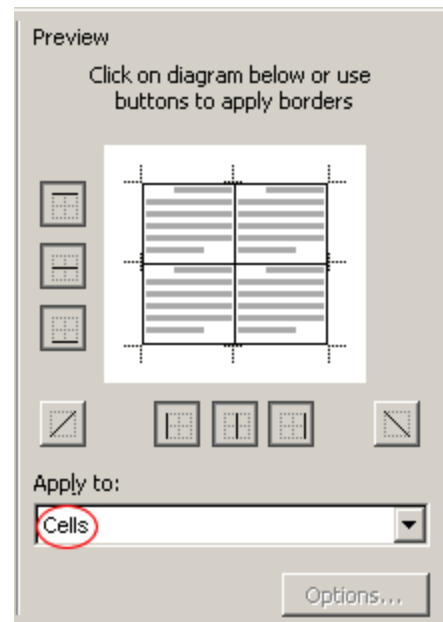


1. Position the cursor in a cell in the table.
2. Select the *borders and shading* command from the *format* menu.
3. Click the *borders* tab in the borders and shading dialog box.
4. Click the setting for *none*. Select *table* from the list labeled *apply to*.



To add a border to selected cells or rows:

5. Select the cell(s) or row(s) that you want to change.
6. Select the *borders and shading* command from the *format* menu.
7. Click the *borders* tab in the borders and shading dialog box.
8. Click the corresponding buttons in the preview area to add or remove the desired border(s). Select *cells* from the list labeled *apply to*. Then click the *OK* button.



Reference

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