THE PSYCHOLOGY LAB CHECKLIST

Title page
- ☐ My title is informative, mentioning both the independent and dependent variable(s).
- ☐ My title is no more than 12 words long (e.g., The Effect of Sleep Deprivation on Visual Episodic Memory). It is centered, bolded, and approximately 3"- 4" from the top of the page.
- ☐ My name is centered beneath the title. Centered beneath my name is the name of my institution (i.e., Hamilton College).
- ☐ Centered beneath my institution's name is the name of the course (e.g. "PSYCH 101: Introduction to Psychology). Centered beneath the course name is the name of my professor (e.g. "Dr. John Smith).
- ☐ Centered beneath the name of my professor is the date, following this format: Jan. 1, 2020.
- ☐ I have a page number in a header that is right-justified.
- ☐ The title is the only text bolded on this page.

Abstract
- ☐ My abstract starts on the second page of my paper. The title Abstract (bolded) is centered above.
- ☐ My abstract is a concise description of what I am investigating and includes information on the participants, method, results, and conclusions of the study.
- ☐ My abstract is no more than 120 words.
- ☐ My abstract is not indented.
- ☐ My abstract does not contain citations of other works.

Introduction
- ☐ My **title** (bolded) is centered above my introduction, which starts on the third page of my paper.
- ☐ There is no "Introduction" header.
- ☐ My paper begins with an anecdote or grabs the reader's attention in some way.
- ☐ After an introductory paragraph, I review previous research, which I present topically, not chronologically.
- ☐ My general presentation of previous research leads logically to my specific hypothesis, which I state at the end of the introduction.
- ☐ In addition to presenting previous research, my introduction conveys to the reader the purpose of the present study (e.g., "The purpose of the present study was to test a new model of…").

Method
- ☐ The title **Method** (bolded) is centered above my method section.
- ☐ I use **Participants**, **Materials**, and **Procedure** as subheadings for different parts of my method section. These subheadings are left-justified, not indented, bolded, and use Title Case. The content of the subsection begins indented on the next line.
- ☐ I use separate subheadings to denote separate parts of the Materials and Procedure. These subheadings are left-justified, not indented, bolded, italicized, and use Title Case.
- ☐ I describe the participants:
  - o The number of participants [e.g., (52 men, 58 women)].
  - o The participants' ages, including range (e.g., "from 18 to 22 years"), mean, and standard deviation. Note: mean age is rounded to one decimal place.
  - o Other pertinent demographic characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, handedness, sexual orientation, etc. depending on the study).
  - o Who the participants are or where they are from (e.g., undergraduates at a small liberal arts college, parents of 3-month-old children, etc.).
  - o How I recruited the participants (e.g., "Participants were recruited through an online study sign-up system.").
  - o How I compensated the participants for taking part in the study (e.g., "Participants were entered into a lottery to win $100.").

- ☐ I describe the materials and/or apparatus:
  - o I describe measures in detail (e.g., "I used a 12-item measure of anxiety ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) to evaluate participants' levels of anxiety on a day-to-day basis. Half of the items were reverse-scored to reduce response bias."). I also provide one or two sample items.
  - o I describe any equipment used (e.g., eye tracker, Inquisit computer program), including the company name and model.
  - o I do not list pen, paper, or other unimportant items as materials.
- ☐ I describe the procedure:
  - o I describe what took place in chronological order, including informed consent and debriefing.
  - o I do not describe information explained previously in the Participants or Materials sections.
- ☐ Someone reading my Method section would be able to replicate my study exactly.

Results
- ☐ I *describe* the results of the study; I do not *explain* them.
- ☐ I state which statistical test I used to analyze my results (e.g., "I used an independent samples *t* test to determine…").
- ☐ I closely follow APA format to present my results, remembering to include degrees of freedom for all statistical tests and providing exact *p* values to two or three decimal places (e.g., $t(23) = -0.93$, $p = 0.01$). When $p = .000$ on the SPSS printout, I write $p < .001$.
- ☐ I include means and standard deviations in the proper format [e.g., ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .16$)].
- ☐ I state whether or not the results supported my hypothesis [e.g., "As hypothesized, sleep deprivation did affect visual episodic memory. Participants who were sleep deprived performed more poorly on a test of visual episodic memory ($M = 12.13$, $SD = 0.35$) than did participants who were not sleep deprived ($M = 9.34$, $SD = 0.67$)."].
- ☐ I use italics where appropriate (e.g., *t* test, *F*, *r, p*).
- ☐ I round numbers to two decimal places (*p* values may be rounded to two or three decimal places).
- ☐ I include *p* values even for nonsignificant findings.
- ☐ I reference all tables and figures (e.g., "As shown in Figure 1…") included in the paper.

Discussion
- ☐ I briefly restate my main findings and note whether they support the hypotheses.
- ☐ I discuss my findings, providing explanations for both expected and unexpected results.
  - o I discuss research that supports or contradicts my findings, and I tie my work into a broader theoretical framework.
- ☐ I discuss a few potential limitations of my study.
- ☐ I discuss substantive ideas for future research in detail by explaining their purpose and how they could be tested in a research study.
  - o When a future research idea directly relates to a limitation, I include it in the same paragraph with the limitation.
  - o I make sure to include ideas for future research that go beyond simply replicating the study with a larger and more heterogeneous sample.
- ☐ I discuss implications of my study (i.e., how it relates to the real world).
- ☐ My final paragraph is a few sentences that sum up the research and its implications.

References
- ☐ The word References (not bolded) is centered above my list, which begins on a separate page.
- ☐ I list references in alphabetical order by the first author's last name.
- ☐ I do not number the references.
- ☐ I use a hanging indent (found on the ruler in Microsoft Word and under "Format…Align & indent" in Google Docs) if the reference is longer than one line.
- ☐ I make sure to include a doi number at the end of the citation if the article has one.
- ☐ I reference journal articles in the following format:

Cohen, G., Aronson, J., & Steele, C. (2000). When beliefs yield to evidence: Reducing biased

evaluation by affirming the self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*, 1151- 1164.

https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672002611011

Tables
- ☐ There are no vertical lines in my table.
- ☐ All of the columns in the table have column headings.
- ☐ I use the decimal tab to ensure that my numbers are vertically aligned by decimal point.
- ☐ I label the first table as Table 1, the second as Table 2, etc. These labels are left-justified and bolded.
- ☐ I give each table an italicized title. The title succinctly describes the content of the table. It is double spaced and appears below the table number and above the first line of the table.
- ☐ I capitalize all of the words of the title except for unimportant words (e.g., and, in, but, etc.).
- ☐ My tables supplement the information in my paper; they are not redundant presentations of information.
- ☐ If I present correlations, I use asterisks to denote *p* values (see example in Table 1).
- ☐ I create tables in the following format:

Table 1

Intercorrelatons between Measures of Intelligence

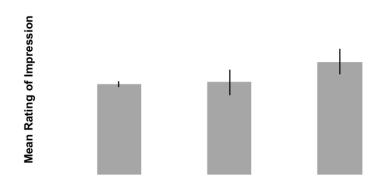|	SAT	Reaction Time	Digit Span
GPA	.66**	.11	.44*
SAT		.13	.15
Reaction Time			.28*

*p < .05; **p < .01.

Figures
- ☐ I include figures after tables, beginning on a separate page.
- ☐ For graphs, I label the X and Y axes. The axes labels are bolded.
- ☐ I use a sans-serif font such as Helvetica or Arial in the title and image.
- ☐ My figures are large enough that they can be easily read.
- ☐ My figures supplement the text of my paper; they do not present information that I have already completely discussed in the body of the paper or a table.
- ☐ I label the first figure as Figure 1, second as Figure 2, etc. These labels are left-justified and bolded.
- ☐ I give each figure an italicized title. The title succinctly describes the content of the figure. It is double spaced and appears below the figure number and above the figure.
- ☐ I include a caption beneath the figure that identifies the independent and dependent variables. The caption is double spaced and in the font I have used in the rest of the paper (i.e., Times New Roman).
- ☐ If I create a bar graph, I make sure to include error bars and note them in the figure caption.
- ☐ I create figures in the following format:

Figure 1

Mean Impression Rating by Experimental Condition

Note. Mean rating of participants' impressions as a function of experimental condition. Error bars represent one standard error above and below the mean.

Other Considerations
- ☐ I use active voice (e.g., "Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale…") as often as possible and not passive voice (e.g., "The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was administered…").
- ☐ I use the past tense (e.g., "Fifty-five students participated in the study.").
- ☐ I write as concisely and explicitly as possible.
- ☐ I use transitions and topic sentences to clearly link my paragraphs.
- ☐ I use headings and subheadings to help me organize my paper.
- ☐ I use the word "cause" only if the study was an experiment. Correlation does not imply causation!
- ☐ I do not write that the study "proves" something; I use words like "suggests" and "implies" instead.
- ☐ I avoid using questions and quotations in my writing.
- ☐ I treat the word *data* as plural (e.g., these data are…, the data suggest…).
- ☐ My text is double spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman font (except for text included with the figures, which is in a sans-serif font).
- ☐ My margins are 1".
- ☐ I use an Appendix after my references to include detailed information that would be distracting in the main body of the paper (e.g., the full participant questionnaire, miscellaneous tables and figures).
- ☐ If I have one appendix, I title the page "Appendix", bolded and centered. If I have more than one distinct item to include in the Appendices, I label my appendices "Appendix A", "Appendix B", etc.
- ☐ I arrange the sections of my paper in the following order:
  - o Title Page, Abstract, Introduction (title serves as heading), Method, Results, Discussion,
- ☐ References, Appendices (if applicable)

Useful Resources
- ☐ *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition*
- ☐ Professor Jen Borton's *Writing an APA Style Research Paper*
- ☐ The Psychology Department's website (includes links to handouts on citing sources in APA format, creating tables and figures, and performing statistical tests using SPSS)
- ☐ Sample APA Lab, *The Effect of Positive and Negative Priming on Self-Description*
- ☐ Purdue University's *APA Formatting and Style Guide*
- ☐ Writing Guides from The University of Washington's Psychology Writing Center