

Style Guide for the Journal of the Association for Information Systems

Monica Birth, PhD
JAIS Managing Editor for Copyediting and Production
monicabirth@gmail.com

With few exceptions, *JAIS* generally adheres the style outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition) and aligns with *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary* for spelling, capitalization, hyphenation conventions, etc. If no guidance is given by these sources, we refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition) for guidance. While much of the following can be found in these sources, we have summarized a few points regarding writing style and stylistic conventions to assist authors in preparing their manuscripts for publication. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at monicabirth@gmail.com.¹

1 Tense and Voice

1.1 Active Voice

Use active voice wherever possible. Historically, publications have eschewed using “I,” “we,” and other such words to maintain objectivity. However, *JAIS* prefers that authors use “I,” “we,” and so on because they are clearer and more succinct.

Table 1. Active Voice

Passive	Active (preferred)
...was analyzed.	We / I analyzed...
...are presented in Table 1.	Table 1 presents / shows / summarizes...

1.2 Tense

This section provides several guidelines to ensure that authors use the appropriate tenses in their manuscripts. Generally, information systems papers use three tenses: present, present perfect, and past.

1.2.1 Present Tense

Use present tense when discussing what your or someone else’s paper does. However, when doing this for papers with two or more authors, treat the sentence’s subject as the authors, not the paper itself (see second last example in Table 3). In other words, do not refer to “Holsapple and Axel (1996)” as though it were the name of the paper.

This paper **explores**...

We define this as...
This paper provides an extensive...
In Section 1, we summarize ...
Holsappe (1995) discusses how decision context...
Holsapple and Axel (1996) discuss [not discusses] how decision context influences decision making.
Holsapple and Axel’s (1996) paper “On decision context influences” discusses how...

¹ Much of this guide was written by Adam LeBrocq, *Communications for the Association of Information Systems* Copy Editor, and was drawn from a previous version of this document.

Use present tense when reporting the results or findings of a study.

Table 4. Present Tense

The data suggest that...

Use present tense when discussing models and hypotheses.

Table 5. Present Tense

The model proposes how exercising strategic choice and institutional forces impact the antecedents and consequences.
In particular, our model explains how and why organizations achieve benefits.

1.2.2 Past Tense

Use past tense with signal phrases that relate to studies.

Table 8. Past Tense—Signal Phrases

“In an exhaustive survey of the literature published between 1990 and 2000, Walker (2001) found ‘no proof, merely a weak correlation, linking place of residence and rate of illness’ (p. 121)” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 646).
We conducted the review to identify publication outlets, theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, sampling, and topic areas for e-government research.

Use past tense with the methodology for data collection.

Table 9. Past Tense—Methodology

We analyzed ...
“To test the model, we conducted interviews and a survey. Because the model comprises [present tense for models] measured and latent variables, we first conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the latent variables to analyze the sets of items that measure those constructs. Next, we used ordinary least squares multiple regression to analyze the results. We also asked the respondents to identify some information about themselves. We first asked respondents to identify their current role(s) on the board” (emphasis added) (Jewer & McKay, 2012).

Use past tense when explicitly using words and/or phrases that indicate they happened in the past, such as when someone coined a term or for what interviewees said.

Table 10. Past Tense—Past Phrases

In 1990, Smith (1990) coined the term...
One interview said: “something here.”

1.2.3 Other Tense Points

When discussing your paper in the introduction and conclusion, take care to not to use the future tense (introduction) or the past tense (conclusion). Use past tense in the conclusion only when discussing what you **did** in the course of conducting your study. See Table 11 for examples.

Table 11. Tense in Introductions and Conclusions

Incorrect: (introduction):	In Section 1, we will summarize ... After that, we will analyze ...
Incorrect: (conclusion):	In Section 1, we summarized ... After that, we analyzed ... In Table 1, we analyzed ...
Correct: (introduction and conclusion):	In Section 1, we summarize ... In Table 1, we analyze ...

2 Quotes

All direct quotes require a page reference unless the source document does not contain them.

2.1 Quote Format

All quotes use double quotation marks. Direct quotations require page numbers unless they are from an online source, interview, etc.

Table 12. Quotes

“Remember to use double quotation marks for quotes” (LeBrocq, 2012, p. 10).
While “quotations are fun” (Adam, 2011, p. 1), they can cause problems.

For quotes in quotes, use single quotation marks. Single quotation marks should only be used for this purpose and should never be used to emphasize a word or phrase

Table 13. Quotes in Quotes

“Adam introduced the term ‘quotes’ in his seminal 2012 work” (LeBrocq, 2012, p. 10).
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2.2 Indented Quotes

Indented quotes are longer than 40 words or more and are italicized. Do not indent quotes under 40 words. Do not italicize the citation at the end of an indented quotation and place the period before the citation (see examples). Capitalization changes to quotes can be made to fit the sentence context and should be made “silently.” Do not use square brackets to mark such capitalization changes and do not use brackets around ellipses marking deleted text within a quote. Square brackets are generally used in quotes only to mark text or punctuation that has been added to a quote.

2.3 Other Quote Points

Quote marks should always appear after a period or comma. Other punctuation marks (e.g., colon and semicolon) should appear after quotation marks.

Table 14. Quote Marks and Periods

“I am an example of where to put a period at the end of a quote.”
“I am an example of where to put a semicolon at the end of a quote”;

3 Common Stylistic Issues

3.1 Equivocation

Equivocation is an entrenched style in academic writing, and authors typically equivocate in introductions and conclusions.

Table 17. Equivocation Example

This study aims to explore the role of metaethics in information systems.
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This sentence leaves it unclear as to whether the author actually explores the role of metaethics in information systems or not, which is not appropriate for an academic paper. Journals accept academic papers for publication because it does something (e.g., adds knowledge) and not because it *might* do something.

Thus, if you explore meta-ethics in information systems, simply say that (e.g., “In this paper, I explore the role of metaethics in information systems”).

3.2 That and Which

JAIS upholds a distinction between “that” and “which.” That is, the two words are not synonymous and should not be used interchangeably. Choosing to use either that or which depends on whether the information they introduce is “essential” or “nonessential” (i.e., necessary to the meaning of the sentence or not). Essential elements use “that” with no punctuation to offset them; nonessential elements use “which” preceded by a comma.

3.2.1 Essential

In Table 18, one cannot omit the bold element or place it between commas “without leaving the meaning of ... [the company] too general” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 449). This sentence refers to a specific company that is located in Oklahoma (i.e., it is the company in Oklahoma that has twelve employees, not the one in New York). Thus, the bold element uses “that” and has no punctuation.

Table 18. Essential

The company that is located in Oklahoma has twelve employees.
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3.2.2 Nonessential

In Table 19, the bold element is not essential to the meaning of the sentence and so must use “which” and commas. That is, “it does not limit the word to a particular individual or group” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 449). This sentence refers to the company with twelve employees (the reader knows what company the speaker means). The fact that it is located in Oklahoma may be useful information, but one understands what company the speaker means regardless of the fact that it is in Oklahoma.

Table 19. Nonessential

The company, which is located in Oklahoma , has twelve employees.
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3.3 Because and As

Please avoid the overuse of “as.” For example, while “as” can and does have the same meaning as “because,” “because” is easier to understand because it only has one meaning, whereas “as” has both temporal and cause meanings. Table 25 illustrates the problem, and Table 26 illustrates usage.

3.4 Compound Modifiers

“When two or more words serve together as a single modifier before a noun, a hyphen or hyphens form the modifying words clearly into a unit” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 565).

Table 30. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 565)

She is a well-known actor .
The conclusions are based on out-of-date statistics .
Some Spanish-speaking students work as translators.

Note, however, that *-ly* adverbs are never preceded by a hyphen.

Table 31. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566)

They are clearly defined terms .
That is a swiftly moving train .

Also note that, when a “compound adjective follows a noun, hyphens are unnecessary” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566). Many authors continue to hyphenate these words when they do not need to.

Table 32. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566)

The actor is well known .
The statistics were out of date .
Many students are Spanish speaking .

3.5 Emphasis

Please use minimal emphasis. When doing so, use italics or quotes. When emphasizing details in quotes, please add “(emphasis added)” at the end before the citation to indicate that. If a quote originally has the emphasis, then use “(emphasis in original).”

4 Other JAIS Style Points

This section lists some other points in alphabetical order.

4.1 Abbreviations

Always spell out abbreviations when first using them.

Table 36. Abbreviations

First mention of term:	The information systems (IS) discipline focuses on computers.
Subsequent mentions:	One can ask what exactly the relevance is of normative issues, ethics, and morality for the IS discipline.

JAIS does not require periods between each letter in an abbreviation. Use US, UK, FBI, etc. If using the initials of a name, there should be a space after each period (e.g., in references; J. Q. Smith).

4.2 Capitalization

Capitalize “Appendix,” “Section,” “Table,” and “Figure” when referring to a specific section / item (e.g., Figure 1, Function 1).

Do not capitalize job titles or positions: e.g., president of the United States, senior editor, associate editor, vice president of IBM, manager, executive director of marketing, assistant professor of information systems, etc. Exception: Do capitalize position names if they are used as part of a name: e.g., Janitor Frank Lee cleaned the floors, President Lincoln was elected in 1860. Also titles may be capitalized in ceremonial contexts, or following a name in headings, lists, etc.

Do not capitalize models, theories, laws, or statistical procedures in the text. Do capitalize proper names included in the models, theory, etc.

Do not capitalize field/discipline names (e.g., use “information systems,” “neuroIS,” “accounting”).

Table 37. Capitalization with Models, Theories, Laws, Hypotheses, and Field/Discipline Names

Incorrect	Correct
Partial Least Squares (PLS)	partial least squares (PLS)
Self-Determination Theory	self-determination theory (SDT)
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	structural equation modeling (SEM)
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	technology acceptance model (TAM)
chronbach’s alpha	Chronbach’s alpha
Information Systems / Accounting / neuroIS	information systems / accounting / neuroIS

4.3 Commas

JAIS uses the serial, or Oxford, comma. That is, in a series (three or more items), a comma should separate each item (see Table 38).

Table 38. Serial Comma

Correct:	The cat hates turnips, lettuce, and rice.
Incorrect:	The cat hates turnips, lettuce and rice.

Also, take care that the commas do not occur inside quotation marks (see Section 2.3).

4.4 Hyphens, En Dashes, and Em Dashes

J AIS uses em dashes—like this—to set off auxiliary information. Do not use a hyphen (-) or en dash (–) for this purpose—they are not the same size. To insert an em dash, hold alt and type 0151 on your number pad or use your software’s “insert symbol” command. *J AIS* does not use en dashes (–) for any reason.

Please use a hyphen (-) to indicate “to” in number or date ranges (e.g., 77-80 or date ranges January-February).

Do not use hyphens in compound words using common prefixes. Instead close up these terms into a single word: e.g., interrelation, nonnormative, underexamined, preexisting. However, do hyphenate terms involving co- and people: e.g., co-worker, co-author, co-editor. Also, certain vowel combinations should also be hyphenated: e.g., co-opt, meta-analysis, multi-item, quasi-experimental.

Per APA usage, do hyphenate editor-in-chief

4.5 Font

All font should be in Times New Roman. General text should be in 10 pt font, footnote and tables should be in 9 pt font. Notes to tables should be in a separate row at the bottom of the table in 8 pt font. Captions and section headings should use headline-style capitalization, meaning all major words are capitalized (prepositions longer than four letters should also be capitalized).

4.6 Footnotes

The superscript number that denotes a footnote should occur after punctuation marks such as periods, commas and quotation marks. *J AIS* does not use endnotes. Footnote text should be left justified, with one space after the superscript number. There should be no line spacing separating individual footnotes.

Table 40. Footnotes

I went to the shop ¹ , but the “cat was gone” ² .
However, what information systems includes is a debated subject ¹ .

4.7 Key Terms

Introduce key terms, words, and phrases with quotation marks or italics. Thereafter, do not distinguish them in any way.

Table 42. Key Terms

In this study, we focus on whether “hybrid systems” affect how a person interprets the world around them. Hybrid systems are...

4.8 Numbers

Please use numerals for numbers over 10 (including 10) except if they begin a sentence (in which case, spell them out).

Please use numerals for data analysis results regardless of whether they are over or under 10 or where they appear in a sentence.

4.8.1 Percent

Always use the numeral and “%.” The only exception to this is if you begin a sentence with a spelled-out number; in this case, you should use “percent.” E.g., “Twenty-five percent is the number.” “The number is 25%.”

4.9 Spelling

J AIS uses American spelling conventions. For example, organization, emphasize, color, behavior, summarize, etc.

Also, we use the following spelling conventions in accordance with APA: internet, website, data set, email, Wi-Fi, webpage, the web, the cloud, ebook or e-book, database, home page.

“Data” should be used as a plural noun.

4.10 Vagueness

JAIS does not accept vague language; be specific and concrete wherever possible. Doing so will help readers to comprehend your paper.

Additionally, one can better explain words such as “several,” “a few,” and so on with the precise number. If you make three contributions, say “three” instead of “several,”

One repeated error papers make concern the word “this.” Please **always** clearly follow “this” with what “this” actually is: don’t say “**we test this.**” Instead, say “**we test this relationship.**” When one does not clarify what “this” is, the reader has to then determine what it refers to, which can be difficult when a paper discusses several ideas. As such, it’s always clearer to explicitly state what “this” is.

5 Referencing

References should generally follow the style outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition, 2019). This section contains examples for many types of referencing. Note that this style does not capitalize every word in a text’s title. For conference paper titles, book titles, presentation titles, etc. use sentence-style capitalization, meaning only the initial word and proper nouns should be capitalized. Also capitalize the first word following a colon that marks a subtitle. For journal titles, conference proceeding titles, and conference titles use headline-style capitalization, meaning all major words are capitalized (prepositions over four letters long should also be capitalized). Use & to separate authors names in the reference section. Also use & in the names of book publishers. Include the name of the publisher but not the city of publication. When giving websites, do not use “retrieved from,” simply give the URL.

Exceptions to APA style: *JAIS* does not use Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). Also, *JAIS* does not require page numbers for conference proceedings and does not require dates and locations for conference presentation references.

5.1 In-text Citations

JAIS generally follows APA’s author-date system. For citations of papers written by one or two authors, use all author names in each citation. For citations of papers written by three authors, use all author names the first time the paper is cited (i.e., Jones, Smith, & Roberts, 2019) and the first author’s name followed by et al. for subsequent citations (i.e., Jones et al., 2019). For papers with four or more authors, use the first author’s name followed by et al. for the first and all subsequent citations. Use the ampersand (&) in all citations with two or more authors; do not use “and.” However, when you use the authors as part of a sentence (i.e., “Cayle and Rogers (2008) find that this isn’t the case.”) use “and.”

5.2 Reference Section Examples

This section gives a few examples. For a more comprehensive guide see the APA publication manual or an online source such as <https://www.bibme.org/apa>.

5.2.1 Journal Papers

Burton-Jones, A., & Straub, D. W., Jr. (2006). Reconceptualizing system usage: An approach and empirical test. *Information Systems Research*, 17(3), 228-246.

5.2.2 Magazine Articles (Online)

Ackerman, B. (2007). The perfect blend. *Consumer Goods Technology Magazine*. <http://consumergoods.edgl.com/media/publicationsarticle/art-mar07-6.pdf>

5.2.3 Books

Hare, R. M. (1981). *Moral thinking: Its levels, method, and point*. Clarendon.

5.2.4 Chapters / Sections in Books

Keren, G. (1990). Cognitive aids and debiasing methods: Can cognitive pills cure cognitive ills? In J. Caverni, J. Fabre, & M. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Cognitive biases* (pp. 523-555). Elsevier.

5.2.5 Conference Proceedings

Adams, C. (2001). Persuasion as education. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Systems*.

5.2.6 Conference Presentations

Jones, D., & Gregor, S. (2006). *The formulation of an information systems design theory for e-learning*. Paper presented at the First International Conference on Design Science Research in Information Systems and Technology.

5.2.7 Working Papers

Acha, V. (2004). *Technology frames: The art of perspective and interpretation in strategy* (SPRU Electronic Working Paper No. 109). University of Sussex.

5.2.8 Wikipedia References

When sourcing information from Wikipedia, use the following format:

Abductive reasoning. (2010). In *Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abductive_reasoning

6 Conclusion

Following these guidelines will ensure that your paper is better understood in the review process and, should it be accepted, published as quickly as possible. If you are unsure of any point in this style guide before submitting your paper or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Monica Birth, *JAIS* Managing Editor of Copyediting and Production, at monicabirth@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing your best work submitted to *JAIS*.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed). American Psychological Association.
- Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2012). *The Little, Brown handbook* (12th ed). Pearson.
- Jewer, J., & McKay, K. N. (2012). Antecedents and consequences of board IT governance: Institutional and strategic choice perspectives. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13(7), 581-617.