Writing a research report in APA style

Sections of a paper (in this order):

- Title page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- References
- Tables
- Figures (captions under figures)
- Appendix

More info about sections:

Abstract:
Sentence about each primary section of paper – no more than 120 words

Intro:
What is the general topic? What do we know from previous research? What is new about the current paper? What are you going to try to demonstrate? What are your hypotheses?

Method:
Participants: Describe sample (humans = participants; animals = subjects)
Apparatus and/or materials: Describe computers, tests, materials used
Procedure: What did the participants do? What did the researchers do w/ subjects?

Results:
What statistical tests were conducted and what are the findings?

Discussion:
Restate purpose and hypotheses. What is your interpretation of the findings? How can study be improved (what are the flaws)? What are the future directions?

General formatting:

12pt font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1” margins
1 space after all punctuation marks (including periods)
Top margin: short title then 5 spaces then page number (start on title page)
Use page break for: title page, abstract, references, tables, captions, figures
Center section titles (abstract, methods, results, discussion, etc.)
Use title of paper rather than section header “introduction”
Use bold w/o indent for sub-sections
Bold section headers
Use italics for all statistical terms (M, SD, p etc.); use spaces around “=”
Look at example paper (e.g. from textbook) for formatting of title page

Number formatting:
If < 10 write-out; if >10 use numerals but…
Write-out if # is first word in sentence
Use #s for %, age, sample size, statistics, if compared to a # that is >10
Citations:
Never use author’s first names nor title of study in body of paper (only in reference section)
1 author – use name and year in parentheses each time
2 authors – use “and” if in sentence, use & between names if cited at end of sentence
3-5 authors – cite all authors 1st time, then use first author then et al. (year)
6+ authors – cite first author then use et al.
Reference section should only include papers that were cited in body of paper

Table and figure formatting:
Only use horizontal lines (no vertical lines) in tables
Number titles and provide label
Label X and Y axis of figure; label figure in “Figure Captions”
Tell reader when to look at figures/tables in body of paper (e.g. “see Figure 1”)

Writing clearly:
1. Write an orderly and organized paper.
   a. Prepare an outline (You need to know what you plan to say at end to write beginning!)
2. Use clear and logical communication.
   a. Work on transitions between sections
3. Use economy of expression.
   a. Avoid wordiness – delete extra words/redundancy
   b. e.g. – “The results revealed that…” start sentence with next word!
4. Use formal language.
   a. Don’t use contractions; Use scientific wording
5. Be specific.

Grammatical considerations:
Use past tense since the study has already been done (use future tense for proposals)
Do not use the word “prove” – use word “support” instead
Make sure there is subject/verb agreement
Sparingly use 1st person (“I” or “we”)
   Use “it was found that” instead of “I found that”
Inanimate nouns can’t perform actions
   Change “The study found that…” – a study can’t find things, researchers do!
Avoid passive voice
   Change “The participants were given instructions by the researchers to…” to “The researchers gave instructions to …”
Use unbiased language; Don’t refer to people by simple characteristic
   Instead of “handicapped”, use “people with handicap”
Do not imply you know feelings or thoughts of researchers you cite
Do not write “the researchers stated” or “said” or “wrote” – just write sentence then cite it!
Do not use quotes (only for very rare circumstances – put it into your own words!)

Careful! Use the following words correctly:
Datum/data; then/than; effect/affect; that/which; while/since