APA Style: Common Errors

Only common errors of students are reviewed here.

For a complete review of APA style, see the APA Manual in the Auraria Library or examine this website which reviews key issues:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

You can also try this tutorial on APA style:
http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx

Common Errors:

Citing a reference in the text:

1. If there are two authors, (a) use “and” to link the two authors if they appear in a sentence. Example: Smith and Jones (1985) found many students have learned APA style. (b) Use an ampersand (&) to link the two authors if you are citing them in parentheses. Example: Research has found that many students are learning APA style (Smith & Jones, 1985). Note: The period to end the sentence comes after the reference. Also, a page number is not required because I have not used a quotation.

2. Using et al. for more than two authors. The first time you cite a reference you should cite all authors (and not use et al.) unless there are more than six authors. You can use et al. in citations of this work after the first citation. If the reference has six or more authors, you can use et al. the first time. Note: There is not a period after the et.

3. Quotations: (a) Some students overuse quotations. Quotations should be used if the wording is particularly eloquent or important. (b) If the quotation is less than 40 words, you simply put quotation marks around the quotation and close with the author, year, and
page number or numbers in parentheses after the end of the quotation. Order: close quotation marks, info in parentheses on author, year, and page number if not already contained in the sentence (author might appear elsewhere in the sentence), then period. Example: Fitzpatrick has written “Students should always use APA style correctly” (2012, p. 13). (c) If the quotation is lengthy (over 40 words) the quotation should be presented as a block. This is done by starting a new line, indenting the entire quotation by 5 spaces on the left side, and closing with the author, year, and page numbers not already cited in the lead in to the quote. No quotation marks are used in the block quote. Example: Smith was admitted by her colleagues when she said

Many things are important about education, but among the most important are learning how to speak and write well. And more words to this effect to make 40+ words (2010, p. 34).

4. Headings: First level heading in a section is centered and the first letter of each major word is capitalized.

   Second level headings (underneath first) are flush to the left margin. Only the first word is capitalized. A new line is started after the heading to begin the narrative.

   Third level headings are indented, end with a period, and the narrative begins right after the heading.

5. Using numbers in sentences: If the number is less than ten, use words, i.e., spell out the number. Example: The research took place at two universities. If the number is 10 or more, use
numbers. When 12 people came together to discuss the issue, much progress was made.

6. *Data* is a plural word; datum (rarely used) is the singular. So, when you use the word data, you need to use plural modifiers and verbs. Example: These data show a strong trend. *Not:* This data shows a strong trend.

7. *That* and *who.* The word “that” refers to inanimate objects; not people. Example: That building is beautiful. The city that won the prize was in the Midwest. *But,* if you’re referring to people use *who* not *that.* Example: The woman who argued for passage was from Ohio. *Not:* The woman that argued for passage was from Ohio.