

American Psychological Association (APA) Documentation and Style



Based on and quoted from the Purdue OWL - APA Formatting and Style Guide (7th Edition)
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style.html
Prepared by the Southeastern Writing Center. Last updated June 10, 2020.

When you write a paper containing information drawn from published sources, you need to document or acknowledge the sources of the information you borrow. Documenting your sources is not just fair academic practice (failure to document is *plagiarism*, a very serious offense), but it also allows your readers to evaluate the originality of your work, the quality of any research you have done, and the relevance, currency, and reliability of the information you are using. This handout describes APA documentation requirements, as well as several useful APA stylistic guidelines for formatting your papers.

Formatting Quotations and In-Text (Parenthetical) Documentation

APA style requires you to document your use of sources by placing the author's last name, the year of publication, and either the page or paragraph number at appropriate points in your text. This in-text citation method documents your work, briefly identifies the source for readers, and enables them to locate the source of information in the alphabetical list of References at the end of your paper. Citation of an article implies that you have personally read the cited work.

Each of the following common uses of source materials requires documentation:

- direct quotations
- paraphrases and summaries
- information and ideas that are not common knowledge or have influenced your work
- any borrowed material that might appear to be your own if there were no citation

Short Quotations with fewer than 40 words: Incorporate it into your text and enclose the quotation with double quotation marks. If the quotation appears in mid-sentence, end the passage with quotation marks, cite the source in parentheses immediately after the quotation marks, and continue the sentence. Use no other punctuation unless the meaning of the sentence requires such punctuation.

You can introduce the quotation with a signal phrase that includes the author's last name followed by the date of publication in parentheses.

According to Jones (1998), "students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (p. 199).

Jones (1998) found "students often had difficulty using APA style" (p. 199); what implications does this have for teachers?

If you do not include the author's name in the text of the sentence, place the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number in parentheses after the quotation.

She stated, "Students often had difficulty using APA style" (Jones, 1998, p. 199), but she did not offer an explanation as to why.

Long Quotations with more than 40 words: Display it in a freestanding block of text and omit the quotation marks. Start the block quotation on a new line and indent the block about a half inch from the left margin (in the same position as a new paragraph). Double space the entire quotation. If there are paragraphs within the quotation, indent those another half inch. The parenthetical citation should be placed after the final punctuation mark.

Guidelines for In-Text Citation of Sources

Give enough information—most typically the author's last name, the date of publication, and the page number (or paragraph number if not paginated)—to identify all borrowed material.

APA does not require citations in the references list for classical works, but they should be cited within the text.

The Bible is a classical work requiring no citation in the reference list or bibliography. It is cited in the text with the following elements: book chapter, verse, and translation. If your instructor wants you to cite the full publication information for the edition of the Bible you are using, then follow the general mechanics of APA style for a book with no author identified.

Do not italicize, underline, or use quotation marks for books and versions of the Bible, and abbreviate chapters. Also, identify the version of the Bible within the first in-text citation, and do not cite the version in a subsequent entry unless it is a new version. Use a colon between chapter and verse, but no punctuation should be used between passage and version.

Example: (1 Cor. 13:1 Revised Standard Version)

Format and Location

- Do not include in the in-text citation any information already indicated in the text of your paper.
For example: "Hillocks (1986) argues that the teaching of grammar has no effect on students' writing development." [author already cited in-text]
- A page number always immediately follows a quotation, even when the author and date precede it. For example: Lu (1990) found that "several hypotheses were partially supported" (p. 48).
- Place citations within sentences and paragraphs so that it is clear which material has come from which source. Use pronouns and transitions to help indicate whether several sentences contain material from the same source or from different sources.
For example: "Smythe (1990) found that positioning influences ventilation. In his quasi-experimental study of 20 ICU patients, he used two methods to. . . . However, his findings did not support the work of Karcher (1987) and Atley (1989), who used much larger samples to demonstrate that. . . ."
- Direct quotations from sources that do not contain pages should not reference a page number. Instead, you may reference another logical identifying element: a paragraph, a chapter number, a section number, a table number, or something else. Older works (like religious texts) can also incorporate special location identifiers like verse numbers. In short: pick a substitute for page numbers that makes sense for your source.
Jones (1998) found a variety of causes for student dissatisfaction with prevailing citation practices (paras. 4–5).
A meta-analysis of available literature (Jones, 1998) revealed inconsistency across large-scale studies of student learning (Table 3).

Punctuation

- Place a comma between the author's last name and the date of publication in each in-text citation.
- Join two co-authors in the text with the word *and*, but within parentheses use an ampersand (&).
- When an author-date citation appears at the end of a sentence, place the period after the parentheses. When an author date citation appears mid-sentence, punctuation depends on the normal punctuation of the sentence.

Sample In-text Parenthetical Citations

A Work by Two Authors

Name both authors in the signal phrase or in parentheses each time you cite the work. Use the word "and" between the authors' names within the text and use the ampersand in parentheses.

Research by Wegener and Petty (1994) supports...
(Wegener & Petty, 1994)

Work by Three or More Authors

List only the first author's name followed by "et al." in every citation, even the first, unless doing so would create ambiguity between different sources.

(Kernis et al., 1993)
Kernis et al. (1993) suggest...

In *et al.*, "et" should not be followed by a period. Only "al" should be followed by a period.

If you're citing multiple works with similar groups of authors and the shortened "et al." citation form of each source would be the same, you'll need to avoid ambiguity by writing out more names. If you cited works with these authors:

Jones, Smith, Liu, Huang, and Kim (2020)
Jones, Smith, Ruiz, Wang, and Stanton (2020)

They would be cited in-text as follows to avoid ambiguity:

(Jones, Smith, Liu, et al., 2020)
(Jones, Smith, Ruiz, et al., 2020)

Since et al. is plural, it should always be a substitute for more than one name. In the case that et al. would stand in for just one author, write the author's name instead.

A work by authors with the same last name

To prevent confusion, use first initials with the last names.

(E. Johnson, 2001; L. Johnson, 1998)

Two or more works by the same author in the same year

If you have two sources by the same author in the same year, use lower-case letters (a, b, c) with the year to order the entries in the reference list. Use the lower-case letters with the year in the in-text citation.

Research by Berndt (1981a) revealed strong correlations. However, a parallel study (Berndt, 1981b) resulted in inconclusive findings.

Organization as an Author

If the author is an organization or a government agency, mention the organization in the signal phrase or in the parenthetical citation the first time you cite the source, just as you would an individual person.

According to the American Psychological Association (2000),...

If the organization has a well-known abbreviation, you may include the abbreviation in brackets the first time the source is cited and then use only the abbreviation in later citations. However, if you cite work from multiple organizations whose abbreviations are the same, do not use abbreviations (to avoid ambiguity).

First citation: (Mothers Against Drunk Driving [MADD], 2000)

Second citation: (MADD, 2000)

A work with no author(s)

If the work does not have an author, cite the source by its title in the signal phrase or use the first word or two in the parentheses. Titles of books and reports are italicized; titles of articles, chapters, and web pages are in quotation marks. APA style calls for capitalizing important words in titles when they are written in the text (but not when they are written in reference lists).

A similar study was done of students learning to format research papers ("Using Citations," 2001).

Note: In the rare case that "Anonymous" is used for the author, treat it as the author's name (Anonymous, 2001). In the reference list, use the name Anonymous as the author.

Unknown Author

If the work does not have an author, cite the source by its title in the signal phrase or use the first word or two in the parentheses. Titles of books and reports are italicized; titles of articles, chapters, and web pages are in quotation marks. APA style calls for capitalizing important words in titles when they are written in the text (but not when they are written in reference lists).

A similar study was done of students learning to format research papers ("Using Citations," 2001).

Note: In the rare case that "Anonymous" is used for the author, treat it as the author's name (Anonymous, 2001).

Personal Communication

For interviews, letters, e-mails, and other person-to-person communication, cite the communicator's name, the fact that it was personal communication, and the date of the communication. Do not include personal communication in the reference list.

(E. Robbins, personal communication, January 4, 2001).

If using a footnote to reference personal communication, handle citations the same way.

1. P. Smith also claimed that many of her students had difficulties with APA style (personal communication, November 3, 2002).

Citing Indirect Sources

Generally, writers should endeavor to read primary sources (original sources) and cite those rather than secondary sources (works that report on original sources). Sometimes, however, this is impossible. If you use a source that was cited in another source, name the original source in your signal phrase. List the secondary source in your reference list and include the secondary source in the parentheses. If you know the year of the original source, include it in the citation.

Johnson argued that... (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 102). (Johnson, 1985, as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 102).

Unknown Author and Unknown Date

If no author or date is given, use the title in your signal phrase or the first word or two of the title in the parentheses and use the abbreviation "n.d." (for "no date").

Another study of students and research decisions discovered that students succeeded with tutoring ("Tutoring and APA," n.d.).

Sources Without Page Numbers

When an electronic source lacks page numbers, you should try to include information that will help readers find the passage being cited. Use the heading or section name, an abbreviated heading or section name, a paragraph number (para. 1), or a combination of these.

According to Smith (1997), ... (Mind Over Matter section, para. 6).

Note: Never use the page numbers of webpages you print out; different computers print webpages with different pagination. Do not use Kindle location numbers; instead, use the page number (available in many Kindle books) or the method above.

References

Your reference list should appear at the end of your paper. It provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any source you cite in the body of the paper. Each source you cite in the paper must appear in your reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list must be cited in your text.

Your references should begin on a new page separate from the text of the essay; label this page "References" in bold, centered at the top of the page (do NOT underline or use quotation marks for the title). All text should be double-spaced just like the rest of your essay.

Guidelines for References

Format

- Reference entries are double-spaced.
- Use a "hanging indent" to format each entry.

Arrangement

- List reference items alphabetically. Spell out the author's last name, and use initials for the first and middle names.
- Single-authored entries precede multiple-authored entries that begin with the same last name.
- Entries by the same author(s) are arranged according to date of publication, beginning with the earliest date.
- Entries with the same author(s) and date of publication are arranged alphabetically according to title, with the first designated *a*, the second *b*, and so on.
- Entries by the same first author but different second author are alphabetized according to (1) the first author's name, then (2) the second author's name.
- Give the last name and first/middle initials for all authors of a particular work up to and including 20 authors. Separate each author's initials from the next author in the list with a comma. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author's name. If there are 21 or more authors, use an ellipsis (but no ampersand) after the 19th author, and then add the final author's name.

Capitalization and Punctuation

- Capitalize only the first word of titles of books and articles and the first word after a colon but capitalize all major words in journal titles.
- Capitalize all authors' names and initials, names of publishers, editorial abbreviations (e.g., Ed., Trans.), and places (city/state) of publication.
- Use a comma to separate: last names from initials; individual authors in a co-authored publication; a journal title from volume number; a journal volume number, issue number, or newspaper title from page numbers; and city of publication from state.
- Use one space after commas.
- Use one space after the colon in a two-part title and after the publisher's location.
- Use one space after the period separating initials in a personal name and after periods that separate all major parts of a reference citation.

Sample Print Sources

Books

Stoneman, R. (2008). *Alexander the Great: A life in legend*. Yale University Press.

Article in Print Journal

Scruton, R. (1996). The eclipse of listening. *The New Criterion*, 15(3), 5–13.

Note: APA 7 advises writers to include a DOI (if available), even when using the print source. The example above assumes no DOI is available.

Article in Electronic Journal

Baniya, S., & Weech, S. (2019). Data and experience design: Negotiating community-oriented digital research with service-learning. *Purdue Journal of Service-Learning and International Engagement*, 6(1), 11–16. <https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284316979>

DOIs may not always be available. In these cases, use a URL. Many academic journals provide stable URLs that function similarly to DOIs. These are preferable to ordinary URLs copied and pasted from the browser's address bar.

Denny, H., Nordlof, J., & Salem, L. (2018). "Tell me exactly what it was that I was doing that was so bad": Understanding the needs and expectations of working-class students in writing centers. *Writing Center Journal*, 37(1), 67–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26537363>

Note that, in the example above, there is a quotation in the title of the article. Ordinary titles lack quotation marks.

Article in a Newspaper

Schultz, S. (2005, December). Calls made to strengthen state energy policies. *The Country Today*, 1A, 2A.

Edited book, editor as author

Leitch, M. G., & Rushton, C. J. (Eds.). (2019). *A new companion to Malory*. D. S. Brewer.

Edited book with an Author or Authors

Malory, T. (2017). *Le morte darthur* (P. J. C. Field, Ed.). D. S. Brewer. (Original work published 1469-70)

Article or Chapter in an Edited Book

Armstrong, D. (2019). Malory and character. In M. G. Leitch & C. J. Rushton (Eds.), *A new companion to Malory* (pp. 144-163). D. S. Brewer.

Report by a Government Agency or Other Organization

United States Government Accountability Office. (2019). *Performance and accountability report: Fiscal year 2019*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/702715.pdf>

Individual Authors at Government Agency

Palanker, D., Volk, J., Lucia, K., & Thomas, K. (2018). *Mental health parity at risk: Deregulating the individual market and the impact on mental health coverage*. National Alliance on Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/Parity-at-Risk/ParityatRisk.pdf>

Article in a Magazine

Palmer, H., & Lewis, C. D. (1987, October). Using a common sense approach to evaluating behavior. *Psychology Today*, 40(5), 40-47.

Sample Electronic Sources

Webpage or Piece of Online Content

If the page names an individual author, cite their name first:

Price, D. (2018, March 23). *Laziness does not exist*. Medium. <https://humanparts.medium.com/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01>

If the resource was written by a group or organization, use the name of the group/organization as the author. Additionally, if the author and site name are the same, omit the site name from the citation.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. (2019, November 21). *Justice served: Case closed for over 40 dogfighting victims*. <https://www.asPCA.org/news/justice-served-case-closed-over-40-dogfighting-victims>

If the page's author is not listed, start with the title instead. Additionally, include a retrieval date when the page's content is likely to change over time (like, for instance, if you're citing a wiki that is publicly edited).

Tuscan white bean pasta. (2018, February 25). Budgetbytes. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from <https://www.budgetbytes.com/tuscan-white-bean-pasta/>

Online Scholarly Journal Article: Citing DOIs

Please note: Because online materials can potentially change URLs, APA recommends providing a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), when it is available, as opposed to the URL. DOIs are an attempt to provide stable, long-lasting links for online articles. They are unique to their documents and consist of a long alphanumeric code. Many—but not all—publishers will provide an article's DOI on the first page of the document.

Note also that some online bibliographies provide an article's DOI but may "hide" the code under a button which may read "Article" or may be an abbreviation of a vendor's name like "CrossRef" or "PubMed." This button will usually lead the user to the full article which will include the DOI. Find DOIs from print publications or ones that go to dead links with doi.org's "Resolve a DOI" function, [available on the site's home page](#).

APA 7 also advises writers to include a DOI (if available), even when using the print source.

Article from an Online Periodical with DOI Assigned

Lastname, F. M., & Lastname, F. M. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, Vol.(Issue), page numbers. DOI

Drollinger, T., Comer, L. B., & Warrington, P. T. (2006). Development and validation of the active empathetic listening scale. *Psychology & Marketing*, 23(2), 161-180. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20105>

Article from an Online Periodical with no DOI Assigned

If an online scholarly journal article has no DOI and is published on a website, include the URL. If an online scholarly article has no DOI and is published on a database, do not include a URL or any database information. The only exception is for databases that publish articles that are in limited circulation (like ERIC) or that are only available on that particular database (like UpToDate). You should also include the date that you accessed the article.

Perreault, L. (2019). Obesity in adults: Role of physical activity and exercise. *UpToDate*. Retrieved January 12, 2020, from <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/obesity-in-adults-role-of-physical-activity-and-exercise>

For guidelines on citing additional types of references, consult the APA Publication Manual or talk to a Writing Center consultant.

A Few Principles of APA Editorial Style

Title Page (2.3)

The APA manual recommends different title pages for students and professionals. Professional title pages include:

- The title of the paper.
- The name of each author of the paper.
- The affiliation for each author.
- An author's note, if desired.
- A running head, which also appears on the following pages.
- A page number, which also appears on the following pages.

Students should follow instructor directions regarding title page formatting. If no directions are given, students may use the APA-specified title page for students, which includes:

- The title of the paper.
- The name of each author of the paper.
- The affiliation for each author - typically the school being attended.
- The course number and name for which the paper is being written using the institution's format (e.g., ENGL 106).
- The course instructor's name and title. Ask for the instructor's preferred form if possible because some instructors may prefer "Dr.," "Ms.," "Mrs.," "Mr.," or a different title.

- The assignment's due date written in the format most common in your country (e.g., either January 3, 2020, or 3 January 2020 may be appropriate).
- A page number, which also appears on the following pages.
- Note that student papers lack a running head.

Headings (2.27)

Headings help guide the reader through a document. APA Style uses a unique headings system to separate and classify paper sections. There are 5 heading levels in APA. They are organized by levels of subordination, and each section of the paper should start with the highest level of headings. Regardless of the number of levels, always use the headings in order, beginning with level 1. The format for each level is illustrated below:

Centered, Boldface, Title Case Heading (Level 1)

Flush Left, Boldface, Title Case (Level 2)

Flush Left, Boldface Italic, Title Case Heading (Level 3)

Indented, Boldface, Title Case Heading ending with a period. (Level 4)

Indented, Boldface Italic, Title Case Heading ending with a period. (Level 5)

Abbreviations

Acronyms and abbreviations must be spelled out completely on first appearance in text. Use only if abbreviation is conventional, is apt to be familiar, will save considerable space, and will prevent cumbersome repetition. Avoid beginning a sentence with an acronym or an abbreviation.

Capitalization in text

If you refer to the title of a source within your paper, capitalize all words that are four letters long or greater within the title of a source: Exceptions apply to short words that are verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Do not capitalize names of laws, theories, and hypotheses, except for proper nouns.

Hyphenation

For compound words not in the dictionary, use hyphens for clarity rather than omit them. Hyphenate compound adjectives that precede the noun they modify (e.g., role-playing technique, two-way analysis, middle-class families). Do not hyphenate chemical terms or common fractions used as nouns.

Numbers

Use figures for numbers 10 and above (e.g., 12 of the subjects); for numbers above and below 10 grouped for comparison (e.g., 2 of 16 responses); for numbers representing time, dates, and age (e.g., 3 years ago, 2 hr. 15 min.); for numbers denoting a specific place in a series, book, or table (e.g., Table 3, Group 3, page 32).

Use words for numbers below 10 that do not represent precise measurements (e.g., eight items, nine pages), and for numbers beginning a sentence, title, or heading (e.g., Forty-eight percent responded; Ten subjects improved, and 4 subjects did not).

