Documenting Sources: APA Format
(American Psychological Association)

The first section of this guide provides guidelines and examples for using the author-date method of citing sources in text. The second section explains and demonstrates the construction of the reference list, which is included at the end of a research paper. The following information is taken from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition*. It is shelved in the Ready Reference area by the call number, R 150.72 Am35P. If you need help with finding the book or citing your sources, please speak with a reference librarian.

SECTION I: REFERENCE CITATIONS IN TEXT

You must give credit to the original source of any facts, ideas, opinions, direct quotations, and paraphrased material that you include in your paper. By documenting statements properly, you will avoid plagiarism, i.e., stealing the ideas of someone else and using them as if they were your own. You do not need to provide references for information that is common knowledge. When you are unsure of whether or not to document a statement, it is better to document it than to risk plagiarizing.

The APA style requires that sources be cited in the text of the paper in a manner that enables the reader to identify the corresponding entry in the reference list. The references are placed within sentences and paragraphs to show clearly what is being paraphrased or quoted from another source and to give credit to the author(s) responsible for the information.

There are two basic formats for citing references in the text of your paper:

1. If the name of the author is mentioned in the narrative of your paper, insert the year of publication in parentheses after the author’s name.

   Walker (2000) compared reaction times…

2. When the author’s name is not included in the text, write the author’s name and year of publication, separated by a comma, in parentheses.

   In a recent study of reaction times (Walker, 2000)…

The examples below show the proper format for both types of text citations. If you do not find an example that is appropriate for a source that you are citing, consult pp.174-179 of the manual, or ask a reference librarian for assistance.

ONE WORK BY A SINGLE AUTHOR: Use the author-date method of citation that includes the last name of the author and the year of publication inserted in the text at the appropriate point.

   **Example:** Early onset results in a more persistent and severe course (Kessler, 2003).

If the name of the author appears in the text, cite only the publication date in parentheses.

   **Example:** “Kessler (2003) found that among epidemiological samples…”
ONE WORK BY TWO OR MORE AUTHORS: When a work has two authors, always cite both names every time the reference occurs in text.

When a work has more than two authors but fewer than six authors, cite all authors the first time the reference occurs.

Example: "Williams, Jones, Smith, Bradner, and Torrington (1983) found..."

In subsequent citations, include only the last name of the first author followed by "et al." Include the year if it is the first citation of the reference within a paragraph.

Example: "Williams et al. (1983) found..."

Joining authors’ names with “and” or an ampersand (&): The Publication Manual (p.175) states:

“Precede the final name in a multiple-author citation in running text by the word and. In parenthetical material, in tables and captions, and in the reference list, join the names by an ampersand (&):”

as Kurtines and Szapocznik (2003) demonstrated
as has been shown (Joeskog & Sorbom, 2007)

NO AUTHOR’S NAME IS GIVEN: When you are citing a work with no known author, provide enough of the title to identify the entry in the Reference List and include the date of publication:


If the title is given in the text, place the date in parentheses after the italicized title:

Example: …the book College Bound Seniors (2008) states that …

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR: When “Anonymous” is given in place of an author’s name, use the word Anonymous, followed by a comma and the date, in the parenthetical reference:

(Anonymous, 1998)

In the reference list, an anonymous work is alphabetized by the word Anonymous (page 183).

CORPORATE AUTHORS: The Publication Manual (p.176) states that "the names of groups that serve as authors (e.g. corporations, associations, government agencies, and study groups) are usually spelled out each time they appear in a text citation." When appropriate, the names of some corporate authors are spelled out in the first citation and abbreviated thereafter. The guiding rule for abbreviating in this manner is to supply enough information in the text citation for the reader to locate the entry in the reference list without difficulty.

Examples:

First citation in text - (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2003)
Subsequent text citations - (NIMH, 2003)
SECONDARY SOURCES: When you use information from one source that actually comes from another source, you are using a “secondary source.” The *Publication Manual* (p. 178) states:

Use secondary sources sparingly, for instance, when the original work is out of print, unavailable through usual sources, or not available in English. Give the secondary source in the reference list; in text, name the original work and give a citation for the secondary for the secondary source. For example, if Allport’s work is cited in Nicholson and you did not read Allport’s work, list the Nicholson reference in the reference list. In the text, use the following citation:

Allport’s diary (as cited in Nicholson, 2003).

SPECIFIC PARTS OF A SOURCE: Provide page numbers for direct quotations. Give page, chapter, or figure number, when appropriate. (For electronic sources, see “Electronic Materials” on page 4 of this guide.)

**Examples:**

(Cheek & Buss, 1981, p. 332)

(Shimamura, 1989, chap. 3)

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS: Personal communication includes letters, memos, e-mail, telephone conversations, interviews, etc. Because they do not provide recoverable data, these items are not included in a reference list (*Publication Manual*, p. 179). Cite personal communications in text only. Give the initials and the surname of the communicator, and provide as exact a date as possible:

T. K. Lutes (personal communication, April 18, 2001)

(V.-G Nguyen, personal communication, September 28, 1998)

LEGAL MATERIALS: Text citations for legal materials (court cases, statutes, etc.) follow the same form as APA parenthetical citations for unauthored works. See Page 8 of this guide or Appendix 7 in the manual (pp. 216-224) for more information on citing legal materials.

**Examples:**

Court Case

(Lessard v. Schmidt (1972) or

(Lessard v. Schmidt, 1972)

Statute*

Mental Health Systems Act (1988) or

Mental Health Systems Act of 1988

*When citing a statute in text, give the year the act was introduced, not the year it was codified.

Full Legislative Hearing

*Urban America’s Need (1992) or

(Urban America’s Need, 1992)
TEXT CITATIONS FOR ELECTRONIC MATERIALS: Text citations for electronic resources follow the same author-date format that is explained above. If a specific page or section is being referenced, as in a direct quotation, the page or paragraph number should also be included. **If no paragraph or page numbers are present**, indicate the heading of the section from which the information is taken, followed by the number of the paragraph following the section heading. See the example for “Section” below (*Publication Manual*, p. 172):

**Examples:**

- Page Number (Hilts, 1999, p. 17)
- Paragraph (Myers, 2000, para. 5)
- Section (Wilson, 2003, “Conclusion” section, para. 3)
- Chapter (Shimamura, 1989, chap. 3)

A location reference may be omitted when:

- page and paragraph numbers are not provided and,
- there are no headings to use as a point of reference, or
- using a heading in parentheses would be confusing.

When only a corporate or group name is provided on the web site, use that name as the author:

(National Institute of Mental Health, 1999)

**SECTION II: REFERENCE LIST**

PRINT RESOURCES

References cited in your research paper must appear in a list that identifies each source that you cited from or consulted for your paper. These citations are listed alphabetically by author and are included at the end of the paper. It is necessary for each citation to provide complete and accurate information so the reader can identify and retrieve each source, if desired (*Publication Manual*, 180).

The examples below include the most common types of materials cited in the reference lists of undergraduate student research papers. For additional details and examples, refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition (180-224).

**Double-space all reference entries**, and format them with a **hanging indent**, which means that the first line of the entry is flush with the margin, and the subsequent lines are indented. There are instances when the *Publication Manual* may not contain an example that matches the item you want to include in the reference list. In that case, you are advised to select an example closest to your source and follow the format. When you must adapt an example and are unsure of how to write the reference, the manual states, that you should “include more information rather than less” (p. 193).

**NOTE:** There are two kinds of sources that are cited only in text; no bibliographical entry is included. They are: “References to classical works such as the Bible and the Qur’an, whose sections are standardized across editions, and references to personal communications” (p. 174).
BOOKS

General Format:


One Author


Two Authors


No Author or Editor


Group Author as Publisher


Edited Book


Translated Book


ARTICLES OR CHAPTERS IN EDITED BOOKS

General format:

Author, A.A. & Author, B.B. (1995.) Title of chapter or entry. In A. Editor & B. Editor (Eds.), Title of book (pp. xxx-xxx). Location: Publisher.

Book Chapter

Three Authors


Two Editors


Signed Article in an Encyclopedia


Note: When no author's name is given, place the title first in the reference, followed by the date.

JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, AND NEWSPAPERS

General format:


Note: The issue number is included in parentheses after the volume number if the journal is paginated separately by issue. Italicize the volume number, but NOT the issue number.

Journal Article, One Author


Journal Article, Two Authors


Journal Article, Three to Seven Authors*

*"When authors number eight or more, include the first six authors’ names, then insert three ellipses, and add the last author’s name" (Publication Manual, p. 198).


Magazine Article


Newspaper Article, No Author


Newspaper Article with Author


Newspaper Article, Letter to the Editor


REVIEWS

Review of a Book


Review of a Film*


*If the review is untitled, use the material in brackets as the title; retain the brackets to indicate that the material is a description of form and content, not a title. (Publication Manual, p. 208.)

TECHNICAL AND RESEARCH REPORTS (See Publication Manual, pp. 205-206.)

Format references to technical and research reports as you would a book.


Government Report, Corporate Author, GPO Publisher

Authored Report, from Non-Governmental Organization


AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

Motion Picture


Music Recording


LEGAL MATERIALS: For more specific information and additional examples of references to legal materials, see the Publication Manual, pp. 216-224.

Reference Format for Court Cases from the Publication Manual (p. 217):

Name v. Name, Volume Source Page (Court Date).

Abbreviate the published source (if any), court, and date as specified in the Bluebook.


Text citation: (Lessard v. Schmidt, 1972)

Lessard v. Schmidt (1972)

“Explanation: This decision was rendered by the federal district court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin in 1972. It appears in volume 349 of the Federal Supplement and starts on page 1078 of that volume” (Publication Manual, p. 217).

U.S. Supreme Court Case (Citation to the United States Reports)


Statutes (Citation to the United States Code)


Statutes (Citation to the United States Statutes at Large)


Legislative Materials (Reference for a full hearing)

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION: Memos, letters, telephone conversations, or interviews that are not archived are not included in the reference list, because they do not contain recoverable data. These sources of information should be cited only in text. Provide the communicator’s initials as well as the surname, and give as exact a date as possible. (Publication Manual, p. 179)

T. K. Lutes (personal communication, April 18, 2001) stated that...

(V. G. Nguyen, personal communication, September 28, 1998)

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Include the same elements, in the same order, for an electronic source that you would for a print source. Add as much electronic retrieval information as needed for others to locate the sources you cited. (Publication Manual, p. 187)

The Digital Object Identifier (DOI)

One of the recent changes in APA style is the inclusion of the DOI in the reference, whenever possible. According to the Publication Manual, “the DOI System provides a means of persistent identification for managing information on digital networks (see http://www.doi.org/).” The American Psychological Association recommends, “When DOIs are available, you include them for both print and electronic sources” (p. 189). For more information on the DOI system, refer to pages 187-191 of the Publication Manual.

General Tips for Writing Reference Citations for Electronic Media:

- Use this format for the DOI in references: doi:xxxxxxxxx
- When a DOI is used, no further retrieval information is needed to identify or locate the content.
- If no DOI is assigned, provide the home page URL of the journal, book, etc.
- Avoid dividing a URL in a citation, if possible. When necessary, you may divide the address before most punctuation, with the exception of http://. Do not insert a hyphen if you must break the URL.
- In general, it is not necessary to include database information.
- No retrieval date is needed, unless the source material may change over time (e.g., Wikis).
- Before submitting a paper, recheck the URLs to make sure that they are accurate and that they still work. Update if necessary.
- If an Internet site is not dated, insert (n.d.) immediately after the document title.

BOOKS

When a DOI is assigned, include it in the reference as shown in the examples below. When no DOI is given, include the URL instead.

Electronic Version of a Print Book

Electronic-only Book

JOURNAL and NEWSPAPER ARTICLES (Available Electronically)

General Format:


Note: If each issue number of a journal begins on page 1, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number.

Journal Article with DOI

Journal Article without DOI

Review of a Book

Article in an Online Magazine

Newsletter Article, No Author

Online Newspaper Article


(T. K. Lutes, personal communication, April 18, 2001)
Message Posted to a Newsgroup, Online Forum, or Discussion Group

Rampersad, T. (2005, June 8). Re: Traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions [Online forum comment]. Retrieved from http://www.wipo.int/roller/comments/ipisforum/Weblog/theme_eight_how_can_cultural#comments

Message Posted to an Electronic Mailing List


Blog Post


Note: For additional assistance, consult a reference librarian or visit the following site:

The Online Writing Lab at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

*Adapted from materials developed by the URIS Undergraduate Library, Cornell University and from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (2009).