APA Documentation Style - 6th Edition

College students encounter various documentation styles. Always check with your professor for the preferred style for your class. One approach to using a documentation style is to follow style guides rather than trying to remember everything. Researchers in psychology and other social sciences often use rules from the American Psychological Association (APA). The following rules and examples are derived from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition. Guidelines for the reference list are presented, followed by rules for documenting sources within the body of the paper.

The purpose of documentation is three-fold: to give credit to one’s sources, to establish one’s own credibility through the choice of one’s sources, and to provide a path to each individual source. In fact, the writer’s job is to offer enough information on the references page to allow readers to locate the sources themselves. There are two basic elements of documentation: the references page and the in-text citations.

References Page – General Format

- Double space everything on the page.
- Center the title References.
- Use hanging indent for the entries. The first line of each entry begins at the left margin, while all subsequent lines of each entry are indented ½ inch. Most computer programs can provide this formatting. (In Office 2007, choose Paragraph, then Special, then Hanging.)
- Arrange the entries in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author listed for each source. If no author is listed, alphabetize by the first important word of the title (ignoring the, an, or a).
- The references page should be a separate page, following the last page of the body of the document (but before any appendices or supplemental pages).
- Each entry usually contains several elements: author, title(s), and publication information.
References Page Guidelines

General Guidelines
For each source:

- **Author.** First, type the author’s last name followed by a comma. Then type the first and middle (if provided) initials, each followed by a period. Do not list degrees such as M.D. or Ph.D.

- **Date.** Next, type the date of publication in parentheses. Begin with the year, followed by the month for a monthly magazine or journal, and, finally, the day of the month for a newspaper. Follow the year with a comma IF a month is also used. Follow the parentheses with a period.

- **Title.**
  - For a book source, type the title in italics, capitalizing only the first word, any proper nouns, and, if it occurs, the first word of a subtitle which follows a colon.
  - For a periodical source, type the title of the article itself, capitalizing only the first word, any proper nouns, and, if it occurs, the first word of a subtitle which follows a colon. Follow the article title with a period. Next, type the journal or magazine title in italics, capitalizing all important words (not conjunctions, prepositions, or articles). Add a comma (also in italics).

- **Publishing information.** For a book, follow with the city of publication, a colon, and the name of the publishing company. For a periodical, follow with a volume number and a comma, both in italics. Next write the page numbers, followed by a period. For a newspaper article, use p. or pp. with the numbers; do not use p. or pp. for a journal or magazine article. (Note: if each issue of the journal begins with page 1, then write the issue number in parentheses after the volume number.)

- For an electronic source include the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) next. If no DOI is given, use Retrieved from and the URL.

Electronic Sources - Examples
APA style is gradually recognizing that today electronic sources saturate research. However, this recognition does not mean that all electronic sources are equally reliable. A researcher must always evaluate the credibility of all sources. For more information on source credibility, consult the University Writing Center handout on “Evaluating Sources.”

Still, even reliable electronic sources do not always fit neatly into a category for APA documentation. It is important that you include enough information in electronic source citations for readers to easily and accurately locate the sources you have used. The 6th Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010) contains this note: “In general, we recommend that you include the same elements, in the same order, as you would for a reference to a fixed-media source and add as much electronic retrieval information as needed for others to locate the sources you cited” (p. 187). Many of the citation elements for electronic sources are often difficult to find; however, you should attempt to include as many elements as needed to construct an accurate information pathway for your readers to follow. For example, in addition to the usual information, you might include the website title, sponsoring organization, retrieval date, and/or URL.

(Please note that all examples should be double spaced. They are not double-spaced here due to space considerations.)
Journal article with DOI (Digital Object Identifier):

Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year of publication). Article title. Journal Title, Volume Number, page numbers. doi


Journal article without DOI:


Online newspaper article:


Electronic version of print book:


Entry in an online reference work:


Online article without a specified author: (In the first example, World Wildlife Organization is used as a corporate author. In the second example, the White House is listed as the author. Remember that a goal is to provide enough information for someone to find the resource easily.)


**Print Sources – Examples**

(Please note that all examples should be double spaced. They are not here due to space considerations.)

Journal article with one author, journal paginated by volume:

Last name, First initial. Middle initial. (Year of publication). Article title. Journal Title, Volume Number, page numbers.


Journal article with one author, journal paginated by issue:

Last name, First initial. (Year of publication). Article title. Journal Title, Volume Number(issue number), page numbers.


Journal article with two to six authors, journal paginated by volume:
In-Text Guidelines

The attributive tag gives credit to a source, introduces the source to the reader, and blends the material into the text. APA format requires that in-text citations include the author and the date of the source. Be aware that “authors speak; articles do not.” Use “Wilson stated” not “The article stated.”

General Guidelines

- Use the author’s last name in the sentence or within parentheses, if the author’s words OR ideas are used.
- Include the year of publication within parentheses following the author’s last name.
- For a direct quote, use quotation marks before and after the author’s exact words and include a page number.
- Place the period after the parentheses used for attribution.

Examples

Single author:

In 1989, Jorgensen compared formal interviews to carefully constructed questionnaires.  OR  Jorgensen (1989) compared formal interviews to carefully constructed questionnaires.  OR  Jorgensen compared formal interviews to carefully constructed questionnaires (1989).  OR  Jorgensen stated, “Formal interviews produced optimal results in several situations” (1989, p. 23).

Multiple authors: For two authors, cite both names in every reference in the text. For three, four, or five authors, cite all the authors the first time; cite only the first author followed by et al. for subsequent references. For six or more authors, cite the first author only followed by et al. for all references.

In 1992, Leonard and Trent argued that interviews have produced reliable information.  OR  Leonard and Trent (1992) argued that interviews have produced reliable information.  OR  The Arawaks had been living on the island for several thousand years (Leonard & Trent, 1992).  OR  Bourne et al. (1994) found that this kind of activity “compares favorably to the national level of outdoor recreation” (p. 83).

More than one source in the same parentheses (separate with a semi-colon):

(Miller, 1999; Shafranske & Mahoney, 1998)

Organization as author:

Often, dreams express aspects of personality (“Dreams,” 1980).

McQueen and Weeden’s study (as cited in Miller, 1999) found that subjects could not discern the patterns.

Trent Presto (personal interview, November 5, 2008) found the work rewarding.

OR

V. G. Nguyen (E-mail, September 25, 2007) confirmed these statistics stating again that the margin of error was less than 1 percent.

Kidspsych is a wonderful interactive web site for children (http://kidspsych.org).

(Myers, 2000, ¶ 5)

(Beutler, 2000, conclusion section, para. 1)
Collaboration in a University Writing Center Setting

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References


