APA Style Citations (American Psychological Association)

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is the standard writing guide for the sciences. Each library contains a copy on the shelf with the call number 808.06615 P976.

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<th>In-Text Reference</th>
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**References (alpha by author on last page of research paper)**

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<td>Author/Editor’s last name, Author/Editor’s initial(s). (Publication year). <em>Title (italics)</em>. Place of Publication: Publisher.</td>
<td>Merriam-Webster’s <em>collegiate dictionary</em> (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.</td>
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<td>Author’s Last Name, Author’s initial(s). (year of publication). <em>Title of article (italics)</em>, volume, [issue number for journals paginated by issue], page numbers.</td>
<td>Mellers, B. A. (2000). <em>Choice and the relative pleasure of consequences</em>. <em>Psychological Bulletin</em>, 126, 910-924.</td>
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Sources Published Directly Online

Website names: Sources published directly online have no in print originals, and therefore, it is important to include online publication information. With APA 6, this only means the URL. The new APA guidelines suggest that a website name is unnecessary, given that it can be deduced from the URL or by visiting the site.

URLs: Unlike APA 5, where you would often include the exact URL, APA 6 recommends to only cite the homepage URL, and only the exact URL if the page is not properly indexed or easy to find from the homepage. For blog posts, user contributed content, and discussion forums, APA 6 recommends to include the exact URL.

Date retrieved: Unlike APA 5 where the date of retrieval is included in every online citation, APA 6 recommends to include it only if the source material may change over time. Also keep in mind that you can use “Available from” instead of “Retrieved from” when the URL leads to information on how to obtain the cited material rather than to the material itself.

DOIs: If an article has a digital object identifier (DOI) number, you need only the DOI number, and no URL or retrieval date.

Citing an article from an online only resource


Citing an entire website with no identifiable electronic publication date


Citing an article from an online only news source


Citing an article from an online newspaper


Note that when citing online sources in APA, generally follow the same structure of its in print equivalent, and then follow this information with the date of access and the URL.

Citing an online only journal


*Note the above example has a poorly indexed URL and the material may change over time. Hence the URL is included.
APA 6 – Citing Online Sources

Citing a journal article with a digital object identifier


If you are citing an online only book, the electronic information replaces the publication information

**Online-only book**


Sources Published Indirectly Online

As opposed to some sources published directly online (by a website), other sources may be originally in print, or in another medium, and found online. Cite these sources as you would in their original form, and then add the relevant web information (date accessed and URL).

Citing a book originally in print found online


Citing a newsletter found online with no page information


Citing a video found online


*Note that because this from a website with user generated content, the exact URL is included, instead of the homepage.

Citing a painting viewed online


Citing a blog post


*Note that because blog posts are informally published, do not italicize the article titles.

Sources found in online databases typically have been published elsewhere. Include as much as the original publication information as possible. The new APA rules explain that database names are not necessary, but if you’d like, include as supplementary information.

Citing an originally in print journal article found in a database


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APA 6 Parenthetical Citations

Why we use parenthetical / in-text citations

APA requires the use of in-text or parenthetical citations. We use this to help the reader identify which ideas and facts in the paper come from the particular sources in the reference list.

Author date system

APA uses the author-date system, or the last name of the author and the year published, to help identify sources in the reference list. Place these citations after the information, whether in the middle or at the end of a sentence. If the author or the date is already included in the sentence, then exclude it from the parenthetical citation.

Basic Examples

When no author or date is mentioned in the sentence:

In a recent study in molecular biology (Smith, 2000)

When the author is mentioned in the sentence:

In Smith’s (2000) study in molecular biology

When both the date and the author are mentioned in the sentence, do not use parenthetical citations:

In Smith’s 2000 study molecular biology

Multiple Authors

If there are three of less authors in a source, always cite all these authors when referencing their work:

Craine and Poole (2002) show that...

The scores are indeed correlated with education (Craine & Poole, 2002)

It can be demonstrated (Jarvis, Jenkins, & James, 1994)
If there are more than three, four, or five authors, first cite all the authors in the parenthetical citation, then for following references, cite the first author followed by “et al.” Include the year if its the first reference to the citation in the paragraph.

Prince, Smith, Wilson, and Cooper (1999) found ...

Prince et al. (1999)

If there are six or more authors, cite the first author followed by “et al.” and the year for all citations.

Looking at temperature fluctuations (Grossman et al., 2005)

In the instance where two references with more than six authors reduce to the same form (same first authors), cite enough authors as necessary, then followed by “et al.” to distinguish the two references.


Jesrani, Nangia, Relan, Bhatia, Basu, and Somashekar (2005)


Jesrani, Nangia, Relan, et al. (2005)

Group Authors

Cite a group author (corporations, associations, government agencies, and universities) like you would an author in an in-text citation. If you cite the same group author numerous times, you may add an abbreviation in brackets in the first citation, and later reference that group by the abbreviation.

As demonstrated by studies (American Medical Association [AMA], 1999)

Its proven true in tests (AMA, 1999)
No Author

When there is no author, cite the first few words of what appears in the reference list entry (enough to allow the user to identify the source). If citing the title of an article, chapter, or web page place it in double quotes. If citing a periodical, brochure, book, or report, italicize the title.

- It was first discovered in the 19th century (*Historical Presence*, 1985)
- It demonstrates ("Upgraded Protons," 2002)

Authors with the same last name

If two references in your paper have different authors with the same last name, include their initials along with their surname in the body of your paper or in the in-text citation.

- P. J. Johnson and Smith’s study (2000) and J. N. Johnson (2001) found
- It can produce mild disruption (J. N. Johnson, 2001)

Multiple works in the same parenthetical citation

When citing numerous works by the same author in the same sentence, arrange by the years of publication.


Works by the same author with the same publication date should be distinguished by suffixes.

- Numerous studies (Smith, 2000a, 2000b)

When citing two authors in the same in-text citation, order them alphabetically by their last name, and separate them by a semicolon.

- Various studies (Ryder, 2000; Sanders, 2006)
Old and classic works

Write “n.d.” for sources with no date information where the year would normally be cited. Oftentimes old and classic works will not have date information - when the date information is inapplicable, cite the year the source was translated preceded by “trans.” or the year of the version followed by “Version.”

(Plato, n.d.)

(Sophocles, trans. 1984)

Specific parts or sections

Use a page, chapter, or whatever identifier necessary to help the reader locate the specific part of the source. When quoting a source, always provide page numbers.

(Rathers, 1992, p. 12)

(Cooper, 1999, pp. 5-8)

(Smith & Wollensky, 1994, Chapter 4)

When citing an electronic source there may not be page numbers, in which case cite by paragraph number. If there are no labeled page or paragraph numbers, cite the section and the number of the paragraph following it.

(Relan, 2000, para. 43)

(Kalawadia, 2002, Introduction section, para. 2)

Personal communications

Emails, letters, interviews, memos and the like are personal communications which do not have recoverable data. For this reason, we only cite such items as in-text citations, and not in the reference list. Cite the initials and the last name, the description of the communication, and the date of the interaction.

(M. T. Horton, personal communication, May 17, 2004)

As discussed by J.P Smith (telephone interview, December 13, 2008)

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