Crash Course in APA Style: Documentation for Academic Writing

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CRASH COURSE IN APA STYLE

Abstract

This concise guide presents a crash course in APA style citations and references. It is intended for consultant and student use in the Writing Center. If this were a real APA-style paper, the abstract would include a brief overview of the project, its central research questions and objectives, as well as participants, research methods, and conclusions, as applicable. The abstract is designed to give the reader a concise summary of the information to come. It should be between 150-200 words and in the same format as the rest of the paper. It might end with a listing of keywords, which can be used for classification and categorization purposes. Please take note of the formatting of the running header/header (different on page 1), title page, and abstract page. Please note that the APA paper has four distinct parts: the title page, abstract, main body, and reference page.

Keywords: APA, abstract, running header, main body, references
APA style may seem unwieldy and complex at first, but whether you are a student or a professional, it is essential to your ability to ethically and accurately document sources. Smith, Bell, & Francisco (2010) likened plagiarism to identity theft. They wrote, “when someone steals your identity, they rob you of your name, money, credit standing, and integrity. Likewise, when someone steals a writer’s words or ideas, they are robbing that writer of his or her identity as well, as writing is a product of hard work” (p. 34). APA allows for a standard of documentation that clearly and accurately gives credit where credit is due. In this way, “the writer maintains his or her integrity and likewise his or her hard work is recognized by fellow writers, instead of recklessly and disrespectfully stolen” (“APA and You,” n.d., para. 4). Thus, when a writer’s words or ideas are used, APA documentation requires writers not only to indicate when they are using a source’s information, through source introductions or attributive tags like ‘According to Author Jones (1981),’ but to also indicate, through parenthetical citations, where those ideas end (Smith et al., 2010). In those parenthetical citations, readers receive the very important information of the source, publication year, and page number (for quotes), so that they, too, might research and find that same information. Finally, the source, and all of its relevant information, is documented in a reference list, further identifying and crediting the work. This keeps writers honest and sources recognized (Smith et al., 2010).

Betty Jackson advised that “writers will do well to remember that APA documentation is a four-step process” (as cited in Smith et al., 2010, p. 38). Any time an author or text is listed, the publication year must appear as well. Second, all directly quoted material must be enclosed in quotation marks. Remember, however, that it is not enough to change only a few words when working with source passages; either directly quote the text, or rewrite it completely in your own
words and writing style through summary or paraphrase (Jackson as cited in Smith et al., 2010). No matter what kind of source treatment you use, all three require citations in the text; this is the third step. Unfortunately, it is a step that many writers forget. McKibbin (2009) reiterated this point:

All paraphrases, summaries, and quotes require a parenthetical citation with author and publication year, and some will require the addition of the source’s name if he or she is not introduced in the sentence lead-in, or if readers might be confused as to which source is being used. Even if you use your own writing, you are still using the source’s ideas, and these ideas must be credited. Page numbers (or paragraph numbers for online texts without pagination) are required for direct quotes and are encouraged for paraphrases and summaries. (p. 26)

Finally, all sources that appear in the essay must appear in a correctly formatted reference page at the end; likewise, all sources that appear in the reference list must appear in the essay (“APA,” n.d., para. 13). These are the four steps that will help keep you safe when citing; if you are in doubt, it is better to over-cite than risk unethical source treatment, which carries heavy consequences in academia.
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References


Comment [A12]: The label "running head" only appears on the title page; all caps are used for the shortened version of the title.

Comment [A13]: Website with no known author or group. The "n.d." indicates that no date of publication was available.

Comment [A14]: Chapter in an edited collection. Notice we provide the author of the chapter, date of publication, and chapter title before moving on to the editor of the collection, the title, edition, page span, and publisher information.

Comment [A15]: Chapter written by same author(s) as book; text with three or more authors
QUICK REFERENCE: COMMON SOURCE FORMATS IN APA

A reference page must accompany all texts that include sources. “References” is centered in plain type at the top of the page. Entries are alphabetized using the last name of the senior author (the first author listed). Notice that only the last name and first initial are supplied for each author. If no author is available, alphabetize by the title. In APA, the date of publication is emphasized and follows the author’s name in the entry.

Notice that the first line of each entry is flush against the left margin; second and subsequent lines are indented once.

Formatting Titles
In APA reference entries, only book and periodical titles are formatted in italics. Article titles are written in plain text without quotation marks. Capitalize the first word of the title only, unless the title is of a periodical. All words in periodical titles are capitalized.

Citing DOIs
A DOI indicates a permanent link to online content. APA recommends citing a source’s DOI when available. You can usually locate the number on the first page of electronic texts and database articles. Check for DOIs near the copyright notice.

Abbreviations

- ed. = edition
- Rev. ed. = revised edition
- Ed. (Eds.) = editor(s)
- n.d. = no date
- No. = number
- p./pp. = page(s)
- Vol. = volume

JOURNAL ARTICLES, PRINT AND ONLINE

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MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS, PRINT AND ONLINE

Newspaper Articles

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Print

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS, PRINT AND ONLINE

Entire Book, Print Version

Electronic Version of Print Book

Reference Book, Print Version

Book Chapter, Print Version
Entry in an online Reference Work

Entry in an online Reference Work, no author, editor, or date

WEB PAGES AND SOURCES

Webpage

Report or Long Document from a Web Site

Report or Long Document from a Web Site: No Date

For help with APA citations, or for more information on incorporating and documenting sources, visit the BHSU Writing Assistance Center.

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