

APA Style Citations & References

A Guide for Psychology Undergraduates

Why Cite?

Whenever you report something that you have read, you have an ethical and a practical responsibility to cite where you read it. Ethically, you need to give credit to other authors for their words and ideas. Practically, citations identify your sources to the interested reader. Citing sources is essential in research papers, which rely heavily on empirical evidence.

When you cite references, use the conventions of the discipline, so that key information appears in a consistent way that everyone can understand. Psychology research articles usually use the style of the American Psychological Association (APA). Other common styles are that of the Modern Language Association (MLA), which you may have learned in English classes, and the Council of Biological Editors (CBE), commonly used in the biological literature. Research in the area of animal behavior is published in both psychology and biology journals. When you read research articles, you may encounter APA, CBE, or other formats.

This guide explains how to use APA format for citations. **When you write a paper for a psychology course, you are expected to use the format in this guide unless your instructor gives different requirements.** For more details about using APA style, see *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.), also referred to as the "APA manual".

Ethics

Cite only work that you have actually read. If you read about a book or article but did not actually read the source yourself, your citation needs to make clear what you did and did not read (see "[Secondary Sources](#)" later in this guide).

When you write about something that you have read, you must not only cite your source but also paraphrase the ideas that you present (quoting is uncommon in scientific writing; see "Quotes" later in this guide). Although you may not realize it, you are plagiarizing if you just change a few words around (see "Plagiarism and Student Writing" at our website). If you avoid looking at the author's words while you are trying to explain an idea, it is easier to present an author's idea in an original way.

Citations and the References Page

There are two parts to completing the citation of a source. You must cite the source in the text of the paper, and you must list all sources, in a standardized format, on the References page. First, we discuss the References page, then we explain citations in the text.

The most commonly cited sources are research articles in journals. Below is an example of how the top of the first page of a journal article might look, and a description of how to put this first-page information in an APA reference.

Journal of Amazing Psychology, 1998, Vol. 20, No. 1, 3-24

Paying Attention to Detail:
Struggle with APA Format Causes Students to Lose Easy Points

**Michael W. Passer Marty Blount
Donald S. Christensen**

University of Washington

In this example, the following information is in the upper left-hand corner of the page (this information appears in different places in different journals):

- the title of the journal (*not* the title of the article) (Journal of Amazing Psychology)
- the year that the article was published (1998)
- the volume number of the journal (Vol. 20)
- the issue number of the journal (No. 1)
- the page numbers of the article (3-24)

Underneath this information and centered on the page is, in order:

- the title of the article
- the authors of the article
- the authors' university affiliation

All of the information listed above, except the authors' affiliation, must be included in the References section at the end of the paper that cites this article (exception: see Secondary Citations, below). The citation should look like this:

Passer, M. W., Blount, M., & Christensen, D. S. (1998). Paying attention to detail: Struggle with APA format causes students to lose easy points. *Journal of Amazing Psychology, 20*, 3-44. Retrieved from <http://jamazpsych.org/>

Note: Use the italics function of your word-processing software to type the title of the journal or book (as shown above). You may underline (instead of italicize) the title if you are handwriting or manual typing the reference.

Volume Numbers and Issue Numbers

The *volume* number identifies how many years that the journal has been published. Generally, a new volume comes out each year. If Vol. 20 came out in 1998, then Vol. 21 will come out in 1999, and so on. A journal usually publishes several *issues* of each volume per year, i.e., quarterly (4 issues per year), monthly, or weekly. The pages in each issue usually begin where the last issue left off (e.g., if Vol. 20, No. 1 has pages 1-123, then Vol. 20, No. 2 begins on page 124).

In the example above, we did not include the issue number because it's not necessary: there is only one set of page numbers 3-24 in Volume 20. If, however, each issue of the volume starts over at page 1, then include the issue number, in parentheses, after the volume number:

Passer, M. W., Blount, M., & Christensen, D. S. (1998). Paying attention to detail: Struggle with APA format causes students to lose easy points. *Journal of Amazing Psychology*, 20(1), 3-44. Retrieved from <http://jamazpsych.org/>

When should you cite the issue number? Look at the page numbers beginning at any but the first issue of a volume. If they start with any number other than 1, the pages are numbered consecutively throughout the volume, and you don't need to cite the issue number.

Key Style Rules for Journal Article References

(see also *APA Publication Manual*, 6th edition, pp. 169-224)

- Center the header References. If you have only one source, then use the singular (“Reference”).
- Use a hanging indent: Do not indent the first line of each reference, and do indent all following lines.
- Put each author's last name first. Use only initials for first and middle names.
- List multiple authors of a single reference in the same order they are given in the article. Sequence matters! The order of authors reflects the relative contribution of each person.
- List references in alphabetical order according to the last name of the first author.
- In the title of an article, book, or chapter, capitalize only the first letter of the first word, the first letter of a word after a colon, and any proper nouns. (Notice the difference in the next rule.)
- In the title of a journal, capitalize the first letter of each major word.
- Italicize the title and volume number of the journal.
- Include the issue number of the journal volume only if pages are not numbered consecutively throughout the volume (see above).
- Don't write the abbreviations "Vol.", "No.", or "pp.". Just write the numbers.
- Put periods after the date of publication, after the article's title, and at the end of the reference.
- Double-space everything.
- Digital object identifier (DOI): when published, many journal articles are assigned a unique string of numbers, a DOI, that serves to direct readers to the online article, regardless of where it is stored. This number is generally on the first page of the article, and should be included at the end of the citation, after the page numbers.
- Uniform resource locators (URLs): when no DOI is provided, but the article was retrieved from the web, provide the home page URL of the journal or of the book or report publisher. List this in the citation after the page numbers: "Retrieved from: <http://www.xxxxx>"

Common Citation Formats

Journal article by one author:

Thompson, L. (1990). Negotiation behavior and outcomes: Empirical evidence and theoretical issues. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 515-332. doi:10.1048/9385-0920.58.2.193

Journal article by two authors:

Loesche, L. S., & Tsai, S. D. (1998). More organization, less espresso: Effects of caffeine on manuscript length. *Human Behaviour*, 5, 1-43. Retrieved from <http://journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/ens>

Journal article, three to seven authors:

Saywitz, K. J., Mannarino, A. P., Berliner, L., & Cohen, J. A. (2000). Treatment for sexually abused children and adolescents. *American Psychologist*, 55, 1040-1049. doi:10.5497/4578-2587.456.2.548

Journal article, more than seven authors:

Wolchik, S. A., West, S. G., Sandler, I. N., Tein, J., Coatsworth, D., Lengua, L., . . . Griffin, W. A. (2000). An experimental evaluation of theory-based mother and mother-child programs for children of divorce. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68, 843-856. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/journals/ccp.html>

Book chapter (electronic version):

Booth, D. A. (1980). Conditioned reactions in motivation. In F. M. Toates & T. R. Hall (Eds.), *Analysis of motivational processes* (pp. 77-102). New York: Academic Press. Retrieved from <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/html/index.asp>

Note: See APA manual (6th ed.), pages 202-205, for more versions of electronic book sources.

Book (print version):

Toates, F. M. & Hall, T. R. (Eds.). (1980). *Analysis of motivational processes*. New York: Academic Press.

Note: If more than one city is given for the publisher of a book, name the most convenient city for finding the book (e.g., if Academic Press is published in New York and London, list only New York for an American audience or only London for a European audience).

Citing References In The Text

When you use information from another source, cite that source in the text so that readers can easily find the full citation in the References. Either make the citation part of the sentence, or insert it, within parentheses, after the author or their work is mentioned.

First time cited

One author:

- Thompson (1990) reviewed research on negotiation and found that it spans many disciplines.
- A recent study of the effects of caffeine on concentration (Smith, 1990) used only male subjects.
- Negotiation research spans many disciplines (Thompson, 1990).

Note: When citing multiple references, list them in alphabetical order by the first author. Multiple references by the same author are listed in order by date, as below:

This effect has been widely studied (Abbott, 1991, 1994; Kelso, 1998; Martini, 1992).

Two to five authors:

- Becker and Seligman's (1996) findings contradicted this result.
- This result was later contradicted (Becker & Seligman, 1996).
- Medvec, Madey, and Gilovich (1995) examined the influence of "what might have been" thoughts on satisfaction among a group of Olympic medalists.
- Research on Olympic medalists has shown that bronze medalists are more satisfied than silver medalists (Medvec, Madey, & Gilovich, 1995; Zimm & Abbott, 1992).

Note: Use an ampersand ('&') between two authors' names when the citation occurs within parentheses, and use the word 'and' when it occurs in the sentence. For articles by multiple authors, cite the names in the order given on the title page.

Six or more authors:

Cite only the last name of the first author, followed by "et al." and the year of publication.

- Barakat et al. (1995) attempted to ...

Note: "et al." is from the Latin "et alia", which means "and others". "Et" is a whole word (no period); "al." is an abbreviation and therefore requires a period.

Subsequent citations (of the same article) within the same paragraph

When citing a paper more than once in the same paragraph, omit the date after the first citation.

To cite an article by three or more authors more than once in the same paragraph, use only the first author's last name, followed by "et al." after the first citation.

When writing an entire paragraph about a single study, introduce that paragraph by stating that you will refer to the same study throughout the paragraph, then cite the reference. This avoids awkwardness and redundancy.

- Seligman and Maier (1975) conducted a now-classic study on dogs' responses to traumatic shock from which they could not escape. Briefly, the authors... [*then summarize the study without citation*]

Note: Unless you tell the reader otherwise, as in the example above, a citation refers only to the sentence immediately before it. Thus, if you cite a reference after the last sentence in a paragraph, you are telling the reader that you are citing only the information in that sentence.

Citing the same article in subsequent paragraphs

One or two authors: Use the same format as for the first citation.

Three or more authors: Include only the first author's last name followed by "et al." and the year of publication:

- Medvec et al. (1995) examined the influence of "what might have been" thoughts on satisfaction among Olympic medalists.

- Research on satisfaction among Olympic medalists has shown that bronze medalists are more satisfied than silver medalists (Medvec et al., 1995).

Quotes

Paraphrasing is much more common in scientific writing than quoting. Quotes can be used if the author's own words are critical to understanding the point, or to show a memorable catch phrase (rare in scientific writing). Don't use quotes simply because you don't really understand what the author is saying.

If you must quote, however, use the author's exact words and include the page number in the citation:

- "Our difficulty in regard to sexual selection lies in understanding how it is that the males which conquer other males . . . leave a greater number of offspring to inherit their superiority than their beaten and less attractive rivals" (Darwin, 1874, p. 209).
- BUT NOT: "People with high self esteem performed better on the card-sorting task" (Smith, 1989, p. 45).
[This sentence can be easily paraphrased so it does not warrant a quotation.]

Citing Secondary Sources

Suppose you want to cite a source that you read about, but you did not read the paper itself. The original paper (the one that you read about, but didn't read yourself) is the primary source. The paper in which you read about that source is called a secondary source. Try to read original sources. Why? Secondary sources never represent the primary source completely, and they may even misrepresent it.

If the primary source is not available, but you still want to refer to it, then give both the primary and secondary citations in the text, but cite only the secondary source in the References. Suppose that you want to refer in the text to a 1989 study by Nguyen and Lee, which you read about in a 1996 study by Becker and Seligman. Use one of the following citation formats:

- Nguyen and Lee (as cited in Becker & Seligman, 1996) found the opposite effect in children.
- An opposite effect was found in infants (Nguyen & Lee, as cited in Becker & Seligman, 1996).

Note: For either example, list only Becker and Seligman (the source that you read) in the References.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

I. Title page of journal article from PsycARTICLES:

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1995, Vol. 68(2), 127-137/doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.68.1.127

Peripheral Ingroup Membership Status and Public Negativity Toward Outgroups

Jeffrey G. Noel Daniel L. Wann Nyla Branscombe

University of Virginia

- Write the citation as it should appear in reference section:

B. Write the citation as it should appear in the body of the text in each of these cases:

1. First citation, when given at the end of a sentence in parentheses:
2. First citation, when given in actual text:
3. Second citation in a later paragraph, given in parentheses at the end of a sentence:
4. Second citation within the same paragraph, when given in actual text:
5. Second citation in a later paragraph, when given in actual text:

II. Title page of journal article that you downloaded from <http://www.apa.org/journals/apl/>

Journal of Applied Psychology, 1994, Vol. 79, No. 3, 260-271

Lost but not forgotten details: Repeated eyewitness recall leads to reminiscence but not hyperamnesia

John W. Turtle & John C. Yuille

University of Idaho

Write the citation as it should appear in reference section:

Write the citation as it should appear in the body of the text in each of these cases:

1. First citation, when given at the end of a sentence in parentheses:
2. First citation, when given in actual text:
3. Second citation in a later paragraph, given in parentheses at the end of a sentence:
4. Second citation within the same paragraph, when given in actual text:
5. Second citation in a later paragraph, when given in actual text:

Reference:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.