APA Style: Citing References in Text

APA citation style is an author-date system of referencing other people’s words and ideas within the text of a paper. Sources are briefly identified within the text using the author’s family name, year of publication, and location reference (e.g., page number) at the point where the information is used. Sources can be cited within a sentence or at the end of a sentence.

All sources that are cited in the text are listed at the end of the paper in the reference list. For help on how to prepare your reference list, consult the library’s handout, “APA Style: The Reference List.”

Examples of Citing References in Text [6.03-6.21]

When quoting from a source, you must cite the author(s), year of publication, and page number (paragraph number for non-paginated material) in a citation within your text. When paraphrasing, you must cite the author(s) and the year of publication within your text; you are also encouraged to provide a page or paragraph number if it will help your reader locate the specific passage. Some instructors may require that you always include a page or paragraph number when paraphrasing information from a specific location within a source. Always check with your instructor if in doubt.

NOTE: Most of the paraphrased examples in this handout include a page or paragraph number.

One author [6.11]

Examples:

Gower (2001) argued that leisure time should not be regarded as either time wasted or an unproductive pursuit (p. 207).

Leisure time should not be regarded as either time wasted or an unproductive pursuit (Gower, 2001, p. 207).

Two authors [6.12]

When a source has two authors, cite both authors in the first and all subsequent citations.

Examples:

Jackson and Mackaray (2003) found that many people plan their leisure time in advance in order to ensure they allow time for it in their hectic schedules (p. 77).

A recent study showed that many people plan their leisure time in advance in order to ensure they allow time for it in their hectic schedules (Jackson & Mackaray, 2003, p. 77).
Note: When citing multiple authors within the text of a sentence, precede the final name with the word and (e.g., Jackson and Mackaray (2003) found ...). In parenthetical material and in the reference list, precede the final name with an ampersand (&) (e.g., Jackson & Mackaray, 2003).

Three to five authors [6.12]

Identify all authors the first time you cite the source. In subsequent citations, use the first author’s family name, followed by “et al.”

Examples:

First citation:
Adams, Sweezey, and Hodson (2014) found that chemical dispersants can be used to remove oil from water (p. 56).

Subsequent Citations:
Adams et al. (2014) found ... (p. 61).
The study suggested ... (Adams et al., 2014, p. 70).

Six or more authors [6.12]

Use the first author’s family name followed by “et al.” in the first and subsequent citations.

Examples:

Barnard et al. (2013) argued ... (p. 181).
A recent study showed ... (Barnard et al., 2013, p. 181).

Organization as author [6.13]

Names of organizations or groups are usually spelled out each time they appear in a citation. If the organization has a well-known abbreviation, mention the abbreviation the first time the source is cited; use the abbreviation in subsequent citations.

Examples:

First citation: According to the American Library Association (ALA, 2011), ... (p. 2).
Subsequent citation: ALA (2011) proposed ... (p.5).

First citation: An agreement was reached ... (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2010, p. 9).
Subsequent citation: ... signing of the agreement (NATO, 2010, p. 17).

No author [6.15]

When a source has no apparent author, cite a shortened version of the title. Enclose the titles of articles, chapters, or web pages in double quotation marks and italicize the titles of periodicals, books, brochures, or reports.
Examples:

The book *Histories of Leisure* (2002) described ... (p. 98).

Those surveyed believed that all of the activities they chose as part of their leisure time were entertaining (“Fun and Leisure,” n.d., p. 43).

Note: Use n.d. (no date) when no publication date is available. [6.28]

---

**Anonymous author [6.15]**

If the author of a source is specifically identified as “Anonymous”, use “Anonymous” in the citation. Otherwise, if there is no author, use the title in the author position, as explained in the previous section (see examples above).

Example:

(Anonymous, 2013, p. 115)

Note: An anonymous work is alphabetized in the reference list by the word *Anonymous*.

---

**Two or more works within the same parentheses [6.16]**

If your citation contains two or more works by different authors, order them in the same order they appear in the reference list, separated by a semi-colon.

Example:

(Broadway, 2004; Smith, 2010)

If your citation contains two or more works by the same author, include the author’s name only once, followed by the dates.

Example:

(Gonzalez, 2007, 2013)

When citing multiple publications by the same author(s) with the same publication dates, add a lower-case letter after the date to distinguish them in the reference list. Include the date with the letter in the in-text citations.

Examples:

Studies by Zhang and Xu (2009a, 2009b) ...

... positive effects (Zhang & Xu, 2009a, 2009b).
Secondary sources [6.17]

If you want to cite a source that was cited in another source, try and locate the original source and cite the original. However, if the original source is unavailable, name the original source in your text and provide a citation for the secondary source in parenthesis. List the secondary source in the reference list.

Example:

Smith argued that results were directly related to a population decrease within the region (as cited in Robertson, 1995).

Note: List only the Robertson work in the reference list.

Personal communications [6.20]

Personal communications may include e-mails, telephone conversations, personal interviews, class notes, and other data that is not retrievable by other researchers. These types of sources are not included in the reference list, but are cited in text only. Include the initials with the family name of the communicator and the exact date.

Examples:

During a lecture, Professor D. Forrest discussed ... (personal communication, March 11, 2014).

In a telephone interview with the association’s president ... (H. Klein, personal communication, November 15, 2012).

Quotations [6.03 - 6.10]

Short quotation (fewer than 40 words) [6.03]

When quoting a short passage from a source, incorporate the quotation into the text of your paper, placing the quoted words in double quotation marks, followed by a citation that includes the location (e.g., page/paragraph number).

Examples:

As Carlaw (1988) stated, “no matter what we do, there is never enough time to accomplish everything on our ‘to-do’ lists” (p. 45).

Others have suggested that the pressure to be busy extends to leisure time: “To the long-evolving demands of productivity at work we must now add the burden of productivity everywhere else” (Poole, 2013, p. 23).

Beaupri et al. (2013) found that “many children are stressed out by their sports and recreation activities” (p. 16) due to pressure from their parents to succeed.
Long quotation (40 or more words) [6.03]

When quoting a passage of 40 words or longer, set the quotation off from the rest of the text, indented about a half inch, and double spaced. No quotation marks are used. The citation is placed at the end of the quotation following the last mark of punctuation. This is called a block quotation.

Example:

Ralithan (1989) theorized the causes behind our perceived loss of free time in the digital world:

Technology has undoubtedly increased the speed at which we can complete tasks. . . . However, it seems that just as we complete one assignment, another is added to our list. This speed has not liberated our schedules, but rather we filled it with more work. Yes, we can indeed complete twice the work in half the time. (p. 39)

Note: Use an ellipsis ( . . . ) to indicate an omission. Three spaced periods ( . . . ) indicate where words have been left out of a quoted sentence. Four spaced periods ( . . . ) indicate where words have been left out between sentences [6.08].

Citing Sources Without Page Numbers [6.05]

Not all sources have page numbers. Many electronic documents (e.g., websites) do not contain page numbers. The following examples illustrate how to cite sources without page numbers.

Electronic source with page numbers [6.05]

When citing a quoted passage from an electronic source that has page numbers, use the page numbers as shown in the original document — not what your printer adds to the bottom of each page of your printout.

Example:

Harcourt (2001) has found that “outdoor activities tend to be the most popular choice for leisure time” (p. 9).

Electronic source without page numbers [6.05]

When pages of an electronic source are not numbered, cite your source by paragraph number (if provided), using the abbreviation para.

Examples:

“Not everyone includes the time they spend exercising as part of their overall leisure time” (Institute of Leisurely Research, 1999, para. 3).

A report by the Institute of Leisurely Research (1999) found that “not everyone includes the time they spend exercising as part of their overall leisure time” (para. 3).
If there are no page or paragraph numbers, use any available headings and assign a number to the paragraph in the section you have quoted or paraphrased from (i.e., count down the paragraphs from the heading to the paragraph from which you cited information).

Examples:

“Relaxing during your leisure time cannot compensate for a generally unhealthy lifestyle” (MacDonaugh, 2001, Stress Versus Exercise section, para. 4).

In their study, Ahmed and Haku (2014) found that playing video games or surfing the Internet before bedtime negatively affected sleep patterns (Discussion section, para. 3).

When there is no page or paragraph number, and the section heading is long, use a shortened version of the heading, enclosed in quotation marks.

Example:

A recent study found ... (Sanchez, 2014, “Limit Your Exposure,” para. 1).

Actual heading: “Limit Your Exposure to Computer Screens at Night”