How to Format APA Citations

The American Psychological Association (APA) publishes a style guide for research papers; this style requires sources to be cited in two places:

1. In the text of the paper
2. On the reference page at the end of the paper

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

General Format

Place an in-text citation in the same sentence as the source information. Always include the author(s) and the year. Mention the author(s) either at the beginning of your sentence or at the end.

Author at beginning: Smith and Johnson (2011) found an increase in comprehension with this method.

Author at End: This method resulted in an increase in comprehension (Smith & Johnson, 2011).

Notice the “&” and comma when the author comes at the end. Also, notice that the period goes after the citation, not before it. You don’t need a page number when you are referring to the overall findings or main point of a source.

Adding a Page Number

Add a page number for a quotation or when you are referring to specific information from a source.

Author at Beginning: Gutierrez (2012) classified them into three groups: “emoji thinking, ad brain, and thumb-speak” (p. 3).

Author at End: Three possible groups include “emoji thinking, ad brain, and thumb-speak” (Gutierrez, 2012, p. 3).

Add a space after “p.” and do not use “pg.” Add a comma after the year. Notice that the year always goes with the author’s name, and the page number always goes at the end. Put the citation after the ending quotation marks.

Adding a Paragraph Number

If you are citing a document without page numbers (such as a single web page), cite the paragraph number.

Author at Beginning: Colt (2009) has recommended providing 30 minutes (para. 12).

Author at End: A 30-minute time period has been recommended (Colt, 2009, para. 12).

Missing a Date

If there is no date of publication given, use “n.d.” instead of the year.

Author at Beginning: McCoy (n.d.) has suggested chocolate therapy (para. 13).

Author at End: Chocolate therapy has been suggested (McCoy, n.d., para. 13).

Do not capitalize “n.d.” and do not put spaces after “n.” or “d.” If you are citing a web article, use “n.d.” if there is no publication date for the article itself. Do not use the copyright date at the bottom of the page or the date the article was last updated or modified.
**Abbreviating Authors**

If the source has three, four, or five authors, list all the names in the first citation. After that, abbreviate the names with “et al.”

| First Citation: | Jones, Smith, and Lee (2015) found the model to be accurate. The model was found to be accurate (Jones, Smith, & Lee, 2015). |
| Subsequent Citations: | Jones et al. (2015) recommended a five-fold approach. A five-fold approach has been recommended (Jones et al., 2015). |
| Six or More Authors: | If the source has six or more authors, do not list all the names in the first citation; always use the abbreviation “et al.” |

**Using the Organization as the Author**

If there is no author indicated for a source, the source may have been created by an organization or government agency.

| Author at Beginning: | According to a recent study by the Northeast Society of Observable Behaviors (2016), most people check their phones while waiting in line. |
| Author at End: | A recent study has shown that most people check their phones while waiting in line (Northeast Society of Observable Behaviors, 2016). |

**Using the Title Instead of the Author**

If there is no author and no organization behind the source, use the title. If the title is long, use just the first few words of the title.

| Article Title: | Adding vegetables can increase fiber intake (“Smooth-Talking Smoothies,” 2014). |
| Book Title: | The number of smoothie combinations is nearly incalculable (The Great Smoothie Handbook, 2015). |

*Use quotation marks for an article or other short work, such as a poem, short film, or song.*

*Use italics for a book or other long, stand-alone work, such as a report, feature-length film, or album. Do not use both quotation marks and italics.*
REFERENCE PAGE CITATIONS

Citations on the reference page are different depending on the kind of source you have. Below are formats for common sources.

**Web Page**


- Give the author’s last name first, followed by the first initial (and middle initial, if given) and a period. Separate names with commas, and include “&” for two or more names. If the author is an organization, write out the full name of the organization. If there’s no author, move the title to the front of the citation.
- Put the publication date (not the web site’s copyright date or the last-updated or last-modified date) in parentheses, followed by a period. Include the month and day if given. If there’s no date, use “n.d.”
- Give the title of the page. Capitalize only the first word of the title, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns.
- After “Retrieved from,” give the full web address. Do not end with a period.

**Journal Article**


- Give the author’s last name first, followed by the first initial (and middle initial, if given) and a period. Separate names with commas, and include “&” for two or more names.
- Put the year of publication in parentheses, followed by a period.
- Give the title in italics. Capitalize only the first word of the title, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns.
- Put the name of the journal in italics and capitalize the first word, the last word, and all other words except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions shorter than four letters.
- Put the volume number in italics, followed by the issue number in parentheses and the page range. Do not put a space after the volume number, and do not italicize the issue number.

**Book**


- Give the author’s last name first, followed by the first initial (and middle initial, if given) and a period. Separate names with commas, and include “&” for two or more names.
- Put the year of publication in parentheses, followed by a period.
- Put the title in italics. Capitalize only the first word of the title, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns.
- Give the city and state of publication, followed by a colon and the publisher.