Documentation Conventions – The APA System

To document means to provide information about the sources you used in your paper. A documentation system consists of two parts:

1) parenthetical references within the body of text, and

2) a list at the end of the paper that provides bibliographic information about works that were consulted and cited.

All papers using outside sources include both parts. However, the specific style of documentation can vary according to discipline, since disciplines have become specialized and therefore place emphasis on different types of knowledge. For example, in the Works Cited section, the MLA system places the date of publication as one of the later elements in the citation, since knowledge in the humanities does not become dated as quickly as it might in the natural or social sciences (a 1920 edition of a Shakespeare play, for example, might be just as valid as a 1965 edition). However, in the social sciences, which use the APA system, more recent findings might contradict older findings; therefore, in that system, the date is given toward the beginning of the citation.

Differences in documentation styles are also based on what is deemed convenient or efficient. Therefore, in its "References" list, the APA style does not use quotation marks around the title of an article, nor does it capitalize major words in the title.

Some variations, though, are due simply to the conventions of different academic disciplines, and if you are writing for a particular discipline, you must demonstrate that you are familiar with its documentation practices. The information below provides some basic information about acknowledging and documenting sources according to the MLA and APA formats. You should also keep in mind the following tips:

1) **Be scrupulous** about acknowledging secondary source material. Do not risk plagiarizing whether deliberately or inadvertently.

2) **Form is important.** Always check to see that you have the proper form for referring to outside material within the body of your text and for listing on the Works Cited or References page. Remember that proper form includes indentation and punctuation. If you are writing for a course within a specific discipline, look over journals for that discipline. Note the system of documentation within those journals. Understanding the form requires concentration, so leave sufficient time for documenting your sources correctly.

3) It is almost impossible to memorize every specific rule about documenting sources. **Keep a set of rules handy** when you polish your final draft. The rules in this guidebook will help you use the correct forms for most papers in lower division courses. For more complete information, consult the *MLA Handbook* or the *APA Publication Manual*. These can be purchased at the USC Pertusati Bookstore or checked out from the Leavey Library.

The APA System: Parenthetical Citation

In the APA system, you should refer to outside sources within the body of your text by including enough information so that the reader will be able to locate a source in the References page at the end of the paper. When using the APA system, you should write the year of publication in parentheses immediately following the author's name. If you do not mention the author by name in the text, then you should include the author's name (or a short title if the author's name is missing) and the year of publication, separated by a comma enclosed in parentheses. If you quote from your source, you must also add the page number in your parentheses, with "p" preceding the page number. Here are some examples:

Snodgrass (1988) points out that "young men these days are as concerned about their weight as young women" (p. 237).
Note that, as in the MLA system, you would not need to include Snodgrass's name in the parentheses because it already appears in the text; that is, the reader is already aware of the author's name and would be able to find the rest of the information about the source in the References section. Note also the placement of the quotation marks, the parentheses, and the period.

In the following example, however, Snodgrass's name is not mentioned; therefore, it would be necessary to include his name as well as the page number within the parentheses:

In diagnosing the scope of this problem, what is often overlooked is that "young men these days are as concerned about their weight as young women" (Snodgrass, 1988, p. 237).

Note the use of commas in the parentheses.

A Work with Two or More Authors

If a work has two authors, refer to both. If the names are placed within a parenthetical citation, join them with an ampersand (&).

In a recent study of obese corporate executives (James & Jones, 1989), it was stated...

When the authors' names are used within the text, they should be joined by "and":

James and Jones (1989) state that...

If a work has several authors (fewer than six), they should all be mentioned in the first reference:

James, Jones, Smith, Jeeves, and Raskovsky (1987) argue...

However, in subsequent references, you can use "et al." as in:

James et al. (1987) argue that...

The APA References Page: Books

Like the Works Cited Page in MLA form, there are also three main components in a References page: the title, the author, and the publication information (city, publisher, publication date). Here are some points to remember about the References page in the APA system:

1) All items are arranged in alphabetical order by the last name of the author. If no author is listed, use the first significant word of the title.

2) Each citation should begin at the left margin and additional lines in each citation should be indented one-half inch.

3) Double space between each line and double space between each citation. Two spaces follow a period; one space follows a comma, semi-colon, or colon.

4) The title, "References," should be centered one and one-half inches down from the top of the page. Then double space between the title and the first citation.

Here are some elements of the APA style that differ significantly from the MLA style:

1) Initials, instead of full first names, are used for authors.

2) Titles of books and articles do not use capital letters, except for the first word, the first word following a colon or period within the title, and some proper nouns (e.g., names of people, places, and languages).
3) Titles of articles do not use quotation marks; other titles are italicized (not underlined).

4) There is greater emphasis on the year of publication.

Here are some examples you can use as models:

**A Book with One Author**


Note that the author's first name is indicated only by an initial, that the date appears in parentheses, and that only the first word of the title begins with a capital letter.

**Two or More Books by the Same Author**

List two or more books by the same author in chronological order.


If you cite two or more works by the same author with the same year of publication, alphabetize them by title, and use lowercase letters immediately following the year to differentiate them: (1985a), (1985b), etc.

**A Book with Two Authors**

Reverse last name and initial for both authors, and separate them with commas. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author.


**A Book with a Translator or Editor**


Note that “The” is capitalized following the colon within the title, and that ”Dante” is capitalized because it is a proper noun.

**A Chapter which is Part of an Anthology or Collection**


**The APA References Page: Periodicals**

**Article in a Journal with Continuous Pagination**


The number following the title is the volume number. Notice that it is underlined. Note also that commas separate the journal title, volume number, and page numbers.

**Article in a Journal Paginated Separately in Each Issue**


In this case you follow the volume number "6" with the issue number (4) which is placed in parentheses.
General Interest Magazines

General interest magazines, which are frequently published either monthly or weekly, cite the date of publication, rather than the volume number. The following example illustrates the correct format for magazines that are published monthly.


If a magazine or newspaper does not indicate the name of the author, begin with the title of the article as shown below. This example also illustrates the correct date format for magazines that are published weekly.


Newspapers

For a newspaper entry, provide the author's name, the title of the article, the name of the newspaper as it appears on the front page and the complete date (year, month and day). Page numbers should be listed using the numbering format actually used by the newspaper:


In this example, "The" is part of the name of *The New York Times*. In many cases (e.g., *Los Angeles Times*), "The" is not part of the newspaper's name and would not be included in the citation.

The APA Style: Other Types of Sources

Personal Communications and Interviews

Under the APA system, personal communications such as letters, memos, and telephone conversations are **not** entered in the reference list but are cited in the body of the paper:

James Kohl (personal communication, June 20, 1990) indicated that...

However, published interviews are cited and are listed on the References page. Use the format appropriate for the published source of the interview. The following is an example of an interview published in a monthly magazine.


Note the correct format for citing discontinuous pages as shown in the previous example.

Electronic databases

Online databases of publications (such as Lexis-Nexis, PsycINFO, ProQuest, Expanded Academic, and Ovid) are cited the same as a printed source, but with the following modifications: the phrase “Electronic version” appears in square brackets after the title; the citation ends with the word “Retrieved” followed by the date of access, the word “from” followed by the name of the electronic database, and finally the word “database.” Here are some examples:


**The APA Works Cited Page: The Internet**

When you cite an online source, APA guidelines recommend including as much of the following identifying information as possible:

- Author’s name or authors’ names
- Date of online publication or most recent update
- Title of document
- Title of periodical, in italics
- Date of retrieval or download
- Electronic address (URL)

Below are sample citations for different kinds of sources found on the World Wide Web:

**Article in an online academic or professional journal**


**Scholarly paper**


**Report**


**Article in an online encyclopedia, dictionary or other reference**


**Abstract**


**U.S. government report available online**

**Article in an online magazine**


**Article in an online newspaper**


**Professional site**


**Personal site**

Sample "References" Page in APA Style

Here is an example of a References page. The left, right, top, and bottom margins should all be 1.5 inches in the APA format. All text is double-spaced. The reference list should only contain works cited in the text; the text citation and Reference page entry must be identical.

References


