Academic Skills Know-how
Information Services

APA Quick Guide


What follows is guidance on the situations you are most likely to meet. However, there may be situations which aren’t covered here. In such cases, refer to the sixth edition of the APA’s Publication Manual (full details above) which is available from the Thompson Library: catalogue number 808.06615. In addition, to copies which can be borrowed, there is one which is not for loan and so can be consulted in the library.

The Basics:
APA uses a Name & Date system:

1. Citations (i.e. quotations or references to sources that you use to support your arguments) are written in the main body of your assignment by giving/citing the author’s family/surname followed by the date of the source in brackets i.e. Brown (2010) (see below for variants).

2. You will need to provide a complete list of all the citations that you use in the body of your assignment at the end of your work. This is called a reference list and needs to be presented in alphabetical author/originator order.

Italics:
Only the title of the source of information is italicized. In the case of journal articles put the journal title in italics (e.g. British Journal of Psychology), in the case of books, put the book title in italics.

Secondary Referencing:
This occurs when you are reading a source (i.e. journal article etc) whose author uses facts from another author’s research and you want to use this information for your assignment.

There are 2 ways to approach this:

1. Locate the original research so that you can read, use and cite the source directly. This is the preferred method as it demonstrates further research and understanding.

2. In some instances you may not be able to obtain the original item. If you are confident of the reliability of the item you can use the following secondary referencing rules:

For example, if you have read the book ‘Social Research’ by Tim May (2001) and he refers to the work of Angela Davies (1981) on racism in the early women’s movement and you want to include Davies’s ideas in your assignment you must indicate that you are using a secondary source in the text of your assignment and not the original work undertaken by Davies. You could introduce this by...

Davies documents the racism of the early women’s movement (as cited in May, 2001).

Your reference list would only give the details of the source that you have read for your assignment, in this situation it would be the May (2001) text book.


How to Cite Sources:

1 author
Surname (date)
Austin (2010)

2 authors
Surname of first author and Surname of second author (date)
Buckley and White (2007)

3 to 5 authors
First time cited:
Surnames of all but last author, separated by commas, and Surname of last author (date)
Besenius, Clark-Carter, and Nolan (2010)

Subsequent times cited:
Surname of first author et al full stop (date)
Besenius et al. (2010)
Where ‘et al’ means ‘and others’

More than 5 authors
First and subsequent times cited:
Surname of first author et al full stop (date)
Grogan et al. (2011)
Instead of

Exceptions
The exceptions to the advice above are where this could lead to confusion because you are citing works where the first author is the same and the date is the same

1 or 2 authors
Use letters after the date in the order in which they were cited to distinguish them.
For example, for one author:
Author’s surname (date plus lower case letter)
Forshaw (2007a)
Forshaw (2007b)

3 to 5 authors
First time cited
Scholey, Sünram-Lea, Greer, Elliott, and Kennedy (2009a)
Scholey, Sünram-Lea, Greer, Elliott, and Kennedy (2009b)

Subsequent times cited:
Scholey et al (2009a)
Scholey et al (2009b)

Organisation/group
Use the full name of the organisation unless the name is very long and the abbreviation is well known when the abbreviation can be used but only after you have given the full version as you should always when using abbreviations:
For example:
According to its strategic plan the National Institute of Mental Health’s ‘envisions a world in which mental illnesses are prevented and cured’ (NIMH, 2006).

In parentheses
Sometimes you will want to put the citation after the point you are making. This is usually done when, rather than emphasise the role of the authors you simply are giving support for a statement you are making; it is particularly useful if you have a list of citations. After the statement, put the citations in parentheses, separate author(s) and the date by a comma, use ‘&’ rather than ‘and’ in a citation and separate the citations with a semi-colon. When there is more than one citation put them in the same alphabetical order that they will appear in the reference list. For example:
Students are sometimes apprehensive about learning research methods (Fisher, 1960; Neyman & Pearson, 1950).
Quotations
Use these sparingly and only if the original words are critical to the point you are making.

Fewer than 40 words
Embed the quotation, enclosed with double quotation marks, within the rest of the text and follow the quotation with the source in parentheses plus the page number:

Referring to plagiarism, the APA (2010) note "Whether paraphrasing, quoting an author directly, or describing an idea that influenced your work, you must credit the source." (APA, 2010, p.170).

p refers to page; if the quotation goes over more than one page then use pp instead to denote ‘pages’

40 or more words
Start the quotation with a new line, do not use quotation marks but indent it by about half an inch from the left margin. Again follow the quotation with the citation and page number(s) in parentheses.

Dropping the date
If you cite the same work a second time in the same paragraph, you can miss the date off the second and subsequent times.

How to Reference Sources:
Position and format of reference list
At the end of your assignment we expect a full list of references for all the authors you have mentioned in the text. The reference list should be in alphabetical order by surname of author. Where there is more than one book or paper by the same author, they are ordered by date of publication, starting with the earliest. However, if there is more than one work by the same first author, but different subsequent authors, then you need to put them in alphabetical order before date order. Thus Kline, P. & Lapham, S. (1991) would be placed before Kline, P. & Storey, R. (1978).

1 to 7 authors
List the name(s) of the author(s) and the initials of their forenames with & between the last two authors’ names.

More than 7 authors
List the first 6 authors in the format given above, followed by 3 dots then give the final author’s details:

Instead of:

Journal articles:
Follow the authors’ details and date with the title of the article, the title of the journal, the volume of the journal from which the article came, and the page numbers. Put the journal title and volume number in italics. The number of the part in which the article was published is only included if each part starts its page numbering at page 1; this is very rare in psychology journals.

Books
Whole book by same authors
Use capitals only for the first word and the first word after a colon (and proper nouns, such as London, which would normally start with a capital letter). Put the book title in italics. Give the place of publication, followed by a colon followed by the publisher’s name. Only give the edition for second and subsequent editions.

Edited book
(containing chapters by different authors)
Whole book
Add (Eds.) (or Ed. for single author) after the last author’s details:

Chapter in edited book
Put each editor’s initials before the surname and give the page numbers after the book title:

Conference Papers/posters
Author(s) with initials (year, month) title of paper or poster (in italics). Paper (or poster) presented at meeting of Organisation Name. Location:

Material from web sites
Identifiable author
Surname of Author, initials (date). title of material. Retrieved from URL

Organisation as author
Name of organisation. (date). title of material. Place of publication: publisher. (If available) Retrieved from URL

Don’t put any extra characters such as hyphens or a full-stop at the end. It is best to copy the URL directly from the web page and paste it into your document. Check web pages just before you submit the assignment as the addresses often change. Don’t provide the date you retrieved it unless it contains content which might change.

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