A Template for Using APA Format for Student Papers

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The whole title of the paper is restated at the top of the first page after the title page, followed immediately by the first line of the introduction with no extra blank lines in between. Notice that the introduction does not have a heading that says “introduction.” The introduction is the only section of the research report that does not have its own heading. Please also notice that APA style now asks for one space after a period or other sentence-ending punctuation.

**Documenting Sources in APA Format**

Although many styles of source citation exist, they all share the basic goals of distinguishing between your own ideas and the ideas or information you got from your sources (and which ideas come from what sources) and giving readers enough information about the sources so that readers can go read the sources for themselves.

APA uses three tools to accomplish those goals: the references list, attribution phrases, and in-text (parenthetical) citations. The references list in APA format appears at the end of the document, starting on a new page with the word “References” in bold face at the top of the page. References list entries are alphabetized by the last (family) name of the source’s first author, as shown in the sample references list at the end of this document. The references list is mentioned first because it is the cornerstone of effective source citation in APA format and must be formatted correctly in order for the attribution phrases and parenthetical citations to be useful. The references list is discussed in more detail below, immediately before the sample references list at the end of the document.

A complete in-text citation in APA format consists of author’s last name, year of publication, and—when using a direct quote or information found in only one location in a source—page number(s) or other location information. In all of the disciplines that prefer APA to other source citation systems, the general rule when using information and ideas from sources is to put the source material in your own words. Use direct quotes rarely, and when using direct quotes, quote the least possible amount of text from the source.

When quoting, always “build the quoted material into a sentence of your own” (Small, 2015, p. 12), and immediately indicate the source of the quoted material using an in-text citation. However, Bigger and Green (2017) note that when the author’s name is stated in the body of your text, as it is in this sentence, then “the parenthetical citation is divided” (p. 293), with the date appearing immediately after the author’s name and the page number immediately following the quoted material. Bigger and Smaller (2018) explain that the year of publication always stays with the author’s name, and the page number always stays with the quoted material, whether the author’s name appears in an attribution phrase (as in the case of Bigger and Green and Bigger and Smaller in this paragraph) or in the parenthetical citation (as it does with Small).

When a source has one author (such as Small, 2015) or two authors (such as and Bigger and Green, 2017, and Bigger and Smaller, 2018), the authors’ names are listed in full. However, Green et al. (2019) point out that sources with three or more authors appear as “Author et al.” in attribution phrases and parenthetical citations, even though, as McAdoo (2019) explains, for sources with up to 20 authors, all authors are listed in the references list entry. By the way, the McAdoo source named here is real and is from the APA Style Blog. We highly recommend the APA Style Blog as an accessible, useful, authoritative source for all things APA not covered in the APA manual (that is, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*) itself.

**References List Entries and Special Formatting**

APA is an author-date system, which means that sources are identified by author and publication date, both in the references list and in-text citations. Therefore, the most notable feature of an APA-formatted references list entry is the location of the date of publication in parentheses immediately after the author’s name (or authors’ names). Each entry also includes the title of the source (article, chapter, blog post, video, etc.) and if the source is a part of larger whole (for example an article in a journal, a chapter of an edited book, a single post in blog, an episode of a tv series), then the name and publication information for the larger whole is also included.

Please also pay special attention to capitalization (or absence of capitalization) and use (and non-use) of italics in the samples below. APA format does call for quotation marks around an article title that appears in the main text but does not use quotation marks for article titles in the references list entry. Book titles and journal names are italicized wherever they occur (references list or main text), but book titles, like article titles, are capitalized like ordinary English sentences in the references list. (We call this “sentence case.”) Book titles and article titles are capitalized using “title case” (all important words and all words longer than three letters are capitalized) when they appear in the body of your paper, and journal names are capitalized using title case wherever they appear.

**References**

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