

Common Questions about Citing in APA Style

When you write a research paper, you gather information from many sources, and your readers expect you to refer to those sources in your paper. In APA style, *citations* are those mentions that occur in the body of your paper. *References* are mentions that are listed in more detail as a separate section at the end of your paper.

The format of your citations depends on the type of citation you use. This chart from the APA Manual (6th edition, page 177) demonstrates the proper formatting for *in-text* and *parenthetical* citations.

Type of citation	First in-text citation ¹	Subsequent in-text citation	First parenthetical citation	Subsequent parenthetical citations ²
One work by one author	Walker (2007)	Walker (2007)	(Walker, 2007)	(Walker, 2007)
One work by two authors	Walker and Allen (2004) ³	Walker and Allen (2004)	(Walker & Allen, 2004)	(Walker & Allen, 2004) ⁴
One work by three authors	Bradley, Ramirez, and Soo (1999)	Bradley et al. (1999)	(Bradley, Ramirez, & Soo, 1999)	(Bradley et al., 1999)
One work by four authors	Bradley, Ramirez, Soo, and Walsh (2006)	Bradley et al. (2006)	(Bradley, Ramirez, Soo & Walsh, 2006)	(Bradley et al., 2006) ⁵
One work by five authors	Walker, Allen, Bradley, Ramirez, and Soo (2008)	Walker et al. (2008)	(Walker, Allen, Bradley, Ramirez, & Soo, 2008)	(Walker et al., 2008)
One work by six or more authors	Wasserstein et al. (2005)	Wasserstein et al. (2005)	(Wasserstein et al., 2005)	(Wasserstein et al., 2005)
Groups (readily identified through abbreviation) as authors	National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2003) ⁶	NIMH (2003)	(National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2003) ⁷	(NIMH, 2003)
Groups (no abbreviation) as authors	University of Pittsburgh (2005)	University of Pittsburgh (2005)	(University of Pittsburgh, 2005)	(University of Pittsburgh, 2005)

¹In-text: the authors' names are used as part of your sentence

²Parenthetical: the authors' names appear in parentheses in or at the end of the sentence

³"and" for in-text

⁴"&" for parenthetical

⁵"et al." is a Latin abbreviation for "and others"

⁶Abbreviation goes with first citation of source

⁷Use brackets inside a set of parentheses

How do I cite...

Two or More Works in the Same Parentheses?

Order two or more works within the same parentheses alphabetically, separating works by different authors with a semicolon.

Example: (Jones, 2009; Smith, 2010; Thompson, 2011)

(APA Manual, p. 177)

Works by the Same Author Published in the Same Year?

Differentiate works by the same author published in the same year by including an alphabetically placed letter after the year in your citation.

The letter must then correspond to the same citation in the reference list.

Example: In-text: (Jones, 2009a)

Reference list: Jones, T. (2009a). Introduction to biology. Seattle: Hillman

In-text: (Jones, 2009b)

Reference list: Jones, T. (2009b). The basics of biology. Seattle: Hillman

(APA Manual, p. 177)

Specific Parts of a Source?

Be as specific as you can about where in a source you found the ideas or words you're including in your paper. Always provide specific page numbers for direct quotes.

Example: Parenthetical: (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005, p. 10)

Parenthetical: (Shimamura, 1989, Chapter 3)

(APA Manual, p. 179)

Secondary Sources?

Text or information that appears in your source but is originally from a different source is called a secondary source. If you read about Johnson's diary in an article by Hudson, then your in-text citation would be as follows. Hudson should appear in your reference list, not Johnson.

Example: Johnson's diary (as cited in Hudson, 2001).

(APA Manual, p. 178)

Personal Communications?

Cite personal communication, such as personal interviews, in the body of your paper only. Do not include personal communications in your reference list because they are not archived and a reader will not be able to retrieve them.

Example: In-text: L. D. Sims (personal communication, May 9, 2006)

Parenthetical: (L. D. Sims, personal communication, May 9, 2006)

(APA Manual, p. 179)