APA Documentation

When you use the words or original ideas of another person in your writing, you need to document, or give credit to, the sources of those words or ideas. If you use the exact words from the original, quotation marks are necessary. If you paraphrase or restate the idea in your own words, don’t use quotation marks, but document the source.

In the APA (American Psychological Association) format,* one of several documentation formats, you briefly identify your sources in the text of your paper, then give the full information in the Reference List at the end of the paper.

Identify Sources in the Text

Cite the author’s last name in the text of your paper. Then, in parentheses, include the publication date and any other information required. If you don’t name an author in your text, give the author’s name and date in parentheses at the end of the sentence, along with other required information. See the examples below.

If you refer to the entire contents of a reference and mention the author:
According to Farber (1984), there is a trend toward waiting to marry and toward postponing the birth of the first child.

If you do not mention the author in the text, include it at the end of the sentence, separated from the publication date by a comma:
Child support payments can be withheld from wages in more and more states (Schorr, 1994).

If you want to refer to an entire web site:
The Texas Attorney General’s Office web site has Texas child support information (http://www.oag.state.tx.us/).

If you refer to a specific portion of a reference, add the page or chapter number, separated by a comma:
Thornton (1992, p. 62) notes that “natural fathers aren’t the only ones raising children on their own. As more families split up, social workers note that stepfathers increasingly are being called on to bring up other people’s kids.”

At the turn of the century many men worked long hours, which entailed their absence from the family for most of the day: That was not a rejection of fatherhood but a necessary element of it (McKee & O’Brien, 1982, chap. 5).

If you refer to publications with no author given, include the first 1-3 key words from the title instead of a name:
“Fathers today no longer know who they are or what their wives and children expect from them” (“Fatherhood,” 1990, p. 5), and this increases the likelihood they will abandon their families.

Reference List

A reference list has all the sources mentioned in your paper, arranged in alphabetical order by the authors’ last names or, if a source doesn’t list an author, by the first word of the title (ignore a, an, and the). If you have a type of source not covered in the examples on this sheet, ask the librarian to show you the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.).

The most BASIC RULES for the reference list are:
Books
Last name, Initials. (Publication year). Title of book. City and state where published: Name of publisher.
Periodicals
Last name, Initials. (Publication date). Title of article. Title of periodical, volume number, page numbers.
Online Sources
When possible, give two dates for online sources: the date the material was published and the date you retrieved it.
Indentation
Use a “hanging indent” style: the first line should be flush left and subsequent lines should be indented at least five spaces. Check the example reference list for variations.

OTHER RULES:

A second work by the same author
List in date order, with older before newer. Repeat the author’s name.
Works by multiple authors
If there are six or fewer authors, give names and initials for all. If there are more than six authors, give the first six names followed by “et al.”
Information from the Internet
Always furnish at least a document title or description, at least one date (if the document is undated, then just the date of retrieval), and an Internet address (URL). If possible, identify the authors as well. Check the APA Web page for further information — http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html