APA Quick Guide

What this handout is about...
This Handout will cover several aspects of APA style:
- Why we cite sources
- What needs to be cited
- How to use parenthetical citations and
- How to create the reference page

This handout is designed to introduce you to the concepts and formats of APA citation. APA style is typically used for Social Sciences (Communication, Education, Political Science, Economics, and Sociology). For authoritative coverage of APA style, see the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Why do we cite sources?
One purpose of citations is to leave a trail of clues for interested readers. When you document papers correctly, you provide others with a way to access the sources you have used. Another purpose of citation is to promote ethical responsibility and academic consistency in a discipline’s writing community. If you do not cite and document your sources carefully, you run the risk of plagiarism.

What needs to be cited?
When you write a paper in the social sciences, you often use and build on information other people have researched and compiled. Whether you are writing a report or preparing a literature review, it’s important to give credit where credit is due. If you incorporate or refer to others’ ideas or concepts in your paper, you must document each one using a citation and a Reference Page. In addition to facts and statistics, you must also acknowledge an individual’s ideas or theories.

You need to document:
- Direct quotes
- Paraphrases (rephrased or summarized material)
- Phrases taken from sources
- Words specific or unique to the author’s research, theories, or ideas
- Use of an author’s argument or line of thinking
- Historical, statistical, or scientific facts
- Articles or studies you may refer to within your text

Admittedly, as you gather these items, you may encounter some gaps. What if the journal article has no name, but it has an author, and a publication date? What if the website gives you a page number but not a title or a date? In these cases remember: If you have it (author’s name, website title, date, etc.), use it; if you don’t have it, you can’t use it.

You do not need to document:
- Proverbs, axioms, and sayings (“As the saying goes, a stitch in time saves nine.”)
- Well-known quotations (“The personal is political.”)
- Common knowledge (Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, or oxygen’s atomic number is 8, or Vincent Van Gogh painted “Starry Night”)

Sometimes it’s difficult to be sure what counts as common knowledge, especially when writing in an academic discipline new to you. Perhaps you aren’t familiar with Van Gogh or an atomic number. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself if a knowledgeable reader would be familiar with the information. You may, in fact, need to consult with a reader within the discipline. If she’d have to look it up, you probably should document it. If you aren’t sure if something counts as common knowledge, document it to be safe.

How to Use Parenthetical (In-Text) Citation
Parenthetical citations are placed within the text of your paper. Below are examples of how to cite print sources and electronic sources.

Parenthetical (in-text) citations for print sources
Paraphrase (one option): Author, followed by the date in parentheses, continuing with the rest of the sentence, and then ending the sentence with the page number in parentheses.

EXAMPLE: Havid (1999) from Johns Hopkins University found that patient contentment rose with doctor involvement (p. 5).

Paraphrase (another option): Author and date are mentioned in the sentence. This may occur when you don’t mention the research the author has done but quote directly from her/him.

EXAMPLE: In Havid’s 1999 study, he found the rise of patient contentment rose with more doctor involvement (p. 5).

Direct quote from text: Author, date, and page number in parentheses all follow the quoted material.

EXAMPLE: It has been noted that “patient satisfaction increases with increased doctor-patient interaction” (Havid, 1999, p. 5).
Parenthetical (in-text) citations for electronic sources
NOTE: These sources are slightly different, because many electronic sources do not provide page numbers, you will want to cite either the paragraph number or the heading information.

Cite the paragraph number after the year of publication and within the parenthesis

EXAMPLE: As Myers (2000, 9) aptly phrased it, "positive emotions are both an end-better to live fulfilled, with joy [and other positive emotions] and a means to a more caring and healthy society."

Cite the heading information after the date of publication and before the page number

EXAMPLE: "The current system of managed care and the current approach to defining empirically supported treatments are shortsighted" (Beutler, 2000, Conclusion section, 1).

How to Create the Reference Page
The Reference page, entitled "References," will appear near the end of your written document—that is, after your study, report, conclusion, or literature review. The Reference page lists the bibliographic information for all the sources that you cited in your paper, not all works you have merely consulted. This page is not necessarily the last page in your paper; tables and/or appendices, if you have them, will come after the Reference page.

Examples of Reference Page entries
In this brief handout we don’t have enough space to offer an example of every source form you might cite. Here are examples of the most popular types of sources used in the social sciences, as found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition, page numbers as indicated.

Book
Single Author

Multiple Authors

Editor, Translator, or Compiler Instead of Author

Chapter in an Anthology or Edited Collection

Journal Article

Magazine Article

Newspaper Article

Electronic References
Full-text Journal Article from Online (Web-delivered) Database

Daily newspaper article, electronic version

Professional Webpage