

# Using APA Documentation

The APA style is a system for documenting sources and formatting research papers developed by the American Psychological Association. It is used primarily by students and researchers in the social sciences, such as Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work. Though there are similarities to the MLA style (such as in-text citations and a list of sources at the end of the paper), there are many differences, including the following:

- Only the first word of the title and subtitle of a book are capitalized;
- The year of publication of a work is included in the in-text citation;
- An author's first name is always indicated by its initial;
- Past or present perfect tense is used when referring to sources (e.g., "Smith stated" or "Smith has stated").

**Isn't the APA just for quotations?** No. The ideas and information are as important as the wording, so whether you put a source in your own words or use it word-for-word, letting your readers know where it comes from is crucial.

**What is a source?** Difficult to define precisely, a source can be thought of as any place from which you have gotten words, ideas, and information that make their way into your paper. A source can be a book, a Web Site, a magazine or newspaper article, a video, the lyrics of a song, an interview with your mother in the kitchen over breakfast.

For more information than this quick overview provides, visit [www.yu.edu/wilf/writingcenter](http://www.yu.edu/wilf/writingcenter) and click "Resources."

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**Gather Information about Your Sources as You Research:** As you read sources for a research project, keep in mind that you need to know not just what they say but also information about their publication. Make collecting this information part of your research process. **For models of how to include this information in a Reference list, see the other side of this sheet.**

**For Books:** 1) Author(s)/editor(s) 2) Date of publication 3) Title and subtitle 4) City of publication  
5) Name of publisher

**For Articles:** 1) Author(s) 2) Date of publication 3) Title and subtitle of the article 4) Periodical name  
5) Volume and issue number (if used) 6) Page numbers

**For Sources Available only Online:** 1) Author(s)/editor(s) 2) Date of publication 3) Title of source  
4) URL (Web address) or the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), when available 5) Paragraph numbers if no page numbers are available

**Indicate When You've Used a Source:** Make clear each time you use a source—whether the words or ideas—by including two key pieces of information: the author's last name and the year of publication.

1. **Include the Author's Name and Year of Publication in a Signal Phrase:** According to Smith (2010), many social workers run the risk of becoming emotionally attached to their clients.

**Note:** Since the source isn't quoted directly, you aren't required to provide a page number—though you may include one if it will be useful to your reader.

2. **Name the Author Parenthetically:** Many social workers "potentially face the problem of becoming attached emotionally to clients" (Smith, 2010, p. 101).

**Note:** page numbers must be used for direct quotations.

**List Your Sources at the End of Your Paper:** Except for personal communications, each of the works used in your paper must be listed in alphabetical order, on a final, separate page. This list is called "References." The information concerning each work must be arranged in a specific format. (See samples on the other side.)

## Reference List Formats for Several Kinds of Sources:

### A Book with One Author:

Newman, K. S. (2003). *A different shade of gray. Midlife and beyond in inner city*. New York: The New York Press.

**Note:** Only the first word of the title and the first word after the colon are capitalized. Note also that initials, not first and middle names, are used.

### A Book with Two or More Authors:

Locker, K., & Kaczmarek, S. (2010). *Business communication: Building critical skills*. New York; McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

**Note:** If your source has more than seven authors, list the first six then omit all but the last and replace the omitted names with an ellipsis (...).

### An Article in an Edited Book:

Jackson, T. (2006). The new faces of childcare: A statistical analysis. In M. Denby (Ed.), *New faces in social work* (pp. 123-147). New York: Knopf.

**Note:** The second line is indented 5 spaces/one tab space.

### An Article in a Newspaper:

Torre, J., & Zimmer, D. (2007, October 1). The psychology of champions. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, C4, C6.

**Note:** The first letters of important words in the titles of periodicals are capitalized.

### An Article in a Journal Paginated by Volume:

Cortez, R., & Moore, W. (2005). Transcultural adoption: A statistical overview. *Adoption Today*, 34, 129-137.

### An Article in a Journal Paginated by Issue:

Orshansky, M. (1993). Measuring poverty. *Public Welfare*, 51(1), 27-28.

### An Article from an Online Source or Database:

Kopytoff, V. G. (2010, September 26) "Shifting online, Netflix faces new competition." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

**Note:** Online articles follow the same guidelines as print articles; add the URL or, if available, the DOI at the end.

Mathias, R., & Benjamin, A. (2003). Abuse and neglect of clients in agency-based and consumer-directed home care. *Health & Social Work* 28, 174-184.

**Note:** You don't need to indicate if you retrieved an article from a database.

**Personal Communications:** Unpublished interviews, letters, E-mails, memos, etc. should be cited in the text of your paper but not the reference list. In a parenthetical citation, include the initials of the author's first (and, if available, middle) name, and the date. See below for an example.

## A Sample Paragraph and List of References:

Laakso (2000) stated that "Most child support legislation has focused on fostering responsible behavior toward children by parents, contributing to the well-being of families, and reducing welfare costs" (p. 367). However, incarceration can prevent this responsibility. According to Ronald P. Harvey, a juvenile detention caseworker, many parents of the teenagers are incarcerated (personal communication, May 11, 2010). Not enough data has been gathered about children whose parents are in prison. As a result, the number of children and the extent of the crisis cannot yet be known (Seymour, 1998).

### References

Laakso, J. H. (2000). Child support policy: Some critical issues and the implications for social work. *Social Work*, 45(4), 367-370.

Seymour, C. (1998). Children with parents in prison: Child welfare policy, program, and practice issues. *Child Welfare*, 77(5), 469-494.

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