APA Format Case Study

Why Should I Reference?

References are used to record or document the source of each piece of information in your paper obtained from other researchers and writers. If you fail to document information that is not your own, you have committed plagiarism, a form of stealing.

What Should I Reference?

You must reference all direct quotations; paraphrases of material; and summaries of opinions, ideas and interpretations obtained from other sources. If you fail to reference your information, you will be criticized for making statements that appear to be unsupported by evidence. It is not necessary to document information that is common knowledge, but remember that it is always better to overdocument than to underdocument.

You may be concerned that, if you reference too much, your instructors will think the paper is not your own work. That is not so. The method of organization is yours, as well as the purpose which ties the material together, the topic sentences, concluding sentences, analytical and evaluative comments which allow the reader to make sense out of the reference material, and probably most of the introductory and concluding paragraphs.

What Style Should I Use?

Always ask the professor which documentation style is required for the assignment. Styles can vary greatly between journals even within one field. If no specifics are given, this Fastfacts can serve as a guide to one of the standard formats, described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (known as the APA style), used in psychology and many of the social sciences.

Remember to choose one style for a particular paper, and be consistent within that paper.

How Do I Reference?

The APA style uses the name-year system for referencing, not footnotes or endnotes. You will include an in-text citation (also called a parenthetical reference) in the text immediately following the information (e.g., title, word, or phrase) that is being referenced, as well as an entry in the References. (Note: Footnotes in APA are used to supplement or amplify important information in the text or for copyright permission.)

In-text citations include the author's last name and year of publication. These citations can be included within a sentence in various ways:

- at the end of the sentence, in parentheses:

  This hypothesis was tested (Smith, 2010).

- as part of the sentence, using the parentheses to include whatever reference information is not in the sentence:

  Smith (2010) tested this hypothesis. OR
  Smith's (2010) study tested this hypothesis. OR
  In 2010, Smith tested this hypothesis.

Note: In the text of your paper, use "double quotation marks" for the title of an article or chapter, and *italics* for the title of a periodical (journal) or nonperiodical (book).

This handout provides examples of the APA format for citations within the text (see "In-Text Citations") as well as for your references (see "Reference List").

About this Handout

Information in this Fastfacts is based on the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. If you can't find what you're looking for here, the official APA sources have more complete information:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington: American Psychological Association.

APA Web site: http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html

myperfectwords