

APA Formatting & Style Tips



Do:

1. Include the year of publication in the body of your paper (not just on the References page)

APA values current research. Whenever you cite research, you should include the year it was published.

- The date *usually* appears in parentheses after a signal phrase:
 - Holbrook et al. (2007) studied the effects of...
- But it can be written in the body of the sentence itself:
 - In 2007, Holbrook et al. studied the effects of...
- The date can also go inside the parentheses at the end of a citation:
 - The effects of ... (Holbrook et al., 2007)

2. Know how to use “et al.” “et al.” means “and others.” It’s used in citations for works with more than three authors.

For **signal phrases** in the body of your essay:

- **6 or more authors.** Only list the **first author**’s (last) name, also known as the “leading” author:
 - Smith et al. (2015) found . . .
- **3-5 authors.** List all authors’ last names the first time you cite the work. The *second time* (and each time thereafter) list only the first author’s last name:
 - Smith, Adam, Lee, and Gray (2015) found . . . *(first time you cite the work)*
 - Smith et al. (2015) found . . . *(second / later times you cite the work)*

For **parenthetical** in-text citations:

- **1-2 authors:** Include both authors’ names in the parentheses:
 - Children struggling to control their weight . . . (Smith & Adam, 2015).
- **3 or more authors:** Include only the first author and **et al.**:
 - Children struggling to control their weight . . . (Smith et al., 2015).

3. Use block quotations for direct (verbatim) citations that are 40 words or longer.

- Start a new line and indent this text so that it’s set apart from the rest of your text.

Source → Smith (2015) identified several contributing factors in the childhood obesity crisis, such as: ← Colon

Indent → Advertising directed at children ... a reduction in physical education classes ..., an increase in the availability of sodas and snacks in public schools, the growth in the number of fast-food outlets ..., and the increasing number of highly processed high-calorie and high-fat grocery products. (p. 34) ← Page #

Addressing each of these areas requires more than a doctor armed with a prescription pad; it requires ...

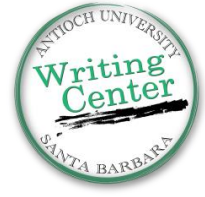
4. Format your title page

- Insert the full TITLE OF YOUR PAPER (in caps) into the header of your paper.
- The title on your *first page* should start with “Running head:” followed by a shortened TITLE. Be sure to select “Different First Page” in your Header settings.

5. Use past tense or present perfect tense to refer to researchers’ actions

- Smith found / stated / argued ... (past tense)
- Smith has found / has stated / has argued ... (present perfect tense)
- Not: Smith ~~finds / states / argues~~ ... (**don’t use** present tense)

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Do:

6. Ask your instructor about their specific policies

- Instructors vary in their expectations for APA. Ask your instructor what they want.

7. Know where to look (and who to ask) for APA help/questions.

- The OWL Purdue website has some good APA information
- You can also ask the Writing Center tutors or look at an APA handbook in the Writing Center

DON'T:

1. Don't write the titles of articles, books, or journals in the body of the text

- In a book titled "~~Examiner comments on Ph.D. theses~~," Holbrook et al. (2007) noted...
- In an article in the journal ~~Studies in Higher Education~~, Holbrook et al. (2007) found...

2. Don't write an author's first name or first initial in the body of the text

- ~~Bob~~ Jones (2013) examined...
- ~~B.~~ Jones and ~~R.~~ Smith (2013) have argued that...

3. Don't confuse "and" with "&"!

- "&" should only appear inside of parentheses (or on the References page):
 - Personal connection contributes to tutoring success (Babcock & Thonus, 2012).
- "and" is used when "and" is a regular word in the sentence:
 - Babcock and Thonus (2012) have claimed that personal connection contributes to tutoring success.

4. Don't confuse "p." and "pp."!

- "p." refers to text that only appears on one page:
 - Holbrook et al. (2007) reported that, "Peer review is the main process by which the quality and contribution of research is judged, and is an activity undertaken by academics as part of their work" (p. 337).
- "pp." refers to text that appears on two or more pages, e.g.: (pp. 337-338).

5. Don't use "informal" language!

- Avoid using "I/we/our" in expressions like "as we have seen," or "as I mentioned above"
 - But **you can use "I/we"** when you're talking about your own experiment/methods:
 - "I selected subjects..." / "We conducted a study..."
- Avoid using "you" for statements about people in general; instead, use the name of the specific group of people.
 - For example: replace "if **you** really care about solving the health crisis..." with: "if **voters/politicians/Americans** really care about solving the health crisis..."
- Avoid contractions like: it's, isn't, didn't, and can't.

6. Don't overgeneralize!

- Be as specific as possible when you refer to a group of people, especially for the first time.
 - For example, instead of "college students," think about whether your argument relates to all college students, or to only college students in the U.S., or to only first-year college students, or to only college students from low-income families.