

APA: Frequently Asked Questions (APA 7)



1) Why APA format?

“APA” stands for the American Psychological Association. APA is often the standard format used in the social sciences. It’s a consistent way for writers to document sources and avoid plagiarism.

2) What do I need to cite?

Cite anything that’s not your own (ideas of others, words of others (quotes), paraphrases of others’ ideas in your own words, statistics, graphs/charts, etc.)

3) What if I can’t find the author for my source? And what if there’s no date?

If the source was written by an organization, you can use the organization’s name as a Group Author. If there isn’t an author or organization, then you can use the title of the source.

Example:

Narrative citation: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, ... (n.d.).
 Parenthetical citation: ... (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).
 References: U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *U.S. and world population clock*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved December 22, 2019, from <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>

Use “n.d.” instead of year for no date

Include URLs as hyperlinks

4) How do I cite something that I could only find in a different source? (Indirect source)

You should try to track down the original source! For example, if you’re reading Schafer and you want to cite something Rosen (1982) said that was mentioned in Schafer, you should first try to find and read Rosen’s (1982) work yourself.

If you cannot find Rosen’s (1982) work (e.g., because it’s out of print or in another language), then cite using “as cited in”:

Example:

In her study, Rosen (1982, as cited in Schafer, 2012) demonstrated that...
 She also found that... (Rosen, 1982, as cited in Schafer, 2012).

Note: If you don’t know the year of the first source, omit it: (as cited in Schafer, 2012)

Note: Only include Schafer (the source you actually read) in your References list.

5) How do I cite multiple pages on a website?

If you are using multiple pages on a website, for example, the “About” page and the “Mission Statement” page on an organization’s website, you must cite each page individually on your References page to make it clear where you found the information.

6) When do I use et al.?

The abbreviation et al. (“and others”) should be used in all in-text citations with 3+ authors.

Examples:

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1 author | Talaga (2014) found... (pp. 212–213). | ... (Talaga, 2014, pp. 212–213). |
| 2 authors | Preston and O’Neal (2016) found... (para. 5). | ... (Preston & O’Neal, 2016, para. 5). |
| 3 or more authors | Lang et al. (2017) found... (p. 38). | ... (Lang et al., 2017, p. 38). |

APA: FAQs Continued (APA 7)



7) What if my source has no page numbers?

If there are no page numbers for your source (e.g., an online source), you may not need to include any, or you may want to include a paragraph number or section number for your readers, to indicate exactly where an idea came from.

Example: (Acosta, 2020, para. 5)

8) If I'm talking about one source in a few sentences, can I just cite once at the end of a paragraph?

No.

You need to make sure that your reader can tell which ideas are your own, and which are paraphrases. A good strategy is to use a signal phrase (last name + year) in the first sentence, then use phrases like “They also pointed out...” in the next few sentences to show your reader that you are still paraphrasing/quoting the same source.

Example: **Garcia & Long (2015)** suggested that students prefer texting over phone calls. **They also found** that some students send up to 300 text messages a day (p. 7). **The study** identified strategies that may alleviate technology addiction (p. 32).

If you include this type of phrase, then you do not need to include another parenthetical citation with the author name/year. (Just include the page numbers for any quotes.)

9) How do I cite a teacher's lecture? / How do I cite lecture notes?

Cite as “personal communication.” *Example:*

Narrative citation: E.-M. Paradis (personal communication, August 8, 2019) ...

Parenthetical citation: ... (T. Nguyen, personal communication, February 24, 2020).

Personal communication does NOT go on your References page, only in-text.

10) Do I need an abstract?

It depends on your teacher/project. Check your assignment guidelines or email your professor if you are unsure.

- a. **How do I write an abstract?** No more than 250 words; a brief, comprehensive summary of your paper. Abstracts are used by readers/researchers to decide if the content of a paper is relevant to them. Write the abstract last, after finishing your paper.

Double-Check: Formatting Reminders

Paper Heading Format:

- 1) Page number in the top right corner of every page, even the cover/title page

In-text Citation Format:

- 1) Format long quotes (40+ words) as block quotes.
- 2) Include a comma between the author's last name and the year: (Park, 2016)
- 3) Use p. for one page (Murray, 2017, p. 17), and pp. for a range (Murray, 2017, pp. 17–19.)

References Format:

- 1) If you copy the formatting from a citation generator (e.g., Google Scholar, EasyBib, or CiteThisForMe) or from the library database “Cite” tool, double-check the formatting (it's often not perfect).