

APA Documentation Style: References Page

American Psychological Association (APA) documentation style is used for citing sources primarily in the social sciences. Like similar documentation styles, APA requires that you cite your sources in two ways:

- With an in-text citation (also known as a parenthetical citation) following any quoted or paraphrased material from your sources
- With a References page at the end of the paper that provides a full bibliographic entry for each of your sources

This resource focuses specifically on the second method of citation, the References page. However, we also have a resource on APA in-text citation if you would like more guidance on that topic.

Formatting the References Page

General rules:

- Start the References page on a new page directly after the last page of your paper. Title it **References**, bold the title, and center-justify the title on the page.
- Use double-spacing for the References page.
- List sources in ascending alphabetical order (A-Z).
- Indent all lines BESIDES the first line for each source. This makes it clear to your readers where the entry for one source ends and the next begins. This is called the “hanging indent.”

Note: Your instructor may have individual preferences for formatting the References page. Always follow your instructor’s guidelines, even if they contradict the APA’s guidelines.

Formatting Bibliographic Entries

It would be overwhelming to include instructions for how to format the bibliographic entry for every potential type of source you might use. Instead, this section provides some guidelines to follow regardless of what sources you use. To find the APA format for a specific type of source, consult the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The Cottey Library also has a tool for generating bibliographic entries; however, you should always cross-check its results with the *Publication Manual*.

You can also access a sample References page by going to the Purdue OWL here:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/apa_sample_paper.html

Generally, the goal of a bibliographic entry is to provide as much of the following information about your sources as possible, in this order:

- The author’s name (last name, first initial—e.g., Hernandez, E.)
- The year that the source was published
- The title of the source (for the References page, do not put titles in quotation marks)
- The “container” of the source, if applicable (see note below)
- The entity that published/sponsored/featured the source (this will often be the same as the container)

Note: The “container” of a source is the larger entity in which the source is included. For example, a book would be a container for an individual chapter; a TV show would be a container for an individual episode; a journal would be a container for an individual journal article. Put the names of containers in *italics*.

If you use an online source, you will also need to include the DOI or URL (web address) for the specific web page you used. Do not remove the hyperlink. Unlike with MLA, you do not need to indicate the date on which you accessed an online source unless it is frequently updated (e.g., a wiki). Note: As of the 7th edition, the APA no longer requires you to include the words “Retrieved from” before the URL.

Frequently Asked Questions about the References Page

Q: What if I don’t know the author’s name?

A: Simply exclude it from your bibliographic entry and begin the entry with the source’s title instead.

Q: What if my source has more than one author?

A: Use (last name, first initial) format for all authors, and separate authors’ names with commas. Use an ampersand (&) before the last author. **Example: Hernandez, E., Williams, D., & Schultz, M.** For sources with more than twenty authors, list the first twenty normally, then place an ellipsis (...) and list the last author.

Q: What if my source is an anthology?

A: Anthologies are collections of texts written by various authors that have been compiled into one singular text. The people who do this compiling are called editors, and their names need to be included in your bibliographic entry. You will also need to include the page range within the anthology of the specific text you used. For example, if the anthology is 250 pages but the text you used spans pages 160-180, you need to include that page range in your entry.