APA In-Text Citations

Citing the work and ideas of others when writing a research paper is a necessary practice that you’ll include in two major places in your essay: the references page, which appears on its own sheet at the end of your paper, and through in-text citations, which appear throughout the body of your essay.

In-text citations (also called “references,” “parenthetical documentation” or “parenthetical citations”) direct your readers to your references page and indicate which work you used and where in the text you found it. In-text citations let your readers know who is responsible for the cited information, when the work was published, and where they can find it for themselves. You need to include an in-text citation each time you borrow information or ideas, whether you quote directly or paraphrase in your own words.

- A typical APA in-text citation consists of the author’s last name and the year, separated by a comma.
  An important study (Foster, 2001) examined the relationship between social class and school success.

- If you’ve already mentioned the author’s name in your sentence, simply include the year in parentheses.
  Foster (2001) investigated the relationship between social class and school success.

- When quoting, use the original author’s exact wording and include the page number along with the other reference information. When citing a quotation, be aware of the location of the period after the parenthetical citation.
  The report found that “a significant positive correlation exists” (Foster, 2001, p. 82).

- When using specific parts of a source, indicate the page, chapter, figure, table, equation, or paragraph number (for an electronic source) of the specific part in your citation.
  Another experiment (Williams, 1998, table 2) found no relationship.

- When citing an entire work without using any direct quotations or paraphrases, page numbers are not necessary.
  One report demonstrated how election-year politics often follow a standard pattern (Johnson & Cruz, 2006).

Use this rule of thumb: if you can point to the part of the source you’re using, include a page number! If you can’t point to it (because you’re summing up the central focus of the work), then no page number is required in your in-text citation.

- When quoting a longer passage that runs forty or more words, indent the entire quotation ½ inch on the left, double spaced\(^1\), with no quotation marks, and include the parenthetical citation after the quotation punctuation. This is called a block quotation.

  Bell (2001) noted that readers and writers have a specific kind of relationship:
  Writers stake out a territory to explore, provide maps designed for discovery, and invite readers to join
  the expedition. Readers, in turn, survey the invitation and weigh the possibilities for discovery before
  making a commitment to the journey. The next time you’re in a bookstore or library, you can watch these
  negotiations in action. (p. 1)

\(^1\) (Examples in this worksheet are single-spaced to conserve paper. Remember that your papers in APA style should be double-spaced.)
• Within a paragraph, you don’t need to include the year in subsequent references, as long as it can’t be confused with other studies cited in the essay.

Other APA in-text citation guidelines and examples:

A work by two authors
Cite both authors every time the reference occurs in text. When including the authors’ names in parentheses use an ampersand (&) rather than the word “and” before the last author.

Johnson and Cruz (1985) explained that election-year politics follow standard patterns.

One report (Johnson & Cruz, 1985) demonstrated how election-year politics often follow a standard pattern.

A work by three to five authors
Cite all authors for the first reference; only list the first author followed by et al. in subsequent citations.

Horn, Grace, Drummond, and Katsaros (1999) explored the history of jazz in America.

Horn et al. (1999) also highlighted the contributions of significant American jazz musicians.

A work by six or more authors
For the first and subsequent citations, cite only the first author’s last name followed by et al.

The results Smith et al. (2010) found were counterintuitive.

A work produced by a group
Refer to the full name and acronym of the group in the first reference; use only the acronym afterwards.

Plans for a space plane had been put on hold (National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA], 1999).

Engineers were in disagreement about the best engineering approach (NASA, 1999).

A work without an author
Use a shortened version of the title, in quotation marks or italicized as appropriate, beginning with the first word on the References page.

Incidents of harassment on college campuses have been on the decline (“Study Finds,” 2001).


An indirect source
When your source quotes another source, mention the name associated with the original quotation in the text, and then use the abbreviation “qtd. in” in the parentheses before your indirect source information.

Wagner stated that myth and history stood before him “with opposing claims” (qtd. in Thomas, 1997, p. 65).

Remember, any time you borrow information or ideas, whether you quote directly or paraphrase in your own words, it is necessary to document your source(s). It can be tricky to determine what is considered “common knowledge,” so when in doubt, CITE!

For more detailed information and specific citation rules, please refer to the APA handbook: