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Why we use parenthetical / in-text citations

APA requires the use of in-text or parenthetical citations. We use this to help the reader identify which ideas and facts in the paper come from the particular sources in the reference list.

Author date system

APA uses the author-date system, or the last name of the author and the year published, to help identify sources in the reference list. Place these citations after the information, whether in the middle or at the end of a sentence. If the author or the date is already included in the sentence, then exclude it from the parenthetical citation.

Basic Examples

When no author or date is mentioned in the sentence:

In a recent study in molecular biology (Smith, 2000)

When the author is mentioned in the sentence:

In Smith's (2000) study in molecular biology

When both the date and the author are mentioned in the sentence, do not use parenthetical citations:

In Smith's 2000 study molecular biology

Citing multiple authors

If there are three of less authors in a source, always cite all these authors when referencing their work:

Craine and Poole (2002) show that…

The scores are indeed correlated with education (Craine & Poole, 2002)

It can be demonstrated (Jarvis, Jenkins, & James, 1994)

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If there are four or five authors, first cite all the authors in the parenthetical citation, then for following references, cite the first author followed by "et al."

Prince, Smith, Wilson, and Cooper (1999) found …

Prince et al. (1999)

If there are six or more authors, cite the first author followed by "et al."

Looking at temperature fluctuations (Grossman et al., 2005)

In the instance where two references with more than six authors reduce to the same form (same first authors), cite enough authors as necessary, then followed by "et al." to distinguish the two references.

Jesrani, Nangia, Patel, Dhand, Averin, and Ruprarelia (2004)

Jesrani, Nangia, Relan, Bhatia, Basu, and Somashekar (2005)

Jesrani, Nangia, Patel, et al. (2004)

Jesrani, Nangia, Relan, et al. (2005)

Citing group or corporate authors

Cite a group author (corporations, associations, government agencies, and universities) like you would an author in an in-text citation. If you cite the same group author numerous times, you may add an abbreviation in brackets in the first citation, and later reference that group by the abbreviation.

As demonstrated by studies (American Medical Association [AMA], 1999)

Its proven true in tests (AMA, 1999)

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Citing sources with no author

When there is no author, cite the first few words of what appears in the reference list entry (enough to allow the user to identify the source). If citing the title of an article of chapter, place it in double quotes. If citing, a periodical, brochure, book or report, italicize the title.

It was first discovered in the 19th century (*Historical Presence*, 1985)

It demonstrates ("Upgraded Protons," 2002)

Citing authors with the same last name

If two references in your paper have different authors with the same last name, include their initials along with their surname in the body of your paper or in the in-text citation.

P. J. Johnson and Smith's study (2000) and J. N. Johnson (2001) found

It can produce mild disruption (J. N. Johnson, 2001)

Citing multiple works in the same parenthetical citation

When citing numerous works by the same author in the same sentence, arrange by the years of publication.

Previous studies (Jesper, 1995, 1998, 2000)

Works by the same author with the same publication date should be distinguished by suffixes.

Numerous studied (Smith, 2000a, 2000b)

When citing two authors in the same in-text citation, order them alphabetically by their last name, and separate them by a semicolon.

Various studies (Ryder 2000; Sanders 2006)

Citing old and classic works

Write "n.d." for sources with no date information where the year would normally be cited. Oftentimes old and classic works will not have date information - when the date information is inapplicable, cite the year the source was translated preceded by "trans." or the year of the version followed by "version."

(Plato, n.d.)

(Sophocles, trans. 1984)

Citing part of a work

Use a page, chapter, or whatever identifier necessary to help the reader locate the specific part of the source. When quoting a source, always provide page numbers.

(Rathers, 1992, p. 12)

(Cooper, 1999, pp. 5-8)

(Smith & Wollensky, 1994, chap. 4)

When citing an electronic source there may not be page numbers, in which case cite by paragraph number. If there are no labeled page or paragraph numbers, cite the section and the number of the paragraph following it.

(Relan, 2000, para. 43)

(Kalawadia, 2002, Introduction section, para. 2)

Citing personal communications

Emails, letters, interviews, memos and the like are personal communications which do not have recoverable data. For this reason, we only cite such items as in-text citations, and not in the reference list. Cite the initials and the last name, the description of the communication, and the date of the interaction.

(M. T. Horton, personal communication, May 17, 2004)

As discussed by J.P Smith (telephone interview, December 13, 2008)