APA Documentation Style: The Basics

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I. Remember the purposes of documentation:
   A. to give credit to the source from which you are borrowing and
   B. to inform the reader about the source of your information.

II. Because of these purposes, remember that your in-text citations must lead the reader to the proper references entries.
   A. In other words, any author's name that you cite in-text must also appear in the "author" position of one of your references entries, and,
   B. conversely, anything appearing in the "author" position of one of your references entries must appear somewhere in the text of your essay.

III. Here's a basic example: a quotation from a book with an author, followed by the references entry for the source:

   In-text citation:

   Lamm and Everett (2007) claimed, “While no one will deny that the Internet’s accessibility from any home computer makes it convenient, its vastness (and its relative lack of organization) can make it difficult to find the kind of information you need” (p. 220).

   References


IV. An APA in-text citation must include the following:
   A. An author's name (or title of work if author is unknown).
      1. The author's name may appear either in the sentence that contains the borrowed information or in parentheses with the page number.
      2. Do not put author's name in both places.
   B. The date of publication in parentheses after the author's name.
   C. A page number (preceded by "p.") in parentheses.
      1. The page number is required for quotations and recommended for paraphrases.
      2. Unpaginated sources such as pamphlets and Web sites pose a slight problem. If the source has headings or section titles, use these along with a paragraph number to help the reader. Here’s an example: (“Multiple Streams,” para. 2). If there are no headings, decide whether or not the reader will benefit from a only a paragraph number; if you see no benefit, provide no paragraph number.
      3. Do not write "online" in parentheses after an electronic-source citation.
4. See the APA Publication Manual, 6th ed., or any recent grammar-and-style guide for more information and the latest updates.

Sample APA In-Text Citations with Corresponding References Entries

1. **Quotation from a Periodical with Author's Name in Sentence**
   
   Buford (2006), discussing the rise of TV food programs, wrote, "Ours is a different audience from the one that watched Julia Child" (p. 47).

   **References**
   

2. **Paraphrase from a Periodical with Author's Name in Parentheses**
   
   Amazingly, by the late 1990s, the list of top-ten killers of Americans did not include AIDS (Casey, 2007, p.100).

   **References**
   

3. **Quotation from a Periodical with Unknown Author (Title in Parentheses)**
   
   An article in *PC Magazine* mentioned that "video and television content on the Web is exploding" ("Video," 2006, p.19).

   **References**
   

   Notice that **article title takes on author position in references entry** and that **article title is abbreviated in in-text parenthetical citation**. Notice also that this publication provides a volume number, 25, so it is included, italicized, in the entry.

4. **Paraphrase from a Periodical with Unknown Author (Title in Sentence)**
The article "The Dangers of Stingrays" (2006) reported that only 17 people worldwide died of stingray wounds (p. 63).

References


5. Quotation from an Electronic Source with Author's Name in Sentence

Greenberg (2009) defined citation diversion as “the citing of content but the altering of its meaning in a manner that diverts its implications” (“Citation Diversion,” para. 1).

Notice that this parenthetical reference includes a heading title and a paragraph number.

References


Notice the DOI (digital object identifier) at the end of the entry. This relatively new (and relatively uncommon, at least for now) information is preferred by APA over the URL. If you can't find a DOI for the source, use the URL.

6. Paraphrase from an Electronic Source with Unknown Author

A recent article in cautioned weightlifters not to ignore their triceps, which comprise 2/3 of the muscle in the upper arm (“Weight,” 2004, para. 2).

Notice that there is no parenthetical page reference for this electronic source but that the writer has decided to include a paragraph number to help the reader.

References


Notice that the writer has provided the URL for the source. This means that no DOI was available.
7. Quotation from a Library Database

According to Greenblatt (2007), “Advertisers always pay dearly to run TV commercials during the Super Bowl, and this year was no exception—$2.6 million for a 30-second spot” (para. 2).

Notice that there is no parenthetical page reference for this electronic source but that the writer has decided to include a paragraph number to help the reader.

References


8. Paraphrase from a Library Database

Shapiro (2006) explained that the inevitable destruction of human embryos is the most difficult ethical issue in stem-cell research (para. 3).

Notice that there is no parenthetical page reference for this electronic source but that the writer has decided to include a paragraph number to help the reader.

References