

APA Citations

Everyone knows citations are important. But why?

Part of writing a scholarly paper is incorporating and building on the ideas of other scholars.

You need to cite so that you aren't plagiarizing other people's work.

A citation allows your readers to locate the sources you used easily. Reading your sources allows them to evaluate and better understand your argument.

There are different citation styles depending on which discipline you're in. Right now, I'm going to talk about APA.

Citations are two pieces: you need an in-text citation, and a reference list.

First, we'll talk about in-text. When using APA format, do not use footnotes. Instead, follow the author-date method of in-text citation.

This means that the author's last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, for example, (Jones, 1998), and a complete reference should appear in the reference list at the end of the paper.

If you are including a direct quote, you need to include a page number as well. There are several different ways to include a page number, depending on the length of the passage you are citing. Here are some examples.

For the reference list, you really only need to include four pieces of information: the author, the date of publication, the title of the work, and the publication data -- either the publisher, or the URL.

All sources that are cited in the text must appear in the reference list at the end of the paper.

These should follow this basic format:

Author, last name then initials. Date in parentheses. Title of the document – and if it's an unusual format, include that in brackets.

If you are citing an article, follow the title with the journal title italicized the volume and issue of the journal, and then your page numbers.

Then source. This can be the publisher's name or the URL.

The best way to learn is to use a good style guide – pick one you like and stick to it, for consistency's sake.

Purdue OWL has an online style guide that's comprehensive, easy to use, and easy to access.

APA has a blog where they answer commonly asked questions.

The library also has style guides, available here on our website.

You can also get a physical copy of a style guide.

Citing is easy once you can fit all the pieces together. The more you do of it, the easier it will get! Happy citing!