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APA Parenthetical Citation

APA documentation style uses a parenthetical citation system that provides the minimum information necessary to allow a reader can find the work in the reference list and then locate the source of the citation. Include only the author's or authors' surname(s), the publication date of the work, and the page number if the material is quoted. When the surname of the author is included in the text or is obvious from the context, include only the date or the page number(s). Here is a simple example of how it works:

A later study concluded “wholists show a strong inclination to use the mode which corresponds most nearly to their verbal-imagery style” (Riding & Mathias, 1991, p. 389).

Note how commas separate the three elements.

Scholars in the social sciences often mention author names in the text, making the inclusion of the author surname(s) within the parentheses unnecessary. In such cases, use a two-part parenthetical citation for quoted material, one for the date after the author surname in the text and another for the page number that follows the quotation:

Riding and Mathias (1991) found that “wholists show a strong inclination to use the mode which corresponds most nearly to their verbal-imagery style” (p. 389).

In APA style, paraphrases are more common than quotations; thus, citations including page numbers are relatively rare:

Pruisner (1995) found that the use of colour did not have an impact on the recall and retention of verbal information presented in graphic form.

In the Riding and Mathias citations above, an ampersand (&) is used within the parentheses, and the word *and* is used to list authors named in the text. Many studies have multiple authorship, and the authors' names are not necessarily listed in alphabetical order; reproduce the order used in the document you are citing.

The abbreviation “et al.” (the Latin *et alii*, *et alia*, or *et alius*, meaning “and others”) provides a shorthand way of acknowledging other authors besides the principal author. The “et al.” is not used for one or two authors. If the work is written by three, four, or five people, then all surnames are mentioned only in the first citation of the source. In every subsequent citation to that same work, you need include only the first author's surname followed by “et al.” and the page number if necessary. If the first mention of the author(s) occurs outside the parenthesis, you may omit the date in subsequent reference to the same study in the same paragraph (unless the names are also *within* parentheses). Here is an illustration:

Federico, Golec, and Dial (2005) found that American attitudes towards the 2003 Iraq War oscillated between patriotism and nationalism, where the former is a positive regard for one's country that allows for criticism of the country and the latter is often accompanied by negative feelings towards members of national outgroups. This distinction is accepted by many researchers (e.g., Kimmelmeier & Winter, 2008) studying nationalist sentiments. Federico et al. surveyed 217 students at a large Midwestern university during the autumn before the Iraq War began, at a time when the possibility of war was prominent in the news.

Here are some more examples of parenthetical citations:

When two multi-author sources look the same when shortened with “et al.,” include enough names to distinguish them:

Dial, Brown, Sherwood, and Fontana's (1994) study of uncles contrasts with Dial, Sherwood, Brown, and Fontana's (1994) study of aunts. Dial, Brown, et al. were optimistic about the long-term influence of uncles, while Dial, Sherwood, et al. predicted that aunts lost influence among nieces and nephews as the children became older.

When the study has more than five authors, use “et al.” even in the first citation:

Mori et al. (1997) suggested that premorbid brain volume might indicate an Alzheimer's patient's ability to resist intellectual decline.

When citing two or more sources at the same time, separate them with a semicolon:

Researchers have developed a scale that measures a person's susceptibility to embarrassment (Kelly & Jones, 1997; Maltby & Day, 2000; Modiglianai, 1968).

Note: Put a semicolon between the citations and list them alphabetically by the surnames of the first authors (*not* chronologically by date).

When referring to two different works by the same author published in the same year, use lowercase letters to distinguish them:

There have been promising developments in applying behavioral cognitive therapy to smoking cessation (Park et al., 2013a, 2013b).

When the author is not a person but a corporate entity, use its name as the author:

The *Publication Manual* recommends “presenting ideas in an orderly manner” and “expressing yourself smoothly and precisely” (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 65). However, it warns that scientific writing differs from other kinds of writing: “Devices that are often found in creative writing—for example, setting up ambiguity; inserting the unexpected; omitting the expected; and suddenly shifting the topic, tense, or person—can confuse or disturb readers of scientific prose” (APA, 2010, p. 65).

Note: Above, the acronym “APA” may be used once the full name is introduced on first use. For nested parentheses, use square brackets.

When there is no author listed, use the title of the work:

A Cleveland woman was the most successful example of this new transplant technology (“Recipient,” 2009).

Note: Use a shortened version (first few words) of the title that corresponds to the title listed in the references. In this case, the title replaces the author's surname. Titles should be either in italics or within quotation marks. “Anonymous” is not listed as the author unless the author is designated as such.

When two *primary* (first named) authors have the same surname, use initials to distinguish them:

Research has emphasized quantifying the contribution of smoking to cancer rates (B. Park et al., 2014) and designing school-based smoking prevention (E. Park et al., 2006).

When citing a conversation, provide the note “personal communication” and the month, day, and year:

R. Spacek (personal communication, April 18, 2009) explained some of the inconsistencies of English usage.

Note: Personal conversations can yield important information, but because they are not published cannot be retrieved by others, they are omitted from the reference list at the end of the paper.