TIPSHEET: APA documentation in the sciences
Guide to the American Psychological Association’s citation style focusing on requirements in the sciences

Why should I reference?

- Identify and acknowledge your sources of information and research
- Strengthen your academic work: References can strengthen your academic work by demonstrating that the statements you are making are based on evidence.
- Allow readers to find out more: Finally, references allow readers to follow up on points of interest or obtain more detailed information by finding the same resources you used.
- Avoid plagiarism: If you do not document information sources that are not your own, you are representing someone else’s work as yours. This is plagiarism, whether you have done it intentionally or not.

What should I reference?

- Reference all paraphrased, summarized, or quoted material in your paper. Note: In the sciences quotations are rarely used.
- You don’t need to cite facts that are common knowledge, but err on the side of caution. Ask your instructor if you’re uncertain.

What style should I use?

Ask your instructor which documentation style is required. This sheet outlines APA style, from the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed., available from the MRU Library).

How do I reference?

There are two steps involved in referencing:

1) **In-text citation**: Identifies within the written text of your assignment the ideas and information you have selected from other sources.

2) **Reference list**: Provides the full bibliographic citation (title, author, etc.) for each source of information used in your paper.

Additional Resources

Get more APA examples and explanations by clicking on “Cite Sources” on the MRU Library homepage (mtroyal.ca/library).

1. **In-text citations**

In-text citations include
- author’s last name
- publication year
- page number indicating where you found the information in the original text.

You can include these citations in various ways:

- At the end of the sentence in parentheses
  
  One study tested this hypothesis (Smith, 1970, p. 787).

- As part of the sentence, using the parentheses to include whatever reference information is not in the sentence
  
  Smith (1970) tested this hypothesis (p. 787).

**In-text citation examples**

These formats apply to both electronic and print sources.

**One or two authors**

… (Elias & Williams, 1981, pp. 56-57).

Elias and Williams (1981, pp. 56-57) describe…

**Three to five authors**

List all authors the first time you cite the reference

…(Brasch, Mendling, & Allen, 2015, p. 85).

In subsequent citations use *et al.* to replace all but the first author

Brasch et al. (2011) demonstrated…(p.89).

**Six or more authors**

Use *et al.* from the first instance of the reference

… (Lui et al., 2015, p. 76).
ANONYMOUS AUTHOR / NO AUTHOR
Do not use “Anonymous.” Instead, use a shortened title of the article (in quotation marks) or book (in italics) in place of the author’s name.


ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS, ETC. AS GROUP AUTHORS
A group may serve as an author if no personal author is listed.

… (World Health Organization, 2016, p. 5).

NO DATE AVAILABLE
Use n.d. to indicate “no date” available in place of the date.

… (Smith, n.d., p. 54).

MULTIPLE SOURCES, SAME AUTHOR
Order them chronologically, earliest to latest, separated with a semi-colon.


If there are several in the same year, add a designator (a, b, c, etc.) to the year in the citation and the reference list.


MULTIPLE SOURCES, DIFFERENT AUTHORS
List source citations alphabetically; separate them with a semi-colon.


CITING A SOURCE CITED IN ANOTHER SOURCE (AKA secondary source)
Include only the source you have seen (e.g., Brown) in your reference list.

… . . . King in 1911 found that… (as cited in Brown, 2003, p. 181).

Note: When the source you’re citing is within another source, obtaining the original paper (e.g., King) is the best option whenever possible.

NO PAGE NUMBERS ARE AVAILABLE
If you have a source such as a website, with no page numbers use the paragraph number instead.

If the document has headings, use the heading of the section, and then give the number of the paragraph under it that contains the information you are using.

… (Meckler, 2011, Methods, para. 2).

If there are no headings, count the paragraphs from the beginning of the document.

… (Jacobs, 2014, para. 4).

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS
Email, personal or telephone interviews, conversations, or lectures are not widely retrievable (i.e., unpublished). Cite them in the text of your paper only. Provide the initials and last name of the communicator and the date of the communication.

… (T. Vela, personal communication, April 25, 2012).

COURSE AND LECTURE MATERIALS
Instructor-created course handouts / items posted to Blackboard: Use the instructor as the author and the date on the handout as the year of publication.

… (Nickle, 2016, para. 1).

Lab manuals: Treat these as books (print) or as web documents (if they are on Blackboard), using the instructor as author (unless another author is indicated, i.e., the department).

… (Department of Chemistry, 2016, p. 2).

Lecture notes that you took in class: See previous section for information on citing personal communications.

Article from a course pack: See B2 on page 7 of the MRU APA handout for an example.

2. REFERENCE LIST
The reference list:
• comes at the end of your paper
• provides the full bibliographic information for your sources
• only includes the references cited in your paper

Your references must:
• start on a new page with the centered title References
• be double spaced with a ½ inch hanging indent, and
• be listed in alphabetical order by last name of first author (in the order listed on the article) or by title (when there is no author).
REFERENCE LIST EXAMPLES
For more examples see the full MRU APA guide or refer to the APA publication manual.

JOURNAL ARTICLE WITH A DOI (print or electronic)
A doi (digital object identifier) is a unique reference that identifies the article; include doi information if it is provided.


JOURNAL ARTICLE WITH MORE THAN SEVEN AUTHORS WITHOUT A DOI (print or electronic)
List the first 6 authors, use … and then list the final author.


ABSTRACT FROM A JOURNAL ARTICLE
Note: It is preferable to cite from the full text of an article, if possible.


If from journal homepage, include journal homepage URL in place of database name (i.e., http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/)

JOURNAL ARTICLE IN PRESS, RETRIEVED FROM THE WEB
Articles in press
• have only been informally published (for example, in a preprint archive or on the author’s website)
• are not usually indexed in a journal website


Update your references as close as possible to the day you submit your work in case of new information.

JOURNAL ARTICLE, ADVANCED ONLINE PUBLICATION
Advanced online publications
• are offered online, usually from the journal homepage
• are normally peer reviewed but may not have been copy edited or formatted
• may have no volume, issue, or page numbers yet


If no doi, include URL for the journal homepage. Update reference just before submitting, in case of new information.
BOOK


CHAPTER OF AN EDITED BOOK

Author(s) of the chapter. (Year). *Title of chapter*. In Editor(s), *Title of the book* (pp. page numbers). Place of publication: Publisher name.


ELECTRONIC BOOK RETRIEVED FROM A LIBRARY DATABASE


LAB MANUAL

*Print manual*

Author. (Date). *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher.

Department of Chemistry. (2012, Fall). *CHEM 0130 Basic Chemistry II laboratory manual*. Calgary, Canada: Mount Royal University.

[See next section on citing a document from Blackboard]

DOCUMENT ON A WEBSITE LINKED TO A COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE

Author. (Date). *Title of document*. Retrieved from Mount Royal University course name Blackboard website: URL


WEBSITE, ORGANIZATION/GROUP AS AUTHOR

A group may serve as an author if no personal author is listed.

Group or organization. (Year). *Title of webpage*. Retrieved access date, from URL


ANONYMOUS AUTHOR / NO AUTHOR, DATE UNKNOWN

Omit authorship from reference, and begin with title. Use n.d. to indicate that there is no date.

*Title*. (n.d.). Retrieved date, from URL


GOVERNMENT REPORT ON A WEBSITE, WITH IDENTIFIED AUTHOR

Author. (Year). *Title*. Retrieved from URL


Italicize the titles of documents and reports found on websites.