

# APA Primer

The OKWU online program requires that student papers conform to the standards and guidelines of the American Psychological Association, or APA. Use of the APA style is a standard practice for most social science and inter-disciplinary degree programs, including Education, Nursing, Business, Leadership, the sciences, Psychology, and so forth. APA is also the standard writing style for many online programs and graduate schools. As such, adherence to proper citation and APA guidelines is imperative to earning high grades as well as avoid unintentional plagiarism. As an introduction, the basic components of APA can be found in your APA manual as well as at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>). There are several APA fundamentals you will need to familiarize yourself with to be successful in graduate school. As a starting point, complete the APA Basics tutorial from the APA website below.

## Complete the Tutorial

APA provides a self-guided, online tutorial on the basics of the APA writing style, as well as the format and structure of written academic papers. The link to the tutorial is provided below. After the completion of the APA tutorial, students will be able to:

- Identify the sections of a research manuscript
- Format research documents according to APA writing style
- Punctuate manuscripts for course assignments and research according to APA guidelines
- Identify the various resources used to support research manuscripts

The APA tutorial will take approximately one hour to complete. There are multiple sections in the tutorial. Some of the sections include sample papers and examples and of the content presented. Students will need to be familiar with the information provided in all sections.

The tutorial requires that you have Adobe Flash Player and Adobe Reader installed on your computer. If you need these applications, go to the following links to download them for free:

- <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/> (<http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>)
- <http://get.adobe.com/reader/> (<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>)

**At this point, you should complete the web-based tutorial below. Once you have done so, return to this page and continue reading below.**

To begin, click the button below, then click "View the tutorial"

Go to the Tutorial (<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>)

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With that thought in mind, a citation is written as briefly as possible to keep from cluttering the paper with unnecessary information. Therefore, the bare minimum is the name of the author and the date of publication, usually enclosed in parentheses at the end of the information being cited. If there is no author then the title of the article is used. If there is no discernable date then n.d. is used to indicate no date. If the information is taken verbatim from the external source then it is enclosed in quotation marks and a page or paragraph number (if the article does not have page numbers) is included in the citation. Note that the URL of the web site is not used inside a parenthetical citation. Thus, [www.learnmoreindiana.org](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org) (<http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/>) is not used. Instead, the title of the article from the web site *Learning Styles Assessment* is the first element in the citation, and the citation would be (Learning Styles Assessment, 2007), or with a direct quote the citation may be (Learning Styles Assessment, 2007, para. 3).

The reference list is constructed so that the reader can readily find the specific reference that the citation points to, and so the reference material may be retrieved if desired. For that reason the reference list is alphabetized by the author's last name or the first important word (i.e. excluding short words like a and the) in the title if no author is available. Also, each reference is formatted in a hanging indent, where the first line of each reference is flush left and all other lines are indented ½ inch.

References take the same no-clutter approach as citations. Therefore the four parts of a reference are author (or title), date, title of paper (unless it has moved to the author position), and source, with each part separated by a period. Authors are listed by last name and initials, with multiple author's names separated by an ampersand (&). The date is enclosed in parentheses, with a single publication date or n.d. The title is taken from the title of the article or book. If the reference is a book, then the city and state precede the publisher's name (e.g. Boston, MA: Prentice Hall). If the article comes from the web, then a workable URL that takes the reader to the specific web page is used. Now that we have constructed a good reference list it is a matter of using the first two parts of any reference to format the citation

## Purpose of Citations

The key to using APA lies in understanding why we do citations and references in such a particular way. A citation serves the two purposes of (a) giving credit to someone else for what they wrote, and (b) referring the reader to a more detailed list of references if they desire to read further.

With that thought in mind, a citation is written as briefly as possible to keep from cluttering the paper with unnecessary information. Therefore, the only information provided within the writing itself is the **name of the author** and the **date of publication**, usually enclosed in parentheses at the end of the information being cited. If the information is taken **verbatim** from the external source, then it is enclosed in "quotation marks" and a page or paragraph number (if the article does not have page numbers) is included in the citation.

- Indirect quote - paraphrased ideas or material: *Three significant issues contribute to these outcomes* (Jones, 2006).
- Direct quote of verbatim material: *One view argues that "there is little evidence of the effectiveness of this approach"* (Miller, 1999, p. 15).
- If there is no author, then the title of the article is used: ("*New Discovery Made*", 2011)
- If there is no discernable date, then n.d. is used to indicate no date: (Jones, n.d.)
- *Note: the URL of the web site is not used inside a parenthetical citation.* Instead, the title of the article from the web site is the first element in the citation. An example citation would be: (Learning Styles Assessment, 2007), or with a direct quote the citation may be (Learning Styles Assessment, 2007, para. 3).

A **References** list at the end of the paper is provided so that the reader can readily find the specific reference that the citation points to and so the reference material may be retrieved if desired. Information like the title of the book or article, the publisher, the web URL address, and so on is provided in this list rather than in the text of the paper itself. This reference list is alphabetized by the author's last name or the first important word in the title if no author is available. The References page is always its

own page at the very end of the text of the paper.

References take the same no-clutter approach as citations. The four parts of a reference are: (1) author (or title), (2) date, (3) title of paper (unless it has moved to the author position), and (4) source, with each part separated by a period. Authors are listed by last name and initials, with multiple author's names separated by an ampersand (&). The date is enclosed in parentheses, with a single publication date or n.d. The title is taken from the title of the article or book. If the reference is a book, then the city and state precede the publisher's name (e.g. Boston, MA: Prentice Hall). If the article comes from the web, then a workable URL that takes the reader to the specific web page is used. Now that we have constructed a good reference list it is a matter of using the first two parts of any reference to format the citation

The final authority on formatting citations and references is the APA (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) manual. Regardless of how any software, web site, or shortcut book provides a suggested format or example, any question about the proper way to list citations and references in a paper should defer to APA.

**For further information please refer to:**

- APA Manual (APA, 2010), 6th Edition - use for formatting assistance and the final authority for academic writing.
- American Psychological Association (APA) (2009). <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/> (<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/>)and <http://search.apastyle.org/?query=&facet=stylecontenttype:FAQ> (<http://search.apastyle.org/?query=&facet=stylecontenttype:FAQ>)
- Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) (2009). <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>)

## Other APA resources

- APA tutorial PowerPoint from Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University (<https://okwu.brightspace.com/d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l?ou=6830&type=content&rcode=okwu-2424>)
- "General Format": <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>)
- "In-Text Citations: The Basics": <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/> (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>)