

# APA: In-Text Citations

When using APA style to write a research paper or other academic text, it is important to include both in-text and reference citations (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020, p. 257). For every in-text citation, there should be a corresponding reference entry and vice versa. APA style uses an author-date system of in-text citations. This means that when source material is used, the author's last name and year of publication must be provided. For example: (Burroughs, 2009).

**Signal phrasing:** When citing a source, a signal phrase may be used to introduce the material. A signal phrase is a word, phrase, or sentence that indicates to the reader that you will be including researched material. For example:

According to Burroughs (2009), ...  
Burroughs (2009) stated that...

**Paraphrasing and quoting:** Paraphrasing and directly quoting are two possible ways of presenting source material in academic papers (APA, 2020, pp. 269–270).

A paraphrase is a restatement of the source information in the writer's own words.

*Example paraphrase:* Voice's influence on writing is debated among writing scholars (Elbow, 2007).

A direct quotation is a word-for-word reprinting of the source information.

*Example direct quote:* "Writing scholars often disagree about how voice influences writing" (Elbow, 2007, p. 168).

## Citing References in the Text

**Narrative and parenthetical citations:** When the author is named in the sentence (called a **narrative citation**), the year of publication immediately follows the name (APA, 2020, pp. 262–263). If the author is *not* named in the sentence, you must put the author's last name and year of publication in parentheses (called a **parenthetical citation**). You must keep author and date together, whether in a narrative citation or a parenthetical citation.

*Reference entry:*

Wegener, J. W. (1994). Volunteer support, marital status, and the survival times of terminally ill patients. *Health Psychology, 24*, 225–229.

*Corresponding narrative citation (single author named in sentence):*

- Research by Wegener (1994) supports the claim . . .

*Alternate corresponding parenthetical citation (single author named in parentheses):*

- Sickle-cell anemia is often fatal, and its health effects vary (Wegener, 1994).

**When to include page number(s) in the parenthetical citation:** When using a direct quotation, APA style requires that page numbers be placed within the in-text citation (APA, 2020, p. 270). Page numbers may also be used when referring to specific parts of a source. If no page numbers are available, use another indicator to help the reader find the information (such as paragraph numbers or subheading titles).

- *Citation with page number:* (Anderson, 2005, p. 10).
- *Or with multiple page numbers:* (Emery, 2006, pp. 23–24).

**Long quotations:** Direct quotes including more than 40 words should be formatted as a block quotation. (APA, 2020, p. 272). The quotation is double-spaced and begins on a new line. The entire block must be indented .5" from the left margin. The parenthetical citation is placed at the end of the block outside of the final punctuation. For example:

Composition scholars' beliefs have shifted:

Baird and the others developed a rich and sophisticated attitude toward voice. On the one hand, participants spent a great deal of time scorning sincerity and skewering students and colleagues who were naive or foolhardy enough to defend it. They insisted that a text gives no window at all on the actual self of the writer. (Elbow, 2007, p. 170)

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**One work by multiple authors:** When citing a source with multiple authors, the rules are different depending on the number of authors: “For a work with one or two authors, include the author name(s) in every citation. For a work with three or more authors, include the name of only the first author plus ‘et al.’ in every citation (even the first citation)” (APA, 2020, p. 266).

**Table 1**  
*Basic In-Text Citation Styles*

Author type	Parenthetical citation	Narrative citation
One author	(Luna, 2020)	Luna (2020)
Two authors	(Salas & D’Agostino, 2020)	Salas and D’Agostino (2020)
Three or more authors	(Martin et al., 2020)	Martin et al. (2020)
Group author with abbreviation (first citation)	(National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2020)	National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2020)
Group author with abbreviation (subsequent citations)	(NIMH, 2020)	NIMH (2020)
Group author without abbreviation	(Stanford University, 2020)	Stanford University (2020)

*Note.* Adapted from APA, 2020, p. 266.

**Citing multiple works in parenthetical citations:** “When citing multiple works parenthetically, place the citations in alphabetical order, separating them with semicolons” (APA, 2020, p. 263).

*Example:*

Several studies (Miller, 1999; Shafranske & Mahoney, 1998) argue ...

**Citing a work without an author:** When a work has no author(s) identified, cite in text the first few words of the reference list entry (usually the title) and the year. If the title is italicized on the reference page, italicize it in the in-text citation. If the title is not italicized on the reference page, place double quotations around it in the in-text citation. (APA, 2020, p. 265).

*Example 1:*

In the book *College Bound Seniors* (2008), the topic of...

*Example 2:*

The report claims... (“Study Finds,” 2007).

**Citing primary and secondary sources:** “In scholarly work, a *primary source* reports original content; a *secondary source* refers to content first reported in another source” (APA, 2020, p. 258). Whenever possible, find and cite the original content. Save secondary citing for sources that are unavailable, such as works that are out of print.

*Example 1:* (Rabbit, 1982, as cited in Lyon et al., 2014)

If the primary source is unknown, omit it from the in-text citation.

*Example 2:* Allport’s diary (as cited in Nicholson, 2003)

The information for this handout was compiled from the following sources:

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).  
Elbow, P. (2007). Reconsiderations: Voice in writing again: Embracing contraries. *College English*, 70(2), 168–188.

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