

## APA Documentation Style: The Basics

Revised July 2016

APA (American Psychological Association) documentation style is a system used in social and natural sciences as well as medical fields to acknowledge the sources that you borrow from when you do research to help you write a paper.

### Why Document Your Sources?

1. To give credit to the sources you have borrowed from to make your paper stronger.
2. To show your credibility: readers can trust you because you care enough about your subject to do research on it to support our own ideas and opinions with the ideas and opinions of expert sources.
3. To let readers know where they can get further information about your topic.
4. To let readers look for themselves at your sources so they can draw their own conclusions.
5. To avoid *plagiarism* (sometimes called “literary theft”), a serious academic offense in which writers borrow words or ideas from a source and present them as if they were their own.

### What Is a Source?

A source is any person, place, or thing from which you borrow information for your paper. Most commonly, it is an article from a journal, magazine, website, or database. It might also be a book, a *YouTube* video, a movie, a song, an illustration . . . . The list goes on.

## Part 1: APA References Page

The APA References page provides publishing information about all of the sources you have borrowed from in your paper. The APA References page is placed at the end of your paper, is alphabetized and double-spaced, and uses “hanging” indents.

Here is a sample References page from a paper for a social science class:

### References

All in the family. (2016, May-June). *AAA Living*, 19-20.

Billo, E., & Mountz, A. (2016). For institutional ethnography: Geographical approaches to institutions and the everyday.

*Progress in Human Geography*, 40(2), 199-220. doi: 10.1177/0309132515572269

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.T., & Shaw, L.L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic field notes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Royal Anthropological Institute. (2016). Ethnography. *Discover anthropology*. Retrieved from

<http://www.discoveranthropology.org.uk/about-anthropology/fieldwork/ethnography.html>

Stoller, P. (2015, August 24). In defense of ethnography. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography\\_b\\_8028542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography_b_8028542.html)

Thompson, G. (2015). A gringo in the lettuce fields. In R.B. Axelrod & C.R. Cooper (Eds.), *The concise St. Martin's guide* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 68-71). Boston, MA: Bedford-St. Martin's.

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Now, let's look at each entry in detail:

All in the family. (2016, May-June). *AAA Living*, 19-20.

This source is a magazine article that has no author, so the title of the article comes first. Note the lack of quotation marks around the title and the lack of capital letters. In APA Reference pages, titles of articles and books have no capitalization except for the first letter of the title, the first letter after a colon, or the first letter of a proper noun. Next comes the year, followed by months, in parentheses. Then there is the title of the magazine, italicized. Notice the normal capitalization. In APA References, normal capitalization rules apply to periodical titles. After the magazine title come the pages that the article appears on.

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Billo, E., & Mountz, A. (2016). For institutional ethnography: Geographical approaches to institutions and the everyday. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(2), 199-220. doi: 10.1177/0309132515572269

This source is an article from a scholarly journal accessed on an online database. In APA References, authors' names are inverted, and only initials are given for first and middle names. Next come the year of publication, the title of the article, and the title of the journal. The numbers following the comma after the journal title are the volume and issue numbers: 40(2) indicates volume 40, issue 2. The doi stands for "digital object identifier." Many scholarly sources use a doi instead of a URL.

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Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.T., & Shaw, L.L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic field notes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

This source is a book with three authors. Next comes the year of publication. There is no month or day indicated for books. Then there is the title of the book, followed by its edition in parentheses. Next come the city and state of publication, a colon, and the publisher.

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Royal Anthropological Institute. (2016). Ethnography. *Discover anthropology*. Retrieved from <http://www.discoveranthropology.org.uk/about-anthropology/fieldwork/ethnography.html>

This source is an article on a website. The author is the organization that sponsors the page. (If you wanted to, you could instead use the article title in the author position.) Next comes the year of publication, followed by the article title. Note the lack of quotation marks around the article title. Next comes the name of the website, italicized. Last come the words "Retrieved from" followed by the URL.

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Stoller, P. (2015, August 24). In defense of ethnography. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography\\_b\\_8028542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography_b_8028542.html)

This source is an article from an online newspaper. It has author, date, article title, newspaper title, and URL, as expected.

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Thompson, G. (2015). A gringo in the lettuce fields. In R.B. Axelrod & C.R. Cooper (Eds.), *The concise St. Martin's guide* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) (pp. 68-71). Boston, MA: Bedford-St. Martin's.

This source is an article in a textbook/anthology. It begins with the author of the article. Then come the date of the textbook/anthology and the title of the article. After that comes the word "In" followed by the names of the editors of the textbook/anthology, which are followed by "(Eds.)." Then, after a comma, come the title of the textbook/anthology, the edition number in parentheses, and also in parentheses the pages that the article appears on. Last come the city, state, and publisher.

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### More Things to Know about the References Page

1. It is alphabetized.
2. Its entirety is double-spaced.
3. "Hanging" indents are used to make the authors' names more visible.
4. For more information about the References page, see the APA's *Publication Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), the Purdue OWL website, or the free handouts in the Writing Center.

## Part 2: APA Quoting and Paraphrasing

The two main ways to borrow information from a source and include it in your paper are quoting and paraphrasing.

- A quotation is an exact borrowing of words from a source, and those borrowed words are put in quotation marks.
- A paraphrase is the borrowing of an idea from a source, and that borrowed idea is written in the student's own words. A paraphrase is not put in quotation marks.

### APA In-Text Citation Style

APA requires an in-text citation style that uses a minimum of clutter to match the quotations and paraphrases in your paper with the publication information about the sources of them in your References page.

Here is the basic formula:

Introductory word group/phrase of attribution  
that mentions author's last name and perhaps some additional information  
+  
(Year of publication in parentheses after author's name)  
+  
"Exact words borrowed in quotation marks" or paraphrase  
+  
(page number, if available, where borrowed material appears).

**Now, here are some excerpts from sources followed by examples of effective quoting and paraphrasing as well as the matching References entry.**

#### Excerpt 1

Modes of participating in and finding out about the daily lives of others make up key parts of ethnographic methods. These "methods" determine what the field researcher sees, experiences, and learns.

## Quotation 1

In their book *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) maintained that ethnographic methods “determine what the field researcher sees, experiences, and learns” (p. 15).

## Paraphrase 1

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) stressed the importance of methods in ethnographic field researchers’ attempts to gain information about others.

## Reference

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.T., & Shaw, L.L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic field notes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Notes: Both the quotation and the paraphrase mention the authors’ names and the year of publication (in parentheses) in a phrase of attribution. The quotation adds some additional information about the source; this is optional. It is the norm in APA in-text citations to mention authors’ last names only. Notice also the use of past-tense verbs in the phrases of attribution; this, too, is the norm in APA style. In the quotation, the student has not quoted an entire sentence from the source but has instead quoted a portion of it and woven into his/her own sentence. Lastly, the quotation ends with a parenthetical page citation, but the paraphrase does not; this is the norm in APA style.

## Excerpt 2

During fieldwork ethnographers invariably interview many people, but they also participate in the lives of their subjects, developing an interpretative sensitivity that can only be acquired over long periods of time. A cardinal principle of ethnographic fieldwork is this: listen to what your subjects are saying, but pay special attention to what they do.

## Quotation 2

Stoller (2015), a professor of anthropology at West Chester University, explained, “A cardinal principle of ethnographic fieldwork is this: listen to what your subjects are saying, but pay special attention to what they do.”

## Paraphrase 2

Observing not only what people say but also what they do is one of the most important aspects of ethnographic fieldwork (Stoller, 2015).

## Reference

Stoller, P. (2015, August 24). In defense of ethnography. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography\\_b\\_8028542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/in-defense-of-ethnography_b_8028542.html)

Notes: The quotation mentions the author’s name and the year of publication in a phrase of attribution. It also adds additional information about the source, which is optional. The paraphrase mentions the author and year of publication parenthetically afterwards; this is an acceptable alternative. The quotation ends with no parenthetical citation; this is because the source has no pages.

## Excerpt 3

King suggests that institutional ethnography, development ethnography, and network ethnography are interchangeable terms, linked by their “concern with penetrating organizations and social networks to understand how particular discourses and policies are created.”

## Quotation 3

King contended that the institutional, development, and network ethnography disciplines share a “concern with penetrating organizations and social networks to understand how particular discourses and policies are created” (as cited in Billo & Mountz, 2016, p. 207).

## Paraphrase 3

Billo and Mountz (2016) mentioned the emphasis that institutional, development, and network ethnography place on examining the effects that social networks and organizations have on polices and discourse.

## Reference

Billo, E., & Mountz, A. (2016). For institutional ethnography: Geographical approaches to institutions and the everyday. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(2), 199-220. doi: 10.1177/0309132515572269

Notes: The quotation is an indirect source (a student quoting something that a source has quoted). In this instance, the student is borrowing a quotation from King that appears in an article written by Billo and Mountz. To cite this effectively, the student has placed King’s name in the introductory word group, quoted King, then indicated the source of the quotation with the parenthetical citation (as cited in Billo & Mountz, 2016, p. 207). The paraphrase does not quote, so it simply names Billo and Mountz, the authors, along with the year of publication, in the phrase of attribution.

## Excerpt 4

36 percent: portion of travelers who planned to take a multigenerational family vacation in the next year.

## Quotation 4

Even the magazine *AAA Living* contained ethnographic data, discussing the “portion of travelers who planned to take a multigenerational family vacation in the next year” (“All in the Family,” 2016, p. 20).

## Paraphrase 4

One source indicated that 36% of vacationers reported that they would travel accompanied by more than one other generation of their families (“All in the Family,” 2016).

## Reference

All in the family. (2016, May-June). *AAA Living*, 19-20.

Notes: The source has no author, so both the quotation and the paraphrase mention the article title and year of publication. It so happens that both the quotation and the paraphrase place the article title and year parenthetically at the end of the citation; this is an acceptable alternative. The quotation gives a page number, but the paraphrase does not; this is the norm in APA style. Note also the conventional capitalization and quotation marks with the title in the parenthetical citations.

**Helpful Verbs for APA Quoting and Paraphrasing (note that APA prefers past-tense verbs)**

according to	defined	observed
agreed	denied	pointed out
argued	described	rejected
asked	disputed	related
asserted	emphasized	reported
believed	explained	responded
boasted	extolled	revealed
claimed	found	said
commented	held	saw
compared	illuminated	showed
conceded	illustrated	speculated
considered	implied	stated
contended	inferred	suggested
contrasted	insisted	thought
declared	maintained	warned
defended	noted	wrote

**For further information about APA documentation style, consult the *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.), the Purdue OWL website, a recent grammar-and-style book, or a Writing Center staff member.**