

APA Citation and Reference List Cheat-Sheet

Learning the APA format is a necessary skill for graduate level nursing education. The investment made in purchasing a personal copy of the APA Publication Manual (currently 5th edition) is worth every penny since it addresses detailed aspects of the APA format including spacing, headers, etc. The following are APA in-text citation and reference list basics:

- APA is detailed and precise...it doesn't make room for creativity! It relies on a predictable format so consistency and attention to detail count.
- The reasoning behind following APA (or any format for that matter) is 2-fold:
 - Clear and consistent identification of sources cited in-text
 - Ease for the reader to find cited sources in the reference list
- In-text citations & the entries in the reference list should match exactly.
 - It should be very clear which citation goes with which reference. Readers should not have to try to figure it out!
- Re: in-text citations:
 - Each paragraph stands alone re: author and year; include both the 1st time the citation is used in each paragraph. Subsequent citations in the same paragraph from the same source need list only the author.
 - If a source has 2 authors, both are listed in every in-text citation; never use et al.
 - If a source has 3 or more authors, list every author the 1st time in-text, then list the 1st author & et al. thereafter for *all* subsequent citations.
 - Exception: if a citation has 6 or more authors, use the et al. rule every time the citation is use in-text, *including* the 1st time.
 - If you cite more than one source for a given point in text, arrange the author/year in the order you would find them in the reference list, i.e., alphabetically (ex: Jones, 2008; Thomas, 2002; White, 1998).
 - For identifying more than one author in-text, use "and" between names; in parentheses, use "&" sign. For example, Smith and Jones (1997) stated.... versus...Nursing students love APA (Smith & Jones, 1997).
 - If a source has a long agency name, write it the 1st time in-text and then abbreviate in brackets for subsequent citations. It should look like this: (National Institutes of Health [NIH]), 2008). Subsequent citations should list only NIH and year as appropriate.
 - Watch spacing between elements, for instance, include a space between p. and the number of the page (ex: p. 134 – *not* p.134).
- Re: reference list:
 - Sources are listed alphabetically, identifying each source by the author(s) last name & initials of 1st &/or 2nd name
 - No author? Identify by sponsoring agency (ex: March of Dimes)
 - No sponsoring agency? Identify by article name

- Multiple listings from same author? Arrange chronologically per publication date, the earliest 1st.
- Multiple listings from the same author in the same year? Arrange alphabetically by title of article (excluding “A” or “The”) and add a lower case letter to the year (ex: 2007a, 2007b, etc.).
- Watch website addresses...again, the key is that the source is clearly identified and accurate. While the basic rules apply re: author, date, etc., the APA manual is particularly helpful with what to include for a wide variety of internet sources besides the date the material was retrieved.
 - The URL is essential (see APA manual, p. 269 for additional details). Include enough information so that the reader can go to the document cited in-text. Per the APA manual, the URL should include the following:
 - Protocol
 - Host name
 - Path to document
 - File name of document
 - Exception: the reference of a journal article obtained via an electronic database (e.g., PubMed) should not include the web address for the database.
- All key words in a journal title begin with a capital letter.
- The 1st word in titles of articles and books begin with a capital letter; all other words in these titles are lower case
 - Exception: the 1st word in a subtitle is also capitalized and proper nouns are also capitalized
- Book titles and journal titles (not journal article titles) are italicized.
- If you have a long agency name that is abbreviated in-text as noted above, do not include the abbreviation in the reference list. The abbreviation is only to make it easier to cite the source in-text.