

Referencing & Citation

Referencing & Citation (a defining feature of research papers) refers to the means by which research writers indicate the sources of information they use to explain, support, or defend the central ideas of their compositions. The following is an overview of different referencing and citation formats.

Why Use Referencing & Citation?

There are three main reasons why authors use referencing and citation (R&C):

- To avoid plagiarism (a serious concern among universities and professional organizations)
- To add credibility to the work by showing evidence of research
- To provide other academic researchers with useful sources of information

Main Components

Referencing and citation is comprised of two main features:

- The **“in-text” citations**, which appear in the text of the essay itself, indicate that the cited information (quoted or paraphrased) was taken from an outside source;
- The **“reference” section**, which appears separately from the main text, i.e. at the bottom of pages (footnotes) or at the end of the composition (end notes; works-cited; or references), provides details about the sources used. Depending on the referencing style used, these details may include:
 - Author (or Authors),
 - Year/date of publication,
 - Title of the material
 - Journal issue and volume numbers,
 - Place of publication,
 - Publisher, Edition,
 - Page numbers,
 - [Online] indication and URL,
 - Date the material was accessed.

Referencing & Citation “Styles”

NOTE: When we refer to referencing and citation styles such as MLA, APA, IEEE, etc., we are actually referring to broader *format styles* that govern all components of a research paper, including title pages; rules for headings and sub-headings; use of charts and graphs; captioning; etc. For the purpose of this Quick Guide, only the referencing and citation stylistic requirements are dealt with.

There are many styles of referencing and citation; though, generally speaking, they can be categorized into two main format styles:

- **“Author-date” styles** (where sources are indicated in the text using the last name of the author and the date of publication);

- **“Numeric” styles** (where sources are indicated in the text using numbers either in brackets, e.g. [1] or (1), or using super-script numbers, e.g.¹).

Different academic and professional fields use different referencing and citation formats. The following are some examples of common styles:

COMMON NUMERIC STYLES

AMA (American Medical Association)

- Used in sciences, mathematics, engineering, physiology, pharmacy, and medicine
- In-text citations appear as numbers in square brackets e.g. [1], super-script¹, or both ^[1] and are repeated throughout the text as needed. The same number is always used for a source i.e. the first source cited will always be [1]
- In the reference list, sources are listed numerically according to the number they were given in the text.

IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers)

- Used primarily in fields of electrical and electronics engineering, computers, and IT
- In-text citations appear as numbers in square brackets e.g. [1] and are repeated throughout the text as needed. The same number is always used for the same source i.e. the first source cited will always be [1]
- In the reference list, sources are listed numerically according to the number they were given in the text.

NOTE: While the in-text formats of these numeric styles are virtually identical, requirements regarding reference list entries will vary. Check with a guideline for details

Oxford Style

- Used in various disciplines (esp. Humanities)
- In-text citations are numbered sequentially throughout the text as needed, often as super-script numbers e.g. ¹. Unlike AMA and IEEE styles, in Oxford style, the number only represents the citation, not the source. A source may appear as ^{1,2,3}, etc. depending on when it is used and how many times.
- In the footnotes or endnotes, source details are listed numerically indicating the source for each individual in-text citation.
- Full source information appears in a separate bibliography, listed alphabetically according to the first letter of the author’s last name.

The IWC QUICK GUIDE to Referencing & Citation

COMMON AUTHOR-DATE STYLES

APA (American Psychological Association)

- Generally used in Social Sciences
- In-text citations are indicated with the author's last name and the date of source publication in parentheses e.g. (Smith, 1997)
- In the reference list, sources are listed alphabetically, according the first letter of the author's last name or the first letter of the publisher's name

ASA (American Sociological Association)

- Generally used in the field of sociology, it is very similar in appearance to APA style
- In-text citations are indicated with the author's last name and the date of source publication in parentheses e.g. (Smith, 1997)
- In the reference list, sources are listed alphabetically, according the first letter of the author's last name or the first letter of the publisher's name

Harvard Style

- Generally used in the humanities, it is very similar in appearance to APA style
- In-text citations are indicated with the author's last name and the date of source publication in parentheses e.g. (Smith, 1997)
- In the reference list, sources are listed alphabetically, according the first letter of the author's last name or the first letter of the publisher's name

NOTE: While the in-text formats of these author-date styles are virtually identical, requirements regarding reference list entries will vary. Check with a guideline for details

OTHER COMMON STYLES

Chicago Style

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) provides two documentation style options:

- A *Notes-Bibliography System* which is used in literature, history, and the arts. The format for this style is similar to Oxford Style
- An *Author-Date System* which is often used in the social sciences. The format for this style is quite similar to APA Style

MLA (Modern Language Association)

- Commonly used in the humanities, especially in language and literature studies.
- MLA uses an *Author-Page* format: in-text citations are indicated with the author's last name and the page from which the source information was taken in parentheses e.g. (Smith, 275)
- In the works cited list, sources are listed alphabetically, according the first letter of the author's last name or the first letter of the publisher's name.

Tips & Strategies

Determine Your R&C Requirements

- The referencing and citation style we use generally depends on our field of study; however, certain programs may have specific R&C style requirements; and sometimes professors have a preferred R&C style. Always check the style requirements before starting your research project. When in doubt, check with your professor.

Locate (and Study) a Style Guide

- Finding a style guide is quite easy: an internet search on specific referencing and citation styles will locate numerous websites and PDFs with information and examples of in-text citation and referencing list format requirements.

Create the Reference List as You Research

- Whenever you find a source of useful information, collect the reference details (author's name, title, year of publication, etc.) on a separate document. If you want, you can go ahead and format your reference list according to the style specifications. By doing so, the list will be completed when or before you finish your research paper.

Using Online Citation Generators

Many students prefer using online citation generators (soft-ware programs) that automatically format citations and reference lists. These programs are convenience and fairly easy to use, and there are a number of free options available. Smart Study (smart.study/blog/) provides a list of online citation generators (type *25 best free online citation generators* in the webpage search bar).

NOTE: while online citation generators do the task of formatting citations and references and may save you some time, keep the following in mind:

1. In order to use these generators, you will still need to provide the reference source details (type of material, title of work, author's name, publication date, etc.)
2. The reference lists these generators create often contain format errors which a professor might penalize you for. You should always proofread the final version of your paper and check all in-text citations and reference list entries for mistakes. Having a style guide will help you in that regard.