The APA 6th edition referencing system

Referencing is a standard practice for acknowledging information sources in academic writing at university. Whenever you write an assignment that requires you to find and use information, you are expected to reference all the sources of information and ideas included in your writing.

This handout provides guidelines for using the APA 6th edition referencing system. There are two components to an APA reference:

1) an in-text reference in the body of your assignment:
   Chan (2011) explores a range of themes and ideas ...

2) full reference details in your reference list:

This guide is divided into two parts. The first part (pp. 1-9) illustrates the basic rules for APA referencing, provides a sample text which uses APA referencing, and answers some frequently asked questions. The referencing guide in the second part (pp. 10-14) contains specific rules and examples for a variety of different reference types.

Part 1 Basic rules

Why do we reference?

Most academic assignments require wide reading so that previous and current thinking about a particular topic can be identified. It is important to show your reader that you have sought out expert, reliable sources to help support and develop your thinking on your topic. The referencing in your assignment should:

- demonstrate good research practice
- show the range of ideas and approaches you have found and thought about
- acknowledge where those ideas came from
- tell your reader where they can locate the sources you have used

Referencing also helps you to avoid plagiarism. If you present someone else's ideas, and/or the way they express their ideas, as if they are your own work, you are committing plagiarism. Plagiarism can be unintentional due to poor referencing, but the consequences are always serious. Accurate referencing helps you to avoid this.

In-text references

1. When to reference

Every time you include someone else's words, ideas or information in your assignment, an in-text reference must be provided. Insert an in-text reference whenever you:

- paraphrase someone else's ideas in your own words
- summarise someone else's ideas in your own words
- quote someone else's ideas in their exact words
- copy or adapt a diagram, table or any other visual material
2. How to reference

An in-text reference is provided each time you refer to ideas or information from another source, and includes the following details:

- the author’s family name (do not include given names) + the year of publication + page numbers when needed.

There are two main ways to present an in-text reference.

a) Integral referencing

The reference is in the body of your sentence, with the author’s name integrated into the sentence structure, and the date is given in brackets. This type of reference is often used when you want to give prominence to the author.

Lam (2010) argues that Hong Kong needs to further assimilate into the Pearl River Delta economy if its long term growth is to be assured.

b) Non-integral referencing

The reference is enclosed in the sentence in brackets. This type of reference is often used when you want to give prominence to the information.

The Hong Kong economy expanded by 2.3% in the third quarter of 2011 (Census and Statistics Department, 2012).

3. Including page numbers

Page numbers should be included when you:

- use a direct quote from a particular source
- copy tables or figures, or present specific information like dates/statistics

Cheung (2012, p. 48) notes that “universities in Hong Kong need to strengthen their academic credentials” if they are to compete in the world economy.

You can also include a page number when you take an idea from a particular page.

4. Use of et al.

Where there are several authors (first time more than 6), only the first author should be used followed by et al. (which is Latin for et alia) meaning and others:

Wong et al. (2005) found that the majority ...

or as a non-integral reference:

Recent research (Wong et al., 2005) has found that the majority of ...

et al. should be used the second time for three or more authors.
The following chart shows how to format in-text citations for APA referencing style:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of citation</th>
<th>Integral</th>
<th>Non-integral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of authors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One author</td>
<td>Chan (2010) claims ...</td>
<td>Chan (2010) claims ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Chan, 2010)</td>
<td>(Chan, 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Two authors      | Chan and Leung (2010) suggest ... | Chan and Leung (2010) suggest ...
|                  | (Chan & Leung, 2010) | (Chan & Leung, 2010) |
| Three authors    | Tsui, Leung and Collins (2010) find ... | Tsui et al. (2010) find ...
|                  | (Tsui, Leung, & Collins, 2010) | (Tsui et al., 2010) |
| Four authors     | Wong, Lam, Collins and Smith (2010) mention ... | Wong et al. (2010) mention ...
|                  | (Wong, Lam, Collins, & Smith, 2010) | (Wong et al., 2010) |
| Five authors     | Preston, Lee, Chan, Smith and Au (2010) report ... | Preston et al. (2010) report ...
|                  | (Preston, Lee, Chan, Smith, & Au, 2010) | (Preston et al., 2010) |
| Six or more authors | Finney et al. (2010) assert ... | Finney et al. (2010) assert ...
|                  | (Finney et al., 2010) | (Finney et al., 2010) |
| Groups (easily identified by abbreviation) as authors | The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA, 2008) states ... | The HKHA (2008) states ...
|                  | (The Hong Kong Housing Authority [HKHA], 2008) | (HKHA, 2008) |
| Groups (no abbreviation) as authors | Animals Asia (2007) defines ... | Animals Asia (2007) defines ...
|                  | (Animals Asia, 2007) | (Animals Asia, 2007) |
| With page number for quotation | Chan (2010, p. 15) claims ... | (Chan, 2010, p. 15) |

5. Other expressions used in referencing

The terms *ibid* and *op cit* are used to avoid repeating the same reference details in-text i.e. the body of your text and in your Reference List.

*ibid* is Latin for *ibidem*, which means 'in the same place'. You can use *ibid* when your next citation is the same as the last one.

*op cit* is also Latin and stands for *opere citato*, which means 'in the work cited'. You can use *op cit* when the same reference is cited somewhere else in your text, but is not the most recent citation.

Look at the example below:

The advantages of having effective referencing skills are well-recognised in terms of students having greater control over their written work (Walker, 2009), achieving and sustaining higher grades (Choi, 2010) and in developing competence as a writer (Lau, 2009). But, students need to "... be mindful of the importance of referencing and be consistent in their use at all times ..." (Aziz, 2010, p. 11). However, it can be hard for some students to distinguish between Western surnames and Western given names, and Aziz (*ibid* p. 12) states that "... students need to read more widely to understand the differences between Western and Chinese names". The findings of some researchers (Walker *op cit*) show that reading in the target language is essential for sustained academic progress.
6. Ellipsis and Square brackets

Ellipsis refers to dots in the middle of a sentence. Their purpose is to let the reader know that some part of a quotation has been left out. If it is necessary to interrupt a quotation you are citing in order to clarify something, you should enclose your remarks in square brackets

Original: Students in the university should study outside class, in all credit bearing subjects, for at least 6 hours a week.

With text omitted and clarification: Students in the university [The Hong Kong Polytechnic University] should study . . . for at least 6 hours a week.

Sample text with in-text referencing and reference list

APA in-text referencing uses author surname and year. Include a page number (or paragraph number for online sources) for direct quotations. The reference list is in alphabetical order.

Until recently, development in the textile and clothing industry has focused on “technological and cost aspects” (HKRITA, 2012, para. 5). According to Chen and Burns (2009, p. 255), emphasis has been placed on keeping the price of the “final product low and increasing efficiency in production”. Tukker et al. (2011) further point out that designers, manufacturers and retailers have paid less attention to other dimensions of the offering, e.g. ownership and related business models, as well as consumer wishes and values. Hence, the products are designed and produced according to regularly changing trends that enable quick profit (Lee & Chen, 2009), rather than radically rethinking the ways of designing and manufacturing the offering that is based on consumer needs and sustainability as proposed by Park and Tahara (2011).

References


The Reference List

1. What it does

The reference list provides full bibliographic details for all the sources referenced in your essay so that readers can easily locate the sources. Each different source referenced in your essay must have a matching entry in your reference list.

It is important to note that the reference list is not a bibliography. A bibliography lists everything you have read, while a reference list is deliberately limited to those sources for which you have provided in-text references. A bibliography is not needed unless specifically requested by your lecturer.

2. How it looks

The reference list is titled 'References' and must be:

- arranged alphabetically by author’s family name (or title/sponsoring organisation where a source has no author)

- a single list where books, journal articles and electronic sources are listed together. Do not divide into separate lists.

The main elements required for all references are the author, year, title and publication information. The basic reference formats are shown in the following examples. These should be followed exactly, paying special attention to details of capitalisation, punctuation, use of italics and order of information.

3. Journal article format

First author’s surname, Initials., Second author’s surname, Initials., & Third author’s surname, Initials. (year). Title of article. Journal name, Volume number(issue number), page number.
4. **Book format**

First author’s surname, Initials., & second author’s surname, Initials. (Year of publication). *Title*. City of publication: Publisher.


5. **Internet Source Format**

Organisation. (Year). *Title of page*. Retrieved from url


**Frequently asked questions**

1. **How do I cite two or three authors?**

When there are two or three authors for a reference, include all their family names in the in-text reference, in the same order that they are listed in the original source. For example:

- According to Choi, Fang and Lee (2012), students in Asia are more studious than their North American counterparts.

- Wong and Morrison (2011) strongly support the use of technology in the classroom.

- Asian students devoted on average 16 hours per week to out-of-class study compared to 10 hours for North American students (Choi, Fang, & Lee, 2012).
2. How do I cite when there are many authors?

If there are six or more authors, you should only use the first author's family name in the in-text reference followed by the abbreviation 'et al.' For example:

- This is supported by Wilson et al. (2011) in their educational change study.

For subsequent citations, you should use et al. for references with three or more authors.

3. In the reference list what should I do when there are many authors?

If there are two authors:
List by their last names and initials. Use the ampersand & instead of "and."


If there are three to seven authors:
List by last names and initials; commas separate author names, while the last author name is preceded again by ampersand.


If there are more than seven authors:
Use the following format.


4. How do I cite when there is no author and/or no date?

When no person is mentioned, include the title of the source or the authoring/sponsoring organisation in place of the author.

For example:

- The centre aims to improve students' communication skills to enable them to attain excellent results in their academic and professional lives (English Language Centre, 2012).
- Oral presentations, like written assessment tasks, should contain an introduction, body, and conclusion (Making the most of oral presentations, 2011).

When no year of publication is given, use the abbreviation n.d. which stands for 'no date' in place of a year, or give an approximate date preceded by ca. which stands for 'circa'.

However, be cautious about using sources without dates. A source with no date might not be reliable.
5. **How do I cite information from one author (Author 1) which I have found in a book or journal article by another author (Author 2)?**

Sometimes you will need to refer to authors whose work you encounter secondhand (i.e. mentioned in other people’s work) rather than firsthand. You should mention both authors (Author 1 and Author 2) in your in-text reference, but would only list the actual item you read (Author 2) in your reference list.

For example, if you read an idea by Choy (Author 1, published in 2005) in a source by Martins (Author 2, published in 2010) you would need to mention both authors in your in-text reference. For example:

- One scholar (Choy, as cited in Martins, 2010) states that...
- Choy (as cited in Martins, 2010) states that ...

However, in the reference list you should only list Martins (Author 2, the source you read) and not Choy (whose idea you read about in Martins).

6. **How do I cite multiple sources by the same author published in the same year?**

If an author has published more than one item in the same year, place a lower case letter of the alphabet next to the dates in your in-text referencing to distinguish between these separate publications. For example:

- Preston argues that a man paints with his brain, not his hands (2011a) and reiterates this elsewhere (2011b).

You must also include these lower case letters in your reference list entries as well. The order in which you attach the letters is determined by the alphabetical order of the titles of these sources.

7. **What if there are two authors with the same family name?**

Occasionally you will need to reference two different authors who share the same family name. To avoid ambiguity, include the author’s first initial after their family name in the in-text references. For example:

- Urban deprivation in Hong Kong has been seen to increase in the first decade of this century. (Chan, E 2010). Whether this will affect the language skills of fresh graduates in Hong Kong is still disputed (Chan, C 2010).

8. **How do I present exact quotations?**

Short quotations of fewer than thirty words should be enclosed in double quotation marks (" ... ") and be accompanied by an in-text reference including a page number (where possible).

For example:

- Research indicates that “students in Hong Kong devote on average 5 hours a week to their English studies from the age of four” (Leung, 2010, p. 31).
Longer quotations of more than thirty words should be presented without quotation marks and indented (using Tab key) at the left.
For example:

According to Obama (2006, p. 219), America:

... should be more modest in our belief that we can impose democracy on a country through military force. In the past, it has been movements for freedom from within tyrannical regimes that have led to flourishing democracies; movements that continue today. This does not mean abandoning our values and ideals; wherever we can, it’s in our interest to help foster democracy through the diplomatic and economic resources at our disposal.

The three dots before the word 'should' (known as an ellipsis) show that a word or words have been left out. Always introduce quotations in your own words.

9. Where exactly do I put the full stop when quoting and/or citing?

Full stops must always be placed at the very end of a sentence, after the quotation and/or in-text reference. For example:

- According to Mooney (2011, p. 88), “exam pressure in Hong Kong has lessened slightly in the past decade”.

- Research indicates that students in Hong Kong have had four mobile devices before their 18th birthday (Samson, 2012).

10. Can I cite two or more sources at the same time?

Yes. Use a semi-colon to separate the sources in the in-text reference, and list the items alphabetically according to their authors' family names. For example:

- Social networking has had a major impact on young people (Chan & Erickson, 2012; Lam & Mok, 2008).

If referencing multiple sources by the same author, present the items in chronological order (oldest to most recent) and separate them with commas. For example:

- Burns (2006, 2009, 2012) argues that there should be more universities in Hong Kong.

11. Can I paste the URL of a webpage into my essay as an in-text citation?

No. Follow the author-date in-text referencing conventions for all sources. If you are unsure how to reference a website because there is no author or date information, follow the guidelines provided for referencing sources without authors or dates.
# Part 2 Referencing guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of source</th>
<th>In-text references</th>
<th>Reference list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books</strong></td>
<td>Surname of author, year of publication / (page number for direct quotations)</td>
<td>Surname of author, Initials. (Year of publication). <em>Title</em>. City of publication: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter in an edited book</strong></td>
<td>Cite the author(s) of the chapter in the text of your paper, not the author(s) of the book.</td>
<td>Surname of author, Initials. (Year). Title of chapter. In Initial. Surname of Editor (Ed.), <em>Title of book</em> (pages of chapter). Location: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books with different editions</strong></td>
<td>Surname of author (Year of publication)</td>
<td>Surname of author, Initials. (Year of publication). <em>Title</em> (edition number). City of publication: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book with no date</strong></td>
<td>Surname of author (n.d.)</td>
<td>Surname of author, Initials. (n.d.). <em>Title</em>. City of publication: Publisher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>Wong (n.d.) states that students need to read more widely and ...</td>
<td>Wong, B.K. (n.d.). <em>Fostering creativity</em>. Oxford: Blackwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ebooks and pdfs</strong></td>
<td>Surname of author, year of publication / (page number for direct quotations)</td>
<td>Surname of author, Initials. (Year of publication). <em>Title</em>. Place of publication (if known): Publisher. Retrieved from: URL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Journals | Surname of author, year of publication, page number (for direct quotations)  
| Examples:  
| Poon, Lee, Chan, Jones and Smith (2003) argue that students should refer to sources properly ...  
| Lam (2005, p. 91) mentions that “students need to be mindful of the importance of referencing” ...  

| Journals | Surname of author, Initials. (Year of publication). Title of the article. Name of Journal, Volume number (Issue number), Pages.  

| Journal article with no author | (“Title of article, first few words,” Year)  
| Example  
| Many organisations already use this method (“Organisational change,” 2010)  

| Journal article with no author | “Title of article,” (Year of publication). Name of Journal, Volume number (Issue number), Page range of article.  

| URLs and DOIs | Surname of author, year of publication  
| Examples:  
| Anderson-Clark, Green and Henley (2008) believe that students should ...  

| URLs and DOIs | If the article has a DOI, use it in your reference. If there is no DOI, include the journal homepage URL in your reference.  
| Surname of the author, Initials. (Year). Title of article, Name of Journal. Volume number(Issue number). DOI:  

| Electronic journals | Surname of author, year of publication  
| Example:  
| ... and this has been formulated by Halonen et al. (2010) who ...  
| (use et al. when citing 6 or more authors the first time; 3 or more authors the second time)  

| Internet Sources (electronic only sources) | Organisation, year, (paragraph number for direct quotations)  
Example: The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA, 2011, para. 6) maintains... | Organisation. (Year). Title of article. Retrieved from URL  
| --- | --- | --- |
| Government report | Department name (Year)  
Example: The Equal Opportunities Commission (2010) has reported that... | Department name. (Year). Title of article (Number of document - if given). City of publication: Publisher.  
| DVD or film | For a film or DVD, use the surname of the director and year of release.  
Example: Law (2010) captured the imagination of...  
If there is no director, it is suggested that a non-integral reference should be used with the first few words of the title with year of release.  
Example: (Great films from the 80s, 2005) | For a film the suggested elements should include:  
Producer, P. P. (Producer), & Director, D. D. (Director). (Date of publication). Title of motion picture [Motion picture]. Country of origin: Studio or distributor.  
Full title of DVD or video. (Year of release). [type of medium]. Country of origin: Film studio or maker. (Other relevant details).  
| YouTube video | It is suggested that a non-integral reference should be used for YouTube sources.  
Example: ... celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2007 (HongKongPolyU, 2011). | Screen name of contributor. (Year and date of publication). Video Title, Series Title. (if relevant) [type of medium]. Retrieved from URL  
| Newspaper | Surname of author, year.  
Example: Van der Kamp (2012) believes that... | Surname of author, Initials. (Year, Date). Title of article. Name of newspaper, p. #.  
Van der Kamp, J. (2012, April 1). Just leasing more land won’t open up the property market. Sunday Morning Post, p. 15. |
### Newspaper (no author)

If no author is designated, cite the first few words of the title, and the year.

**Example:**

“Put pedestrians first” (2012)

**Title of article. (Year, Date). Name of Newspaper, p. #.**


### Translated work

Surname of author, year, page number (for direct quotations)

**Examples**

Freud (1914) stated ...


**When quoting from a foreign language work in the main body of the text, the quote should be provided in English.**

### Chinese sources

Surname of author, year, page number (for direct quotations)

**Example**

Xiao (2008) shows that ...

Xiao (2008, p.37) shows that ...

Do a romanisation of the author’s name and title of book/article. If reader cannot read Chinese, student adds a translation in brackets. If there is no official translation, list the item at the end of the reference list alphabetically.

**When quoting from a foreign language work in the main body of the text, the quote should be provided in English.**


### References with missing details

If there is no obvious publication date, aim to establish the earliest likely date e.g.

- 2010? = probable year
- c. 2010 = approximately 2010
- 201- = decade certain but not year
- 201? = probable decade

If you cannot identify the name of an author, city or publisher, use the following terms:

- (anon) = author is anonymous or unidentifiable
- s.l. = no city of publication (Latin: *sine loco*)
- s.n. = no named publisher (Latin: *sine nomine*)
### Lecture notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Jenkins (2010) states ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

You are advised not to cite university lecture notes – to do so is often deemed unacceptable. You ought to locate, read and cite the sources and references provided in the Reading List or References in the lecture notes.

However, the following guidelines may assist you should you need to cite lecture notes:

Lecturer/Author’s surname, Initials. (Year). *Title of lecture notes*. [Lecture] Name of institution, Date of lecture.

Jenkins, J. (2010). *Developments in computer-assisted learning* [Lecture] The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 12 October.