

APA (6th ed.) referencing basics

Basics of APA referencing

Referencing is most easily understood by studying examples. You may well find it helpful to download a copy of the Library guide *APA 6th ed. Referencing Example* and look at the examples there as you read through this leaflet.


- Each source type has a particular reference format. All of these can be found on the Referencing@Portsmouth webpages of the Library website. An easy way to create references is to copy similar examples from Referencing@Portsmouth and replace the content, taking care not to the punctuation, italicisation or grammar.
- Every time you include information you have learned from a particular source, you must mention or “cite” the source in the text of your assignment. For every source cited in the text, there must be a corresponding entry in your reference list and vice-versa.
- Only reference what you have read. Reference the work/edition you have read. Do not include sources in your reference list that are only mentioned in the works you have read.
- Only reference sources your readers could find. Personal communications (emails, conversations, lectures, etc.) that cannot be found by others are cited in the text but not included in the reference list.
- Your reference list should be an alphabetical list of sources you have used.
- The start of each reference should be the same as the in-text citation, so it is easy to recognise to which reference a citation points.
- Companies and departments can be given as corporate authors in the absence of named individuals. Where there is no author at all, start the reference with the title.
- If you have three authors, no date, or an obscure place of publication that shares its name with a large city check the rules for citation and referencing in Referencing@Portsmouth.
- APA referencing has specific rules for capitalisation. Titles, sub-titles, journal (but not article) titles, proper nouns and acronyms should have capital letters but nothing else, regardless of how they appear on a source.

Referencing electronic resources

- For every electronic resource, you should give either a digital object identifier (“DOI”) or a stable web address. This replaces the place of publication and publisher name included for printed publications.
- Give the DOI if one is available in the form **http://dx.doi.org/** ... followed by the DOI.
- If no DOI is available, end your reference with “Retrieved from” and a stable web address or permalink to the source.
- In the Discovery Service, you must click on the linked chain icon on the right-hand side to find the permalink to an article. If a journal publisher’s website offers a labelled permalink for an article, use this.
- You should use the pdf version if one is available. These can be saved for later reference and have page numbers if you need to quote them, particularly if you wish to include a quote.

General principles of referencing

- Be consistent with layout and punctuation.
- There will not be guidance for every type or variation of a source. In such cases adapt the style for the nearest resource type described.
- If your lecturer tells you to do something different from the guidance offered by the library, do what your lecturer says. Only lecturers give and take away marks.
- When referencing a book, look for the title page, which is the only page near the front of the book with the title on the front and the copyright and publishing information/dates on the back.

For further information and advice, please see Referencing@Portsmouth, available from the Library website by clicking the  button or visiting <http://referencing.port.ac.uk>