

APA 7th Edition & IEEE

Citation & Formatting Guide

A complete, student-friendly reference for both APA 7 and IEEE style — in-text citations, reference-list entries, and paper formatting — free to download, print, and share.

What's inside

- APA 7: in-text citations, reference rules, 13 source-type examples, formatting, mistakes, checklist
- IEEE: numbered in-text citations, reference-list rules, 11 source-type examples, formatting, mistakes, checklist
- Side-by-side comparison of how the two styles differ
- Ready-to-copy example boxes for every citation and reference pattern
- Two full pre-submission checklists — one per style

Prepared by **ZolaXTech** · Free for students and educators

Based on the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.) and the IEEE Editorial Style Manual.

PART ONE

APA 7th Edition Style

Psychology, education, nursing, business, and the social sciences

1. What Is APA Style, and When Do I Use It?

APA (American Psychological Association) style is a set of rules for formatting academic papers and citing sources. It's the standard style in psychology, education, nursing, business, and many social sciences. Its main job is simple: let readers trace every claim in your paper back to where it came from, and give credit to the original authors.

Every time you use someone else's idea, data, or words — whether you quote it directly or put it in your own words — you need two things that work together:

- An in-text citation, placed right where you use the source.
- A matching entry in the reference list at the end of your paper.

If either one is missing, the citation is incomplete. The rest of this guide walks through both, plus the formatting rules for the paper itself.

2. In-Text Citations

2.1 Parenthetical citation

Author's surname and year in parentheses, placed at the end of the sentence or clause.

The results were inconclusive (Smith, 2021).

2.2 Narrative citation

The author's name becomes part of your sentence, with only the year in parentheses.

Smith (2021) found the results inconclusive.

2.3 Two authors

Name both authors every time you cite the source. Use an ampersand (&) inside parentheses, but the word "and" when the names are part of your sentence.

(Smith & Jones, 2021)
Smith and Jones (2021) argued that ...

2.4 Three or more authors

Use only the first author's surname followed by "et al." — and this applies to every citation of that source, including the very first one. (This is a change from APA 6th edition, where the first citation spelled out all the authors.)

```
(Smith et al., 2021)
Smith et al. (2021) reported similar findings.
```

2.5 Direct quotations

Always include a page number (or paragraph number for sources without pages) for a direct quote — this is required in addition to the author and year.

```
(Smith, 2021, p. 45)
(Smith, 2021, para. 3) — for web pages or other sources without page
numbers
```

Quotations of 40 words or more are formatted as a block quote: start on a new line, indent the whole block 0.5", omit quotation marks, and place the citation after the final punctuation.

2.6 Multiple sources in one citation

List sources alphabetically by author surname and separate them with semicolons.

```
(Chen & Okafor, 2023; Kahneman, 2011; Smith, 2021)
```

2.7 Same author, same year — multiple works

Add lowercase letters (a, b, c...) after the year, based on the order the works appear in your reference list.

```
(Smith, 2021a, 2021b)
```

2.8 No individual author

Use the organization's name in place of an author. If the organization has a well-known abbreviation, spell it out the first time and abbreviate afterward.

```
First citation: (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023)
Later citations: (WHO, 2023)
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2.9 No date available

Use "n.d." (no date) in place of the year.

```
(Smith, n.d.)
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2.10 Secondary sources ("as cited in")

Use this only when you can't access the original source. Cite the source you actually read, not the original.

Lee's 2015 study (as cited in Smith, 2021) found ...

Only the source you read (Smith, 2021) goes in your reference list — not Lee (2015).

2.11 Personal communications

Emails, interviews, private messages, and similar unrecoverable sources are cited in-text only — they are never added to the reference list, because readers can't retrieve them.

(J. Smith, personal communication, March 4, 2026)

3. Reference List Basics

3.1 General rules

- Start the reference list on a new page titled "References" — centered and bold.
- Double-space every entry, including within and between entries.
- Use a hanging indent: the first line of each entry is flush left, and every line after that is indented 0.5".
- Sort entries alphabetically by the first author's surname. Organization names are alphabetized the same way (ignore "A," "An," and "The").
- For 2–20 authors, list every author, separating the last one with "&". For 21+ authors, list the first 19, add an ellipsis, then the final author.
- Italicize the title of the larger work — the journal, book, or website — never the title of an article or chapter.
- Use sentence case for article, chapter, and book titles (capitalize only the first word, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns). Journal and website names use Title Case.
- Include a DOI as a full link (<https://doi.org/...>) whenever one exists. If there's no DOI, use the URL only for sources retrieved online; print sources need neither.

3.2 DOI and URL formatting

Correct: <https://doi.org/10.1037/xyz000000>

Incorrect: doi:10.1037/xyz000000

Incorrect: Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1037/xyz000000>

Do not add "Retrieved from" before a DOI or URL — APA 7 dropped that phrase except for sources that are expected to change over time (like a wiki or an evolving dataset), where you also add a retrieval date.

4. Reference Examples by Source Type

Copy the pattern, then swap in your own source's details. Pay close attention to punctuation, italics, and capitalization — they matter in APA style.

4.1 Journal article

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article in sentence case. Journal Name in Title Case, Volume(Issue), pages. <https://doi.org/xxxx>

Chen, L., & Okafor, M. (2023). Attention mechanisms in low-resource NLP. *Journal of Computational Linguistics*, 49(2), 211–238. <https://doi.org/10.1162/example>

4.2 Book

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle. Publisher.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

4.3 Edited book chapter

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of chapter. In E. Editor (Ed.), Title of book (pp. xx–xx). Publisher.

Diener, E. (2009). Subjective well-being. In E. Diener (Ed.), *The science of well-being* (pp. 11–58). Springer.

4.4 Website or online resource

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of page. Site Name. URL

World Health Organization. (2023, March 4). Mental health in the workplace. WHO. <https://www.who.int/example>

4.5 Organization as author, no individual author

Organization Name. (Year). Title of work. Publisher (if different from the author).

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

4.6 Government or organizational report

Organization Name. (Year). Title of report (Report No. xxx, if available). Publisher.

National Institute of Mental Health. (2022). *Anxiety disorders: A guide for families* (NIH Publication No. 22-4677). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

4.7 Dissertation or thesis

Author, A. A. (Year). Title of dissertation [Doctoral dissertation, Institution Name]. Database/Archive Name. URL

Alvarez, R. (2021). Remote work and employee well-being during organizational change [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations. <https://www.proquest.com/example>

4.8 Conference paper

Author, A. A. (Year, Month). Title of paper [Paper presentation]. Conference Name, Location. URL (if available)

Nguyen, T. (2024, June). Bias mitigation in recommender systems [Paper presentation]. International Conference on Machine Learning, Vienna, Austria.

4.9 Newspaper or online news article

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of article. Newspaper Name. URL

Osei, D. (2025, November 12). New study links sleep and memory retention. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/example>

4.10 YouTube video or online video

Author or Channel Name. (Year, Month Day). Title of video [Video]. Platform Name. URL

CrashCourse. (2019, May 3). How memory works: Crash course psychology #14 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/example>

4.11 Podcast episode

Host, A. A. (Host). (Year, Month Day). Title of episode (No. xx) [Audio podcast episode]. In Podcast Series Name. Publisher. URL

Grant, A. (Host). (2023, January 10). The science of habits (No. 45) [Audio podcast episode]. In WorkLife with Adam Grant. TED Audio Collective. <https://www.ted.com/example>

4.12 Social media post

Author, A. A. [@username]. (Year, Month Day). Content of the post up to the first 20 words [Post]. Platform Name. URL

Nakamura, K. [@knakamura]. (2024, March 2). New research shows that brief daily walks improve focus more than we expected [Post]. X. <https://x.com/example>

4.13 Dataset

Author/Organization. (Year). Title of dataset (Version x.x) [Data set].

Publisher. URL

Pew Research Center. (2023). American trends panel wave 112 [Data set]. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/example>

5. Paper Formatting Basics

Element	Rule
Font	12 pt Times New Roman, 11 pt Calibri, or 11 pt Arial (pick one and use it throughout)
Line spacing	Double-spaced throughout — body text, references, and block quotes
Margins	1" on all sides
Paragraph indent	First line of every paragraph indented 0.5"
Title page (student)	Title (bold), your name, institution, course number and name, instructor, due date — all centered, no running head required
Title page (professional)	Adds a running head and author note; used for publication or professional submission
Running head	Not required for student papers (7th ed.) unless your instructor asks for one
Page numbers	Top right corner of every page, including the title page
Reference list	Starts on its own new page, titled "References" (centered, bold), hanging indent
Alphabetical order	Sorted by the first author's surname (or organization name)

5.1 Heading levels

APA uses five heading levels. Most student papers only need levels 1 and 2.

Level	Format
1	Centered, Bold, Title Case
2	Flush Left, Bold, Title Case
3	Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case
4	Indented, Bold, Title Case, ending with a period. Text begins on the same line.
5	Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case, ending with a period. Text begins on the same line.

6. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Using "&" in a narrative citation — write "and" instead. The ampersand is only for parenthetical citations.
- Forgetting the hanging indent on the reference list — the first line is flush left, and every line after it is indented 0.5".
- Citing a source in-text that isn't in your reference list, or vice versa — every citation needs a matching reference, and every reference needs at least one citation.
- Italicizing the wrong element — italicize the journal or book title, never the article or chapter title.
- Using "et al." for exactly two authors — that abbreviation is reserved for three or more authors.
- Adding "Retrieved from" before a DOI or a stable URL — APA 7 removed this phrase except for sources expected to change.
- Forgetting the page or paragraph number on a direct quote — required every time you quote word-for-word.
- Mixing reference styles within one paper — pick one font and one citation pattern and stay consistent.
- Listing sources out of alphabetical order, or alphabetizing by title instead of by author surname.
- Using title case in a journal article's title — article and chapter titles use sentence case; only journal and book titles use Title Case.
- Citing a secondary source as if you read the original — use "as cited in" and reference only the source you actually read.
- Adding personal communications (emails, texts, interviews) to the reference list — they're cited in-text only.

7. APA Pre-Submission Checklist

Run through this list before you turn in any paper.

- Every in-text citation has a matching reference-list entry, and vice versa.
- Parenthetical citations use "&"; narrative citations use "and."
- Three or more authors are shortened to "et al." everywhere, including the first mention.
- Every direct quote includes a page or paragraph number.
- The reference list is alphabetized, double-spaced, and uses a hanging indent.
- Journal/book titles are italicized; article/chapter titles are not.
- DOIs and URLs are formatted as live links with no "Retrieved from."
- Font, margins, and spacing match your instructor's requirements (or the 12 pt Times New Roman / double-spaced / 1" margin default).
- The title page includes your name, institution, course, instructor, and date.

PART TWO

IEEE Style*Engineering, computer science, and electronics — Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers*

8. What Is IEEE Style, and When Do I Use It?

IEEE style is the citation and formatting system used in electrical engineering, computer science, telecommunications, and most technical/conference publishing. Instead of author-year citations like APA, IEEE uses numbered references — each source gets a bracketed number the first time it's cited, and that same number is reused every time you cite it again.

The reference list is numbered in the order sources first appear in your paper — not alphabetically, which is the biggest structural difference from APA.

9. IEEE In-Text Citations

9.1 Basic citation

Place a bracketed number where you use the source. The number reflects the order the source first appears in the paper, and stays the same everywhere you cite it again.

The results were inconclusive [1].
As shown by Smith [1], the results were inconclusive.

9.2 Multiple sources at once

List each number separated by a comma, or use a hyphen for a consecutive range.

[1], [3], [5]
[1]-[4] — for four or more consecutive sources

9.3 Citing a specific page

Add the page number after the bracketed reference number when quoting or referencing a specific location.

[1, p. 45]
[2, pp. 12-14]

9.4 Referring to the author by name

You can name the author in your sentence, but the bracketed number is still required — IEEE does not drop the number the way APA drops repetition.

Smith [1] proposed a new algorithm for edge detection.

9.5 Citing the same source again later

Reuse the same bracket number every time — never assign a new number to a source you've already cited.

10. IEEE Reference List Basics

- Title the list "References," and number entries in the order they're first cited in the text — not alphabetically.
- Each entry starts with its bracketed number: [1], [2], [3]...
- Author names are written as initials first, then surname: A. B. Smith — the reverse of APA.
- For up to six authors, list them all. For seven or more, list the first author followed by "et al."
- Article and paper titles go in quotation marks; journal, book, and conference proceedings titles are italicized.
- Common fields are abbreviated: "vol." for volume, "no." for number, "pp." for pages, and months are abbreviated (Jan., Feb., Mar., ...).
- Include a DOI at the end of an entry when one is available.

10.1 DOI and URL formatting

doi: 10.1109/EXAMPLE.2023.1234567
[Online]. Available: <https://example.com/paper> (accessed Mar. 4, 2026).

11. IEEE Reference Examples by Source Type

Numbers below are placeholders — number each entry according to where it first appears in your own paper.

11.1 Journal article

[#] A. A. Author and B. B. Author, "Title of article," Journal Name, vol. X, no. X, pp. XX-XX, Mon. Year, doi: xxxx.

[1] L. Chen and M. Okafor, "Attention mechanisms in low-resource NLP," J. Comput. Linguistics, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 211-238, Jun. 2023, doi: 10.1162/example.

11.2 Book

[#] A. A. Author, Title of Book, Xth ed. City, Country: Publisher, Year.

[2] D. Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, 1st ed. New York, NY, USA: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

11.3 Book chapter

[#] A. Author, "Title of chapter," in Title of Book, Xth ed., E. Editor, Ed. City, Country: Publisher, Year, pp. XX-XX.

[3] E. Diener, "Subjective well-being," in The Science of Well-Being, E. Diener, Ed. Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2009, pp. 11-58.

11.4 Conference paper

[#] A. Author, "Title of paper," in Proc. Conference Name, City, Country, Year, pp. XX-XX.

[4] T. Nguyen, "Bias mitigation in recommender systems," in Proc. Int. Conf. Mach. Learning (ICML), Vienna, Austria, 2024, pp. 88-97.

11.5 Website or online resource

[#] A. Author. "Title of page." Site Name. Accessed: Mon. Day, Year. [Online]. Available: URL

[5] World Health Organization. "Mental health in the workplace." WHO. Accessed: Mar. 4, 2026. [Online]. Available: <https://www.who.int/example>

11.6 Thesis or dissertation

[#] A. Author, "Title of thesis," Ph.D. dissertation, Dept., Univ., City, Country, Year.

[6] R. Alvarez, "Remote work and employee well-being during organizational change," Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. Psychology, Univ. Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada, 2021.

11.7 Technical report / government document

[#] A. Author or Organization, "Title of report," Publisher, City, Country, Report No. xxx, Year.

[7] National Institute of Mental Health, "Anxiety disorders: A guide for families," U.S. Dept. Health and Human Services, Bethesda, MD, USA, Rep. NIH 22-4677, 2022.

11.8 Standard

[#] Organization, "Title of standard," Standard Number, Year.

[8] IEEE, "IEEE standard for floating-point arithmetic," IEEE Std 754-2019, 2019.

11.9 Patent

[#] A. Author, "Title of invention," Country Patent X XXX XXX, Month Day, Year.

[9] J. Lee, "Method for adaptive noise cancellation," U.S. Patent 10 987 654, Feb. 14, 2023.

11.10 Online video

[#] Author or Channel Name. "Title of video." Platform Name. Accessed: Mon. Day, Year. [Online video]. Available: URL

[10] CrashCourse. "How memory works: Crash course psychology #14." YouTube. Accessed: May 3, 2026. [Online video]. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/example>

11.11 Dataset

[#] Author/Organization, "Title of dataset," Version x.x, Publisher, Year. [Online]. Available: URL

[11] Pew Research Center, "American trends panel wave 112," Pew Research Center, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.pewresearch.org/example>

12. IEEE Paper Formatting Basics

Element	Rule
Font	Times New Roman, 10 pt body text (typical for IEEE conference/journal templates)
Layout	Two-column format for most conference and journal papers
Margins	Set by the official IEEE template for the target venue — do not adjust manually
Figures & tables	Numbered sequentially (Fig. 1, Table I), with a caption below figures and above tables
Equations	Numbered sequentially in parentheses, right-aligned: (1), (2), (3)...
Reference list	Titled "References," numbered in citation order, not alphabetized
Section headings	Numbered (I, II, III...) with Roman numerals; subsections use A, B, C

13. IEEE Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Alphabetizing the reference list — IEEE orders references by citation appearance, not by author surname.
- Writing author names surname-first — IEEE uses initials first, then surname (A. B. Smith, not Smith, A. B.).
- Assigning a new number to a source you've already cited — reuse the original bracket number every time.

- Leaving out the bracketed number when you name the author in-text — IEEE always keeps the number, unlike APA.
- Forgetting to italicize the journal, book, or proceedings title while the article/paper title stays in quotation marks.
- Spelling out volume, number, and page labels — use the standard abbreviations "vol.," "no.," and "pp."
- Using "et al." for six or fewer authors — IEEE lists up to six authors by name before switching to "et al."

14. IEEE Pre-Submission Checklist

- Every bracketed in-text number has a matching numbered entry in the reference list.
- Reference list is numbered by citation order, not alphabetically.
- Author names appear as initials first, then surname, throughout the reference list.
- Article/paper titles are in quotation marks; journal/book/proceedings titles are italicized.
- Figures and tables are numbered sequentially and captioned correctly (caption below figures, above tables).
- The paper follows the official IEEE template for margins, columns, and font size for your target venue.

15. Quick Comparison: APA vs. IEEE

Feature	APA 7 / IEEE
In-text citation	(Author, Year) vs. [Number]
Reference list order	Alphabetical by author surname vs. Order of first citation
Author name format	Surname, First Initial. vs. First Initial Surname
Many authors	"et al." after first author (3+) vs. "et al." after sixth author
Title styling	Article titles in sentence case, not italicized vs. Article titles in quotation marks
Common fields	Psychology, education, social sciences vs. Engineering, computer science

This is a quick-reference guide, not a replacement for the full [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association \(7th ed.\)](#) or the official [IEEE Editorial Style Manual](#). For less common source types or edge cases, consult those directly.

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