

Referencing Your Sources for Science Reports (using APA style)

It is important to reference the sources of the information you present in your report. This allows the reader to confirm the accuracy of the information you present and assess whether you are using it properly in your argument.

Referencing your sources involves two steps. The first step is to provide a short reference to the information source in the body of your report. In scientific report writing, this usually means you provide the name of the first author (or organization) and the year the source document was published. This information is placed in brackets beside the information you cite. For example, here is a section of a sample scientific report that cites two references, a study by Patel published in 2008 and a World Wildlife Fund report from 2009:

... high levels of the contaminant were shown to increase the risk of birth defects in frogs by 300% (Patel 2008). Many populations of frogs are now showing signs of these developmental problems and some scientists think this could cause a massive extinction of frogs world wide (WWF 2009).

The second step is to provide a list of the references you cited. The list, usually called “References,” appears at the end of the report. Readers can use this list to look up the references you cited and read them for themselves. To help them find the references, you need to provide the name of the person (or organization) who wrote the material, the year/date of publication, the full title of the work, and the place of publication.

The way you present this information in the reference list varies by academic discipline. In science, most reports use APA style to format their reference list. This style is described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. For the purpose of this course, it is not important for you to worry about the exact formatting rules. What matters is that you provide enough information that someone else could find it for themselves.

Here are examples of how to format the citations for various sources of information:

Book

Suzuki, D. (2006). David Suzuki: The Autobiography (28–29). Vancouver: Greystone Books.

Note: When citing books in this course, you are encouraged to mention specific page numbers (optional), as shown above, although this is not part of the APA style.

Academic Journal

Patel, A.T., Rizzotti, J.L. and Francis, D. 2008. The effect of insecticide on the early development of frogs. *Journal of Developmental Biology* 92: 22–33.

Note: Provide all the authors names in the same order as they appear in the report. After the report title you provide the name of the academic journal, followed by the volume or issue number and the start and end page numbers of the report in the issue.

Web page

Lynds, B. T. (1995, November 21). About temperature. Retrieved on December 2, 2009 from <http://eo.ucar.edu/skymath/tmp2.html>

Note:

- 1) You only need to cite the Web page if the article did not appear in any other form, such as a book, journal, or magazine article. For example, if the above article were published in a journal but you happened to read it on the Web, you would provide the actual journal reference.
- 2) It is important you also include the date that you read (“retrieved”) the Web page because Web pages often change over time.
- 3) If there is a page like <http://www.somewebsite.org/thepageyouwant.html>, and [thepageyouwant.html](http://www.somewebsite.org/thepageyouwant.html) doesn’t have the publishing information you’re looking for, try shortening or “moving up” the URL to <http://www.somewebsite.org/> to find out who authored the page and when it was last updated.

Newspaper

Schultz, S. (2005, December 28). Calls made to strengthen state energy policies. *The Country Today*, pp. 1A, 2A.

Magazine

Leclair, L., & MacLagan, M. (2006, January). Credit due: Ontarians reconnect with their ambitions. *TVOntario Magazine*, 12–13.

Video Clip from a Website

Norton, R. (2006, November 4). How to train a cat to operate a light switch (Video file). Video posted to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vja83KLQXZs>