

# APA RESEARCH PAPER: WORKING WITH SOURCES

A research paper should present your ideas by blending information from expert sources. A research paper is not simply a series of direct quotations strung together. Quotations should be used only to support your own ideas.

A strong research paper should blend more summaries and paraphrases than direct quotes to support your ideas. Use direct quotations only when necessary to add emphasis, provide clarity, or ensure accuracy. A direct quotation also may be used when the original author's language adds impact to your own ideas.

When using direct quotations, take care to use the exact wording, spelling, and punctuation of the original source and to credit the source. This [example](#) demonstrates how to blend sources into an APA research paper.

## APA IN-TEXT CITATIONS

In a research paper, you must give credit whenever you quote or use another person's words, ideas, or statistics. You give credit by using in-text citations that typically follow the author-date format: the author's last name and year of publication. If the author is unknown, cite the title (abbreviated) in place of the author's last name.

Quotations also require the page number written with the abbreviation *p.* or *pp.* or paragraph number (written as *para.*) if no page number is available. Although not required, page numbers are encouraged for paraphrased material also, especially when paraphrasing lengthy text. For online sources, if neither page nor paragraph numbers are available, cite the heading (abbreviate if more practical) and the number of the paragraph (e.g., *Introduction section, para. 2*).

In-text citations are written either as a *signal phrase* or *parenthetical reference*.

### **Signal phrase**

A signal phrase includes the author's last name (or the title of the source if the author is unknown), the year of publication in parentheses, and an appropriate verb (such as asserts, claims, declares, defines, illustrates, notes, observes, reports, responds, suggests, or writes). The page number is placed in parentheses at the end of a quotation. For paraphrased material, the page number is placed in parentheses at the end of the sentence, followed by the closing punctuation.

### **Examples**

#### **Signal phrase in a quotation**

Automotive Review Council researcher Alan M. Tercero (2011) finds that "as many as 70 percent of those messages are being sent by people driving cars" (p. 29).

### **Signal phrase in a paraphrase**

Tercero (2011) claims that texting while driving will soon replace drunken driving as the number-one source of accidents, a theory that is currently the subject of many studies (p. 37).

### **Signal phrase for unknown page number** (indicating a section heading)

According to Tercero (2011), texting while driving will soon replace drunken driving as the number-one source of accidents, a theory that is currently the subject of many studies (Texting While Driving section, para. 1).

## **Parenthetical reference**

In a parenthetical reference, the author's last name (or the title of the source if the author is unknown), the year of publication, and the page number (if required) is placed in parentheses at the end of the quoted or paraphrased material. The end punctuation is placed after the parentheses.

### **Examples**

#### **Parenthetical reference in a summary**

Other states have concluded that enforcing a texting-while-driving law would prove practically impossible (Burns, 2011).

#### **Parenthetical reference in a quotation**

The children's mother, the other driver, was seriously injured, is now paralyzed, and "sentenced to spend the rest of her life confined to a wheelchair" (Kingman, 2010, p. 44).

#### **Notes:**

1. If in the first citation within a paragraph, the author and year are cited in a signal phrase, the year does not have to be cited in subsequent nonparenthetical references. However, if in the first citation, the author and year are in a parenthetical reference, the year must be included in subsequent citations.
2. When an entire paragraph comes from one source, the citation may be placed at the end of the paragraph except when citing statistics or historical events and dates. In these cases, a citation is required at the end of each sentence in which they appear

## **Examples of In-text Citations**

### **A Work with One Author**

#### **Signal phrase**

Hulicki (2010) believes that lawmakers should examine the statistics compiled by independent researchers who were contracted by insurance companies.

### **Parenthetical reference**

Statistics compiled by independent researchers hired by insurance companies should be examined by lawmakers (Hulicki, 2010).

### **A Work with Two Authors**

List both authors in the signal phrase or parentheses each time you cite the source.

### **Signal phrase**

Burns and Nobel (2001) cite studies indicating that accidents caused by texting while driving could increase by as much as 2% a year.

### **Parenthetical reference**

One study indicates that accidents caused by texting while driving could increase by as much as 2% a year (Burns & Nobel, 2009).

### **A Work with Three to Five Authors**

List all the authors in the signal phrase or parenthetical reference the first time you cite the work. In later citations, list the first author's name followed by *et al.* (not italicized) in either the signal phrase or the parenthetical reference.

### **Signal phrase for first citation**

Curleigh, Mole, and Lari (2010) cite similar statistics from research conducted by insurance companies.

### **Signal phrase for subsequent citations (in subsequent paragraphs)**

Similar statistics have been reported from research conducted by insurance companies (King et al. 155).

Curleigh et al. (2010) reported similar statistics found in highway-safety surveys conducted by insurance companies.

### **Parenthetical reference for first citation**

Similar results have been found in other highway safety studies (Curleigh, Mole, & Lari, 2010).

### **Parenthetical reference for subsequent citations (in subsequent paragraphs)**

Normal light had no effect (Curleigh et al., 2010).

**For six or more authors**, use the first author's name followed by *et al.* for all citations.

### **Unknown Author**

If the author is not known, use the complete title in the signal phrase or use a short form of the title in parentheses.

### **Complete title in the signal phrase**

The article "All Is Not Well" (2009) includes an opinion by John Jones, a federal judge.

### **Partial title in the parenthetical reference**

John Jones, a federal judge, believes that these laws can be enforced ("All Is," 2009).

## **Groups as Authors**

For names of groups that serve as authors (e.g., corporations, associations, government agencies), use the full name of the group in the first citation and abbreviate it in subsequent citations if the abbreviation will give the reader enough information to locate the source on the reference page. (If you abbreviate the name, include the abbreviation in parentheses after using the full name in the first citation.) If the name is short or abbreviating the group name will cause the reader confusion, continue to write out the full name in each citation.

### **First citation using a signal phrase**

The National Institute of Highways and Byways (NIHB, 2009) is studying the effect that enforcing a law against texting while driving would have on state law-enforcement officers.

### **Second citation using a signal phrase**

NIHB (2009) is studying the effect that enforcing a law against texting while driving would have on state law-enforcement officers.

### **First citation using a parenthetical reference**

Researchers are studying the effect that enforcing a law against texting while driving would have on state law-enforcement officers (National Institute of Highways and Byways [NIHB], 2009).

### **Second citation using a parenthetical reference**

Transportation officials are hopeful that new laws restricting texting while driving will significantly reduce the number of fatal accidents (NIHB, 2009).

## **Web Sites or Other Electronic Sources**

Cite electronic sources (Web sites, on-line articles) the same as print sources (books, magazines). However, note that many of these electronic sources do not use page numbers. In these cases, cite the paragraph number if visible. If neither page numbers nor paragraph numbers are visible and the document includes internal headings, cite the heading (shortened if appropriate) and the number of the paragraph following it.