APA DOCUMENTATION BASICS
Updated August 2016

APA stands for American Psychology Association; it publishes a style guide entitled *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th edition* which was last updated in 2010. APA documentation style is often used in psychology, education and many other social sciences. Although there are many different style guides such as the Modern Languages Association (MLA) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), they all have the same goal: to set a standard for good writing and provide a consistent method to format your papers and document your sources. Make sure to confirm which style your professor expects.

WHAT DOES A STYLE GUIDE DO?
A style guide helps you prepare academic texts like research papers. It explains how to format your paper and document (or cite) your sources. For example, it shows:
- What to include in a list of works cited or in a bibliography
- How to document a work with multiple authors
- How to identify editors or translators
- How to format your paper including font size, cover page, and page numbering

WHY SHOULD I DOCUMENT MY SOURCES?
- To allow readers to locate your sources if they wish to read them for themselves
- To acknowledge the work done by others
- To provide support for the position you take on a controversial issue
- To establish links with the experts in your field of study
- To add credibility to your work

WHERE DO I PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION FOR A SOURCE?
You document a source in two places:
- Within your paper when you introduce a quotation, paraphrase information or summarize a passage (in-text documentation)
- At the end of your paper when you provide complete information that allows your readers to locate your sources (References)
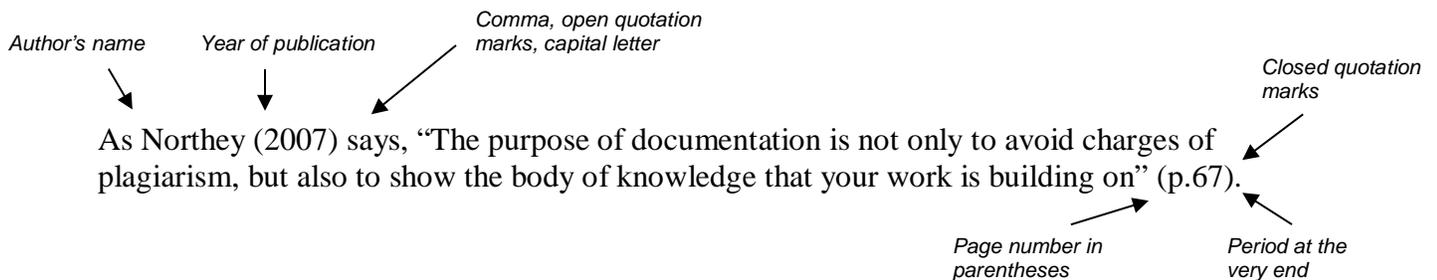
It is important to note that properly documenting your sources takes quite some time, especially if it is your first time or you are using a new style guide.

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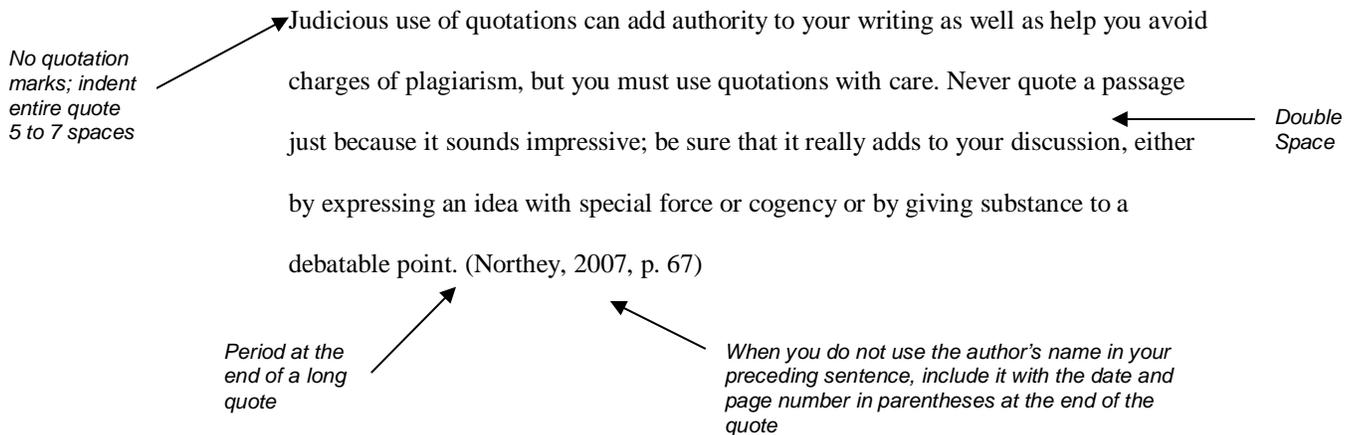
IN-TEXT DOCUMENTATION

QUOTATIONS
Although the use of direct quotations should be kept to a minimum, in academic writing we sometimes find them essential. We use direct quotations when the original author's writing is famous, beautiful, poignant, or, for some other reason, important to keep intact.

SHORT QUOTATIONS (FEWER THAN 40 WORDS)

Author's name

Year of publication

Comma, open quotation marks, capital letter

Closed quotation marks

As Northey (2007) says, "The purpose of documentation is not only to avoid charges of plagiarism, but also to show the body of knowledge that your work is building on" (p.67).

Page number in parentheses

Period at the very end

LONG QUOTATIONS (MORE THAN 40 WORDS)

Your professor may expect you to include a specific number of quotes in your research papers, but when you choose those quotes, keep this advice in mind:

Colon

Judicious use of quotations can add authority to your writing as well as help you avoid charges of plagiarism, but you must use quotations with care. Never quote a passage just because it sounds impressive; be sure that it really adds to your discussion, either by expressing an idea with special force or cogency or by giving substance to a debatable point. (Northey, 2007, p. 67)

No quotation marks; indent entire quote 5 to 7 spaces

Double Space

Period at the end of a long quote

When you do not use the author's name in your preceding sentence, include it with the date and page number in parentheses at the end of the quote

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PARAPHRASING

When you are writing for academic purposes, you usually do not use direct quotations. In fact, the academic writer PARAPHRASES the information into their OWN words more often than not. Remember, the words are yours, but the ideas belong to another writer and therefore, you MUST give the reader the original source.

HOW DO I PARAPHRASE ANOTHER WRITER'S WORDS?

Read the passage and ask yourself *What is this all about?* or *What point is the author trying to make*? Close the book, and in your own words, jot down what you think the author is saying. Read the original passage again to make sure you captured the author's meaning. Ask yourself *Is the author positive, negative or neutral about the topic*? This question refers to the author's tone and message; when paraphrasing, you must not change the tone of the original source to suit your tone. If necessary, revise your paraphrase so that it matches the author's ideas and tone. Note the documentation details so you won't have to look them up again.

The following is the original direct quote:

"Judicious use of quotations can add authority to your writing, but you must use quotations with care.

Never quote a passage just because it sounds impressive; be sure that it really adds to your discussion,

either by expressing an idea with special force or cogency or by giving substance to a debatable point."

The following is a paraphrased version with documentation:

Give the author credit for the idea

According to Northey, adding impact to your academic writing can be done with a careful selection of direct quotes. Some academic writers use direct quotes in order to make their writing seem more notable; the author strongly suggests avoiding this tactic. The point of adding quotes to support your argument (2007, p. 67).

Include year of publication

*APA **encourages** you to include the page number*

DOCUMENTATION AT THE END OF YOUR TEXT

At the end of your research paper, you must include a reference list. This means that you cite all of the sources you used to write your paper. You should include every source you mentioned in your paper. Do not add sources in your reference list unless they are mentioned in your writing. Sources should be alphabetized, double spaced and each should have a "reverse indent" of 5 to 7 spaces.

List sources on a separate sheet at the end of your paper. Entitle your list References

Year of publication placed in parentheses followed by a period

Author's name: *Family name, comma, initial(s) of first name(s); if no author is given, the name of the organization responsible for the publication followed by a period*

Title of a book: *italicize the title; capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns included in the title, followed by a period. For a second or later edition, place the number in parentheses immediately after the title* (6th ed.), *followed by a period*

References

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Title of a printed journal: *in italics and capitalized, comma, volume number in italics, page numbers not in italics and without "pp" at the end followed by a period*

Online Journal: *follow format for printed journal and add: "Retrieved from" followed by the URL*

Publication Data: *Place of publication, colon. Name of publisher followed by a period*

If you need further help you can consult the MLA website https://style.mla.org/
Concordia's libraries are an excellent resource and you can ask a librarian for help anytime.
The On-line Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University is also very helpful
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/