

# Guidelines for Using Citations in Research Papers

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This document is intended to serve as a straightforward guide for students who want to use citations effectively in research papers. Here are the guidelines:

1. Keep it simple. I think APA-style citations are the most intuitive and easy to make. The rules are as follows:
  - Always give the author's (or authors') last name(s) and the year of publication. *Never* use first names or the titles of books or articles.
  - Citations go at the end of sentences, before the period, like this (Downs 1957). If you're using footnotes or endnotes, the number should go at the end of the sentence, outside the period, like this.<sup>1</sup>
  - Always give a page number for direct quotes. It should look like this: Zaller (1992, 2) writes "Efforts at integration of research findings are uncommon in the public opinion field." If you prefer, this is fine too: Zaller (1992) writes "Efforts at integration of research findings are uncommon in the public opinion field" (2).
  - If you're citing someone in the text (e.g., explaining what an article says), put only the year in parentheses. It should look like this: Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) say that ordinary citizens often lack political knowledge.
  - If you're citing something with fewer than four authors, write out each last name with the year. Here's an example: Ordinary citizens often compensate for their lack of political knowledge by relying on low-information cues (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991).
  - For citations with four or more authors, use "et al." Notice, however, that the name of each author is written out on the reference list on the next page. Here's an example: Kuklinski et al. (2000) show that many citizens confidently hold factually inaccurate beliefs about politics.

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<sup>1</sup>Converse (1964).

- Other handy Latin abbreviations:
    - *e.g.* for examples. So, you might write: Many scholars investigate the effect of party identification on vote choice (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960).
    - *i.e.* when you mean “that is.” So you might write: Many people hold factually inaccurate beliefs about politics (i.e., they are misinformed).
    - *c.f.* when you want to contrast a claim you’re making with another source. So you might write: Nyhan and Reifler (2010, 305) define misperceptions as “cases in which people’s beliefs about factual matters are not supported by clear evidence and expert opinion—a definition that includes both false *and* unsubstantiated beliefs about the world” (cf., Gaines et al. 2007).
2. When in doubt, cite it. This helps guard against academic honesty concerns and makes you look like you’ve read a lot.
    - This is *especially* true anytime you claim that there has been a lot of research on a particular topic, or if you make a claim about what existing research says. If you say something like “Partisanship is among the most studied topics in political science,” you need to give evidence! It could look something like this: Partisanship is among the most studied topics in political science (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Bartels 2002; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012).
  3. Always include a reference list at the end of your paper, on a separate page. See the next page for an example. I don’t go into detail here on how to set-up a reference page, but the example on the next page is a good template.
  4. When I’m grading research papers, I’m less concerned with the format (e.g., MLA, APA) and more concerned with clarity and consistency. If you want to use footnotes or endnotes instead of parenthetical citations (i.e., the approach outlined above), that’s fine. As long as the citations are clear and intuitive and stay consistent throughout, that’s great.

## References

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