Guide to APSA Style Basics

Meriam Library – California State University, Chico

For more information, consult the Style Manual for Political Science, revised edition (Call number: REF JA86.A52 2001), or the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition (Call number: READY REF Z253 U69 2003). More examples are provided in Kate Turabian’s A Manual for Writers or Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th edition (Call number: READY REF LB2369 T8 1996).

Formatting the Reference List

1. APSA style generally follows Chicago Manual of Style’s author-date citation practice. It requires parenthetical references within the text of the paper and a list of references at the end. See the end of this guide for examples of “reference citations in text.”

2. Reference lists begin immediately following the conclusion. Type the word “References” flush against the left margin.

3. Use hanging indent form. First line of each reference is set flush left and subsequent lines are indented. References are single-spaced with one empty line between references.

4. Arranged alphabetically, not by format of publication (book, journal, etc.).

5. The author should be first element. If no author is present, use the editor’s name. If no editor is present, start with the book title or article title.

6. List author’s last name, followed by a comma then the author’s first and/or middle name. Spell out authors’ names. Do not use initials unless they are used by the author.

7. Book and periodical titles should be in italics.

8. Chapter and article titles should be contained in quotation marks.

9. The date is always the second element in a citation.

10. Capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc. This rule does not apply to indefinite or definite articles (a, an, the), short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle.

See Chapter 17 of the Chicago Manual of Style for more reference list formatting examples.

Reference Examples

Books:

One Author

Two Authors

Chapter from book:


Journal article, two authors (print, microfilm, PDF):


Journal article, one author (from a library subscription database):


Newspaper article, one author (print, microfilm, PDF):

Talev, Margaret. 2004. "No Budget Accord in Cards This Week." Sacramento Bee, 9 July.

Newspaper article, no known author (print, microfilm, PDF):


Newspaper article, one author (online version):


Report from a private organization available on organization Web site:


Executive Agency Government Documents (online versions):


Bills (online versions):


**Laws and Codes (online versions):**


**Legislative Reports (online versions):**


**Legislative Hearings -- Entire hearing document cited (online version):**


**Legislative Hearings -- Only one piece of testimony cited (online versions):**


**Presidential and Gubernatorial Documents (online versions):**


Case Citations – Court Opinions:

Online
Marbury v. Madison. 1803. 5 U.S. 137; 2 L. Ed. 60. LexisNexis Academic (November 15, 2006).


Print, PDF:
Marbury v. Madison. 1803. 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137; 2 L. Ed. 60.

Reference Citations in Text (Parenthetical References)

When writing your paper, whenever you express words, facts, or ideas that are not your own, you need to refer the reader to the original source of that information. Those sources are listed in the References. The author’s last name and the year of publication should always appear in the text, and pages or paragraphs should be listed when citing or quoting a specific section of the work.

See Chapter 17 of the Chicago Manual of Style for more reference citation examples.

Examples of Citations in Text (Parenthetical References)

Author’s Name in Text (no page number):
Walker (2000) compared reaction times...

Author’s Name in Reference (no page number):
In a recent study of reaction times (Walker 2000)...

Author’s Name in Text (page number):
According to Jones (1998), “Students often had difficulty using APSA style” (199)

Author’s Name in Reference (page number):
She stated, “Students often had difficulty using APSA style.” (Jones 1998, 199)

Legal Citations (no page number):
The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that foreigners currently held in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay are entitled to habeas corpus rights. (Rasul v. Bush 2004)

Government Report (page number):
Although many schools report incidents of violence, far fewer experience “serious violent incidents.” (U.S. Department of Education 2004, 2)