

16: Research and APA Documentation Style

Chapter Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Provide online search techniques
- Outline types of resources
- Explain how to evaluate resources
- Distinguish between summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting
- Review the APA format
- Explain how to cite and document sources

Before you head for the library or its Internet equivalent, you need a topic, some idea of the specific aspect of the topic you want to focus on, and some ideas about what to say about that narrowed topic. Problems finding a topic and thinking of what to say about it are often called the dreaded writer's block.

Narrowing a topic is that process in which you go from an impossibly huge topic such as nanotechnology to something more manageable such as applications of nanotechnology in brain surgery.

Brainstorming a topic is that process in which you think of everything you can that you might write about in relation to your topic.

Know Your Booleans for Searching Online or in Databases

An important tool to have when you go searching for information—either in libraries or on the Internet—has to do with **Boolean operators**: AND, OR, NOT and a few esoteric others. The following table will help you become an expert in narrowing search parameters, especially in a huge database such as that provided by the college.

Technique	What it does	Example
Truncation — adding a symbol to the root of the word to retrieve related terms and variant endings for the root term. Some databases have left- and right-hand truncation.	Expands your search	structur* finds structure, structuring, structures, etc. *elasticity will find elasticity, aeroelasticity, viscoelasticity
Boolean AND — retrieves only those records containing all your search terms	Narrows your search	finite AND element AND methods
Boolean OR — retrieves records containing any of your search terms; especially useful for synonyms, alternate spellings, or related concepts	Broadens your search	energy OR fuel pollut* OR contaminat* sulfur OR sulphur
Boolean NOT, AND NOT — attempts to exclude a term that is not useful or relevant	Narrows your search	"Advanced Materials" AND composite NOT wood
Proximity — retrieves terms within a specified distance of one another; variations of proximity searches are phrase searches, where the terms must be retrieved exactly as entered; NEAR, ADJACENT, WITH, and WITHIN searches	Narrows your search	"Styrenic Block Copolymers" (quotation marks ensure that the multiple-word term is searched as a phrase, but are not required for all databases)
Parentheses () — groups terms with Boolean for more complex searches	Combines searches	"mechanical engineering" AND (handbook OR dictionary)

Types of Resources for Information Research

Encyclopedias and Other Reference Works

If you are beginning at ground zero with your report topic, a good strategy would be to read some articles in general **encyclopedias**. As a researcher, you need to know something about the topic so you will know what kinds of questions to ask and how to organize your data. If you are knowledgeable, the entire research process will be more efficient and even enjoyable.

- [Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management](#)
- [Encyclopedia of Economic and Business History](#)
- [Business Jargons](#)

Can you build a legitimate report based on encyclopedia articles that you summarize and paraphrase? NO! Most college level instructors will not accept encyclopedias as legitimate sources because their information is broad, not specific. You may not be able to gather enough information to create a report of any reasonable length. Encyclopedias (even [Wikipedia](#)) are an excellent place to begin your research and to build a background of knowledge, but they should not be used as part of your cited research data. They are a place to start and to decide where to direct your actual research.

Books

Books can provide excellent background, a historical treatment of your subject and depth. Check a book's table of contents and index to see if it has what you are looking for. For some current research topics, however, books tend to be too general and usually not as up-to-date as periodicals. To obtain more specific information on technological advancements and current information, go to journal articles, technical reports, or other sources discussed later in this chapter.

Try these resources. Search "job interview strategies" to see what kind of resources you can locate:

- [Online Books](#)
- [WorldCat](#)
- [Perlego](#)
- [Google Scholar](#)

Here are some sites that consolidate access to thousands of libraries worldwide:

- [LibDex](#)
- [The WWW Library Directory](#)
- [LibWeb](#)

In HACC library, you can either search [the library catalog](#) or use the [eBooks on EBSCOhost](#) database.

Periodicals

Periodicals is a librarian's word for publications that come out periodically—magazines, academic journals, trade publications, and newspapers. Depending on the topic and scope of your research, you will probably use academic journal articles and trade publications more often than magazines and newspapers. However, there are certainly some magazines and newspapers related to business that might provide useful, relevant, and credible information, too. HACC library offers over [80 databases](#) that you can use to conduct your research.

When in doubt, pay a visit to your campus library and make friends with the librarians there. You can [set up an appointment or chat with a librarian](#) as well as use HACC library's [research guides](#).

Evaluation of Your Research Findings

The following is a system of evaluating the reliability of Internet information developed by the [Cornell University Library](#). This information is especially important if you are using Internet sources and need to defend their validity and reliability.

Point of view

Does this article or book seem objective, or does the author have a bias or make assumptions? What was the author's method of obtaining data or conducting research? Does the website aim to sell you something or just provide information? What is the author's purpose for researching and writing this article or book?

Authority	Who wrote the material? Is the author a recognized authority on the subject? What qualifications does this author have to write on this topic? Is it clear who the intended audience is? What is the reputation of the publisher or producer of the book or journal? Is it an alternative press, a private or political organization, a commercial press, or university press? What institution or Internet provider supports this information? (Look for a link to the homepage.) What is the author's affiliation to this institution?
Reliability	What body created this information? Consider the domain letters at the end of a web address (URL) to judge the site's quality or usefulness. What kind of support is included for the information? Are there facts, interviews, and statistics that can be verified? Is the evidence convincing to you? Is there any evidence provided to support the author's conclusions, such as charts, maps, bibliographies, and documents? Compare the information provided to other factual sources.
Timeliness	Has the site been recently updated? Look for this information at the bottom of a web page. How does the copyright of a book or publication date of an article impact the information contained in it? Do you need historical or recent information? Does the resource provide the currency you need?
Scope	Consider the breadth and depth of an article, book, website, or other material. Does it cover what you expected? Who is the intended audience? Is the content aimed at a general or a scholarly audience? Based on your information need, is the material too basic, too technical, or too clinical?

As a rule of thumb, steer clear of any resource that has "wiki" or "about" in the title or URL. Your safest bets are sites sponsored by the U.S. government (.gov) or educational institutions (.edu).

Summary, Paraphrase, Quote

Whether you're writing a summary or broaching your analysis, using support from the text will help you clarify ideas, demonstrate your understanding, or further your argument, among other things. Three distinct methods, which Bruce Ballenger refers to as "The Notetaker's Triad," will allow you to process and reuse information from your focus text.

Summary

Summary is useful for "broadstrokes" or quick overviews and brief references. When you summarize, you reword and condense another author's writing. Be aware, though, that summary also requires individual thought: when you reword, it should be a result of your processing the idea yourself, and when you condense, you must think critically about which parts of the text are most important. As you can see in the example that follows, one summary shows understanding and puts the original into the author's own words; the other summary is a result of a passive rewording, where the author only substituted synonyms for the original.

Original Text

"On Facebook, what you click on, what you share with your 'friends' shapes your profile, preferences, affinities, political opinions and your vision of the world. The last thing Facebook wants is to contradict you in any way" (Filloux).

Effective Summary

When you interact with Facebook, you teach the algorithms about yourself. Those algorithms want to mirror back your beliefs (Filloux).

Ineffective Summary

On Facebook, the things you click on and share forms your profile, likings, sympathies, governmental ideas and your image of society. Facebook doesn't want to contradict you at all (Filloux).

Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is similar to the process of summary. When we **paraphrase**, we process information or ideas from another person's text and put it in our own words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to process and condense, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea in its entirety using your own language. Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.

Quote

A direct quote might be most familiar to you: using quotation marks (“ ”) to indicate the moments that you're borrowing, you reproduce an author's words verbatim in your own writing. **Direct quotes** are good for establishing ethos and providing evidence. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly. However, remember that we should not quote too often because we want to maintain our voice as a writer throughout the document. Therefore, we should quote only if it is crucial to either use the exact words the author is using or emphasize the tone of the quoted words or phrases.

Citing Sources of Borrowed Information

When you write a report, you can and should borrow information to provide support and depth to your ideas, to offer examples to illustrate your points, or to introduce and discuss points of view different from yours. It is important that you always document your sources both in the text and at the end of the document on the References pages. Reports that do not cite and document sources are considered plagiarized. Depending on your instructor policy and severity of the charges, you may receive a failing grade for the assignment, fail the entire course, or even be expelled from the college. When in doubt how to cite a source, always check with your instructor, a librarian, or [HOWL: HACC Online Writing Lab](#).

Types of Sources to Document

This question always comes up: how do I decide when to document information—when, for example, I forgot where I learned it from, or when it really seems like common knowledge? There is no neat, clean answer. You may have heard it said that anything in an encyclopedia or in an introductory textbook is common knowledge and need not be documented. Don't believe it. If it really isn't common knowledge for you, at least not yet, document it. If you know you read it during your research process, you need to document it.

One other question that is often asked: do I document information I find in product brochures or that I get in conversations with knowledgeable people? Yes, most certainly. You cite and document any information you did not create, regardless the type of the source. As a student, you are expected to present research that is not only informative and useful but also honest.

APA Format

These are the major components of an APA-style report or paper:

1. Title page
2. Abstract
3. Body, which includes the following sections:
 - Headings and, if necessary, subheadings to organize the content
 - In-text citations of research sources
4. References page

All these components must be saved in one document, not as separate documents.

Title Page

The title page of your paper includes the following information:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Name of the institution with which the author is affiliated
- Header at the top of the page with the paper title (in capital letters) and the page number (if the title is lengthy, you may use a shortened form of it in the header)

List the first three elements in the order given in the previous list, centered about one-third of the way down from the top of the page. Use the headers and footers tool of your word-processing program to add the header, with the title text at the left and the page number in the upper-right corner.

Abstract

The next page of your paper provides an abstract, or brief summary of your findings. You may not need to provide an abstract in every paper, but you should use one in papers that include a hypothesis. A good abstract is concise—about one hundred to one hundred fifty words—and is written in an objective, impersonal style. Your writing voice will not be as apparent here as in the body of your paper. When writing the abstract, take a just-the-facts approach and summarize your research question and your findings in a few sentences.

Margins, Pagination, and Headings

APA style requirements also address specific formatting concerns, such as margins, pagination, and heading styles within the body of the paper.

Review the following guidelines:

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Headings

APA style uses section headings to organize information, making it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and to know immediately what major topics are covered. Depending on the length and complexity of the paper, its major sections may also be divided into subsections, sub-subsections, and so on. These smaller sections, in turn, use different heading styles to indicate different levels of information. In essence, you are using headings to create a hierarchy of information.

The following heading styles used in APA formatting are listed in order of most important to least important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

APA Documentation Style

In your academic and professional career, you'll hear about a few different ways to cite your sources—for example, Harvard Style, MLA, and APA. In this course, we will use the **APA** ([American Psychological Association](#)) documentation style. This documentation style is used mainly in behavioral and social sciences as well as related fields, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and business.

The following resources will provide all the guidance you need to correctly document, or give credit to, your sources:

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Citing your sources will be easier if you plan for this at the start of the process. You should:

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In-Text Citations

Throughout the body of your paper, include a citation whenever you quote or paraphrase material from your research sources. The purpose of citations is twofold: to give credit to others for their ideas and to allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic, if desired. Your in-text citations provide basic information about your source; each source you cite will have a longer entry in the references section that provides more detailed information.

In-text citations must provide the name of the author or authors and the year the source was published. (When a given source does not list an individual author, you may provide the source title or the name of the organization that published the material instead.) When directly quoting a source, you are also required to include the page number where the quote appears in your citation.

This information may be included within the sentence or in a parenthetical reference at the end of the sentence, as in these examples.

Example 1

Epstein (2010) pointed out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

In Example 1, the writer names the source author when introducing the quote and provides the publication year in parentheses after the author’s name. The page number appears in parentheses after the closing quotation marks and before the period that ends the sentence.

Example 2

Addiction researchers cautioned that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (Epstein, 2010, p. 137).

In Example 2, the writer provides a parenthetical citation at the end of the sentence that includes the author’s name, the year of publication, and the page number separated by commas. Again, the parenthetical citation is placed after the closing quotation marks and before the period at the end of the sentence.

Example 3

David Epstein’s book *Junk Food, Junk Science* (2010) pointed out that “junk food cannot be considered addictive in the same way that we think of psychoactive drugs as addictive” (p. 137).

In Example 3, the writer mentions both the author and the title of the source in the sentence, which is then followed by the publication year. The page number is provided after the quotation. As long as you have included the essential information, you can choose the option that works best for that particular sentence and source.

Citing a book with a single author is usually a straightforward task. Of course, your research may require that you cite many other types of sources, such as books or articles with more than one author or sources with no individual author listed. You may also need to cite sources available in both print and online and non-print sources, such as websites and personal interviews.

Please see the resources under "APA Documentation Style" above for more information.

References List

The brief citations included in the body of your paper correspond to the more detailed citations provided at the end of the paper in the **references section**. In-text citations provide basic information (the author’s name, the publication date, and the page number if necessary), while the references section provides more extensive bibliographical information. Again, this information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if they so desire.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

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The references page is double spaced and lists entries in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If an entry continues for more than one line, the second line and each subsequent line are indented five spaces, using a hanging indent.

Example of a References Page

References

- Driver, S. (2020, March 23). *Keep it clean: Social media screening gain in popularity*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2377-social-media-hiring.html>
- Evuleocha, S., & Ugbah, S. (2018, June). Profiling: The efficacy of using social networking sites for job screening. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 55(2), 48–57. doi:10.1002/joec.12074
- Gillet, B. (2019, November 10). Should you look at a job applicant's Facebook profile? *Ottawa Business Journal*, 22(9). Retrieved from <https://web-a-ebshost.com>
- Workopolis. (2015, April 5). *The top three things that employers want to see in your social media profiles*. Retrieved from <https://careers.workopolis.com/advice...e-things-that-employers-want-to-find-out-about-you-online/>

General Research Tips

- Clarify your general and specific purpose before you begin your research.
- Identify the resources that you have available, narrow your topic, focus on key points, and plan your investigation.
- Use Boolean operators to narrow your search.
- Use search engine filters to find information quickly.
- Source academic journal articles using your library databases or Google Scholar.
- "The filter bubble" can have a significant impact on the types of search results you receive online.
- Evaluate your sources for credibility. Consider the creator, language, recency, activity, and reputation of the website sources you use.
- Use APA style to place inline (in-text) citations and to create your reference list.
- Outline your work first to make the writing process easier.
- Use rhetorical proofs and/or organizational principles to order your document.

All links live as of June 2021.

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