Using APA 6th style

Using the APA 6th referencing style in writing

A fundamental requirement of academic writing is for students to make use of and to cite literature in their writing. It is important that you cite sources accurately.

The American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing is commonly used in the University of Melbourne. APA is an author-date system, which cites the name of the author(s) and publication year in the text of your assignments to indicate where published information has been used in your writing.

There are two elements to APA style:

1. In-text citations presented in your writing
2. Reference List presented at the end of your work

1. In-text citations

When citing sources in-text, you have two options: to present the information as direct or indirect quotes.

“Direct quotes”
A direct quote uses information directly, word for word, exactly as it is in the original source. You indicate it is a direct quote by use of “double quotation marks”. E.g.:

The frameworks document states that the policy is, “clear and unmistakeable in providing direction to education professionals” (Jones & Wills, 2004, p. 4).

You need to provide author family name(s), year of publication and, because it is a direct quote, the page number (you do not need to present direct quotes in italics).

Use direct quotes rarely: use a DQ when the author’s ideas are especially original or unique; when the writer has made a point so clearly or well that it cannot be expressed in a better way by you; or when the original words create a strong effect or reveal something about the author.

Indirect quotes or paraphrase
Most of the time, when you are using ideas from literature in your writing, you will put the ideas in your own words; i.e. paraphrase the ideas. You need to capture the meaning of the original accurately and you still need to cite the source of the idea, as it is not yours. For example:

There is clear intent in regard to the policy providing educators with direction (Jones & Wills, 2004).

Indirect quoting does not generally require a page number. You need to reframe the information carefully so that you are not misrepresenting the original author’s ideas.

Author prominence vs Idea prominence
When presenting information, you can focus on the author(s) whose text the idea is from or the idea itself:

Author prominence – authors referred to in the sentence, e.g.: Berk (2009) asserts that wellbeing is the most important factor in this context.

Idea prominence – authors referred to in the brackets, e.g.: One of the benefits of CILL is that it complements rather than competes with other subjects (European Commission, 2010).

Use author prominence when you want to focus more on who wrote the information, especially when you want to present author(s) opinion. Use idea prominence when you want to focus more on the information itself, especially when presenting more factual information.

Direct quote or paraphrase?
Most academics prefer that you use more paraphrased information than direct quotes. There is no set ratio for this, but in your work, indirect quotes should nearly always clearly outnumber direct quotes.

Reference List

The Reference List is a list provided at the end of your paper, on a page(s) by itself, of all the works cited in your work; only those cited. (A Bibliography is a wider list of works you have read, whether you have cited them or not.)

The Reference List provides all of the publication details of each citation for the reader. The list is presented alphabetically by author name, which may be the name(s) of a person(s) or an organisation.

While citing works in text is a writing skill which requires synthesising others’ voices with your own, creating a Reference List is more of a technical skill where you simply follow the format and sequence of information as prescribed to the smallest detail. See below for resource guides.

Further Resources

American Psychological Association http://www.apastyle.org/
UniMelb ReCite http://library.unimelb.edu.au/recite/apa
Murdoch University http://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/APA