

## Citing Internet Sources

Based on the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001)

The sources from which you borrow words or information when you write speeches or papers need to be properly acknowledged, regardless of the nature of the original source. The internet is becoming a more valuable and more commonly used tool for carrying out academic research. This information sheet is designed to provide basic information about how to acknowledge a variety of different internet sources using the American Psychological Association (APA) reference style. More information is available in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001).

Remember that there are two parts to citing sources in APA style:

- 1) The first part is *in-text citations*. In-text citations are labels that are inserted next to each piece of prose or information that comes from another source. In APA style, the in-text citation is made up of the year the original source was published and the name or names of the author(s), enclosed in parentheses.
- 2) The second part is the *works cited* or *reference list*. This is an alphabetized list of all the sources that are cited in the paper. It is attached to the end of the paper. The list contains not only the author's name and the publication date, but also information like the book or article title and the publisher. It should include all the information that a reader needs to find the original source.

### **In-text Citations of Internet Sources Based on Print Sources:**

Many of the sources that we consult over the internet are actually based on print sources. For example, we may read a *New York Times* article over the web or consult a .pdf copy of an article from an academic journal through one of the libraries' academic databases. If your internet source is based on a print source, you should cite it in the text of the paper in the same way you would if you cited the print source. For example, if you consulted an article by J. Markoff about Apple's iTunes music sales in the hard-copy, dead-tree version of the *New York Times* and wanted to include information from the article in your paper, it might look like this:

Apple reported that it sold 70 million songs through iTunes in its first year (Markoff, 2004).

If you went to the *New York Times* website or the Lexis/Nexis database and read the same article online, your in-text citation would look exactly the same. (As discussed below, however, the entry for the article in the reference list will vary depending on where you read the article.)

Similarly, if you were paraphrasing a 1993 academic article by W. J. Potter that you found on the shelves of the library, you could cite it like this:

Some critics of cultivation theory argue that it fails to take into account the fact that audiences select what they watch (Potter, 1993).

If you read the article online through the “Communication and Mass Media Complete” database, you could cite it in your paper exactly the same way.

Remember that if you use a direct quote in your paper (that is, you copy what the original source said word-for-word), you also need to include information about where the words you are borrowing appeared in the original manuscript. A reader would need this information to find them within the original source. If the electronic copy of your source includes the *original* page numbers from the print version, include these page numbers when you acknowledge the quotation. This is the case with many of sources available through academic databases. They often include pdf copies of academic articles, which are essentially just scanned copies of the article as it was originally printed. So, a direct quotation from the hard-copy of an article by T. Lowery and her colleagues might be cited like this:

The researchers argue that the study findings indicate that “marketers may benefit from being sensitive to the linguistic characteristics of candidate names” (Lowery, Shrum, & Dubitsky, 2003, p. 15).

If you read an electronic pdf version of the article that included the original page numbers, you could acknowledge the quotation in the text of the paper in the same way.

In other cases, however, print sources that are made available online are reformatted so that you cannot tell which page a particular passage originally appeared on. Some of the academic databases make articles available in html format so that they appear as one long webpage. Many newspaper websites will break an article up into different webpages with hyperlinks that lead from one to another. The way the article is broken up across the webpages does not correspond with the way the article was broken up across pages in the print version. If your source doesn’t have page numbers, use paragraph numbers to indicate where your quotation was located in the original document. Sometimes paragraph numbers are noted in the margins of electronic texts. If your source does not include paragraph numbers, count down from the top of the manuscript to figure out what paragraph the passage you are quoting from is in. The first paragraph from the top is paragraph 1. The second is paragraph 2 and so on. In in-text citations, paragraph numbers are preceded by the paragraph symbol - ¶. You can get most word processors to produce this symbol by clicking on “insert” and then “symbol” in the drop-down box. If you read the Lowery et al. article online in one of these formats, you would acknowledge the quotation like this:

The researchers argue that the study findings indicate that “marketers may benefit from being sensitive to the linguistic characteristics of candidate names” (Lowery, Shrum, & Dubitsky, 2003, ¶ 53).

### **Reference List Entries for Internet Sources Based on Print Sources:**

Again, all sources need to be included in a reference list that should be attached to the end of your paper. The purpose of the reference list is to provide the reader with enough information to track down your original source if they’re interested in doing so.

If you read an online version of a print-based source in a format that is essentially an unaltered copy of the original print version (i.e., a “pdf” file of an academic article) you should enter it in your reference list as if it were the hard-copy version. Then add “Electronic version” in brackets between the title of the article and the title of the journal.

Lowery, T. L., Shrum, L. J., & Dubitsky, T. M. (2003). The relation between brand-name linguistic characteristics and brand-name memory [Electronic version]. *Journal of Advertising*, 32(3), 7-17.

If you read an online version of the source that has been modified in some way (i.e., it’s been converted to html format, so that you don’t have the original page numbers), you should add what’s called a “retrieval statement” to the very end of the reference. This statement simply indicates when and where you found the article online. Here are some examples.

Lowery, T. L., Shrum, L. J., & Dubitsky, T. M. (2003). The relation between brand-name linguistic characteristics and brand-name memory. *Journal of Advertising*, 32(3), 7-17.  
Retrieved January 22, 2008 from the Communication and Mass Media Complete database.

Hansell, S. (2002, April 11). Seeking profits, Internet alters privacy policy. *The New York Times*.  
Retrieved April 14, 2002 from the New York Time website <http://www.nytimes.com>

Remember, in cases like this, you would need to use the paragraph numbers in the in-text reference if you were quoting from the article. If your source doesn’t tell you which pages the article was printed on in the paper version, you may exclude this information from the reference list entry.

### **Sources that Originate on the Internet:**

The rules for in-text citations of online sources that were written for the internet are essentially the same as those for print sources.

- If you use a direct quote, you need to include the name of the author either the introduction to the quote or within parentheses at the end of the quote. You should also include the date the information was *posted*. If the date on which the information was posted is unavailable, you should indicate this by using the abbreviation “n.d.” (for “no date”) where the year would otherwise go. The words you borrow from the original source should be in quotation

marks (if it's 40 words or less) or set of as a block quote (if it's more than 40 words). You also need to indicate where in the document your quotation comes from. Unless the document is a pdf file with page numbers, you would use the number of the paragraph from which your quotation came to do this.

- If you are paraphrasing a source or citing statistical information, you should include the name of the author and the date the information was posted, either within the sentence itself or within parentheses adjacent to the information.

Here are some examples:

Arbitron and Nielsen (n.d.), who are working together to launch Project Apollo, describe the project on its website as a “national marketing research service that collects multimedia and purchase information from a common sample of consumers in order to measure the return on investment for marketing efforts” (§ 2).

Disney claims that its employees are “committed to the highest standards of corporate responsibility” (Walt Disney Company, n.d., ¶ 1).

According to the Internet Movie Database (n.d.) *The Two Towers* had a budget of 94 million dollars.

The Walt Disney Company's studio division includes four domestic film distribution companies, an international film distribution company, a home video distributor, a theatrical producer, and three music distribution companies (Walt Disney Company, n.d.).

Again, you need to include all your sources, including internet sources, in your reference list. Many types of online sources are so new that the field is still developing the specific formats through which they are noted in the reference list. There's likely to be some variation in the specific way in which the information in reference list entries are arranged across different authors.

However, the principle is that you need to provide enough information to allow a reader to track down the original source or, if that proves impossible, allow the reader to evaluate the credibility of that source. Since webpages can change so rapidly, it is not adequate to simply list the URL in the reference list. By the time someone reads your paper, the URL may no longer be functioning. The page to which it leads may have changed. Providing additional information about the webpage may help readers to find the information if it has been moved. It also allows them to determine for themselves whether the source is credible and current.

There is, therefore, some basic information that you should always provide for each of your internet sources. If you are citing information that was first published on the web, you need to provide:

- the name of the author; it may be a specific person or an organization
- the date on which the document was posted or notation that no date was available
- and the name of the document or webpage
- a retrieval statement indicating when and where on the web you accessed the information.

The retrieval statement should include:

- the date you accessed the website
- the name of the website
- the URL or web-address of the site

When you cite a webpage's URL you should try to make it as specific as possible. If the information is available within a multi-page website, cite the specific page on which the information appears rather than the opening page of the website. The easiest way to do this is to cut and paste the URL into your document. You do not have to add any punctuation to the end of the URL in your reference list entry.

The fact that your readers are likely to be evaluating the credibility of your internet sources means that you should be careful to limit your internet sources to those that are actually credible. For example, if you can not identify the person or organization that is responsible for a website, you should not use it as a source for an academic paper. Once you have determined the author, you should give some thought as to whether that author has the expertise or knowledge to speak accurately about a particular topic before you use a webpage as a source. For example, you should be very cautious about citing blogs. Much of the time blog entries simply state the poster's personal opinions (which may or may not be worth much) or repeat information that was reported elsewhere (that may or may not be true). Try to find and cite original reports rather than second-hand ones. Remember that Wikipedia is a collectively written and edited. Anyone can add or change almost any entry. Therefore, it is impossible to know who posted what. Some of the information is reputable. Some of the information is not. It is hard to know which is which. Therefore, you should not generally use this online encyclopedia as the sole source for any specific piece of information you provide in an academic paper.

Below are some examples of appropriate ways to cite several different types of online sources that you are likely to come across in doing research for papers for the communication department. If you have a particular source that doesn't fit any of these examples precisely, you can adapt the examples. Make sure that you include all the information outlined above. If you have any questions, talk to your instructor *before* your paper is due.

*A research report from an organization's website:*

In the first example, the report has specific authors who are credited in the report itself. In the second example, no specific authors are listed. The organization that provided the information is therefore treated as the author. Furthermore, it is not clear when the report was posted. The abbreviation "n.d." - for "no date" - is used in place of the year of publication.

Ganz, W., Schwartz, N., Angelini, J. R., & Rideout, V. (2007, March). *Food for thought: Television food advertising to children in the United States*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from the Kasiser Family Foundation website: <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/7618.cfm>

Arbitron, Inc. (n.d.). *American radio listening trends*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from the Arbitron website: <http://wargod.arbitron.com/scripts/ndb/fmtrends2.asp>

*A company or organization's website:*

In each of these examples, no specific information was available about who wrote the information on the website. Therefore, the company or organization that hosts the website is considered the author. In the first example, 2007 is the date listed at the bottom of the company page, which indicates when the page was last posted or substantially revised. In the other examples, no information about when the information was last updated was available.

Arbitron Inc. and The Nielsen Company. (2007). *Project Apollo: Measuring the sales impact of multimedia advertising*. Retrieved January 18, 2003, from the Project Apollo website: <http://www.project-apollo.com>

The Walt Disney Company. (n.d.). *The Walt Disney Company and affiliated companies: Company overview*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from the Walt Disney Company website: <http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/overview.html>

Internet Movie Database. (n.d.). *Spider-Man 3 (2007): Box-office/business*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0413300/business>

(One note about the Internet Movie Database: if you're using the website as a fast and efficient way of finding out information that would be available in a movie or television program's credits (i.e., the names of a specific work's writer, producer, director, or production company) you do not have cite IMBD itself. However, if you're using the website for information that would not be available in a credit roll (i.e., box office gross, opening dates, top-10 lists), you should cite the website as a source.)