

APA Documentation: Parenthetical & narrative citations

Documentation in APA has two main parts: a References page and in-text citations. **In-text citations take two forms: parenthetical and narrative citations.** This Writing Guide explains parenthetical and narrative and citations in APA documentation.

What are “in-text citations”?

“**In-text citations**” are so called **because they are placed in the text**—that is, right in the sentences you write. They’re like a code: they tell the reader, “Source material is being used!” and “Here’s which source it is.”

APA documentation is an “author/year” system; those two pieces of information are included in a citation:

A basic APA citation	
includes two pieces of information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the author(s)’ last name(s) • the source’s year of publication 	–and has two forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parenthetical • narrative

Parenthetical citations

In a **parenthetical citation**, both pieces of information are **enclosed in parentheses**

Examples: (Handley, 2006) (Westerfeldt & Holland, 2018) (Garcia et al., 2020)

Placement:

- Put the citation **after the use of the material** (often at the end of a sentence).
- Put citations *inside* (that is, *before*) the period at the end of a sentence.
- When citing a **quotation, add the page number.**

Here’s an example of APA parenthetical citations in action:

that over 15% of players who had a loss of consciousness went back onto the field the next day **(Yard & Comstock, 2009)**. This can easily lead to Second Impact Syndrome (SIS). SIS is when someone gets a second concussion while still experiencing symptoms of the first. The condition is dangerous and “the consequences can be lethal” **(Solomon et al., 2006, p. 15)**. Concussed high school football players

Narrative citations

In a **narrative citation**, the writer “introduces” the source by name *as part of the sentence*. (This is sometimes referred to as “attribution.”)

Important notes:

- Because **the author’s name** is in the sentence, **it is not repeated** in the parentheses.
- The **author(s)’ names are used grammatically**, usually followed by a verb or as part of a phrase; **verbs are in past tense**.
- APA narrative citations **use last names only, even the first time you refer to the source**.
- The **year of publication in parentheses comes immediately after the author(s)’ name(s)**.
- Author and year are **not separated by a comma**.
- The citation is **NOT placed or repeated at the end** of the source material.

Examples: Carson (2006) discovered that...

According to Garcia et al. (2020), it is possible...

Placement:

- Use author(s) name(s) **logically within the sentence**; use **past tense verb**.
- Put the year in parenthesis **immediately after the author(s) name(s)**.
- When citing a **quotation**, add the **page number after the quotation**.

Here’s an example of APA narrative citations in action:

the days immediately following an accident, thus giving athletes a false sense of security. **Yard and Comstock (2009) argued** that too many players are allowed back onto the field before they are physically ready. This can easily lead to Second Impact Syndrome (SIS), a condition that can develop when someone gets a second concussion while still experiencing symptoms of the first. **Solomon et al. (2006)** noted how dangerous the condition is and bluntly concludes, “the consequences can be lethal” (p. 15). Concussed high school football players

More help with citations

For more help with...	...see this Writing Guide:
... how to format citations with more than one author →	“APA Documentation: Author’s names”
... how to use narrative citations →	“Documentation: Narrative citations are your friends!”
... how to cite when drawing from the same source for several sentences →	“Documentation: Using running attribution”