

RES 9: ASA Quick Guide (6th Edition)

What is ASA style?

“ASA” is the official writing and citation style for sociology as recognized by the American Sociological Association. It is based upon the *Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)*, and as such, the most recent edition (6th) ASA Style Guide sought to align the rules and writing procedures with the most recent updates in the *CMOS*. While ASA style is based on *CMOS*, there are elements unique to the needs of the sociological field.

Why do citations matter?

Whenever you refer to someone’s words or ideas, whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting, you have a responsibility to your readers to cite your source. If you do not cite your source’s words or information, you are plagiarizing. Whether intentional or accidental, plagiarism has consequences (see [MTSU’s definition of plagiarism](#)). Understanding your citation style can go a long way toward helping you write responsibly and ethically.

What are in-text citations?

This type of citation is used when writers refer to someone else’s idea(s) through paraphrasing, summarizing, and/or quoting.

In ASA, in-text citations are formatted using the author-date system in the *CMOS* and include:

- The last name(s) of the author(s) in either parenthetical or narrative form
- The year of publication
- The page number(s) being referenced (if it is a direct quotation)

Parenthetical in-text citations:

- Example of a summary or paraphrase: ... (Potter 2007).
- example of a quote: ... (Potter 2007:23).

Narrative in-text citations:

- Example of a summary or paraphrase: In this article, Potter (2007) contemplates...
- Example of a quote: In this article, Potter (2007:23) states that...

What about in-text citations with multiple authors or sources?

For works with two authors, list both last names and the year.

- Example: (Potter and Weasley 2008)

For works with three authors, list all authors’ last names and the year in the first citation, but in subsequent citations, list only the first author’s last name followed by “et al.” and the year.

- Example of first usage: (Potter, Weasley, and Granger 2008)
- Example of subsequent usages: (Potter et al. 2008)

For works with four or more authors, only list the last name of the first author followed by “et al.” and the year.

- Example: (Potter et al. 2009)

When referencing more than one source in a sentence, list each source in your in-text citation in alphabetical order and separate them with a semicolon (;).

- Example: (Dumbledore et al. 2008; Potter 2006; Weasley and Granger 2007)



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What is a “References” page?

The References page lists, in alphabetical order, every source cited in-text. The purpose of the References page is to provide a roadmap to your sources so that other scholars or researchers can find them. This means that, as a writer, you need to provide as much information as you can about where to find a source.

On an ASA References page:

- Entries should be listed alphabetically by last name. Both the first and the last name are used (use a first initial if a full first name is not available), and only the first author’s name is inverted.
- Publication titles are put in italics while article and chapter titles are placed in quotation marks.
- For online sources, include a URL or DOI and provide access dates if required by instructor or publisher.

Sample References page (journal, website, and book):

References

Black, Sirius and Remus Lupin. 2010. “The Sting of Betrayal.” *Journal of Magical Creatures’ Realities* 9(34):3-7.

Hagrid, Rubeus. 2003. “The Misconceptions surrounding Acromantula.” *Digital Collections on Magical Creatures* 33(61). <https://www.misunderstoodbutlovedcreatures.com>

Potter, Harry, Ronald Weasley, and Hermione Granger. 2006. *The Rise and Fall of the Dark Lord*. Hogwarts: Literal Literary Illustrations.

Other ASA rules and guidelines:

- “They” is accepted as a singular pronoun.
- Unless a gendered term should be used (i.e., it’s specific to the type of research conducted), the use of nongendered terms is preferred.
- When referring to ethnicity (e.g., black or white individuals), use lowercase—unless capitalization is preferred by an author or publisher.
- Access dates are not needed in references, except in situations where there is not a publication date or for certain types of reference materials.
- In general, use past tense for literature reviews, although a mix of past and present may be used to better communicate results. Additionally, use past tense for methodology sections in research projects and either past or present for results sections.

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