



Deciding your Documentation Style

There are many different kinds of documentation styles. A student needs to decide before starting a paper what kind of documentation style is needed so that credit can be given to the authors. You cannot mix different documentation styles in the same paper, so it is important that you ask your instructor to clarify what format he or she would prefer.

What does documentation do?

- The citations within the text show the reader the name of the author and page numbers where an idea or opinion, summarized, paraphrased, or quoted, can be found.
- The reference page (Works Cited or bibliography page) shows the author's full name, title of work or name of book, the publication information, and the page numbers that were used in the paper.
- The information given allows the reader to find the source and the exact place in the book or journal where the information can be found if he or she needs to do so.

The faculty at Dallas Baptist University generally prefers four main styles of documentation:

Modern Language Association (MLA):

This style of documentation is mostly used by fields in the humanities (English, communications, fine arts, etc.). The format is designed for classic literature and timeless material where the material does not become outdated. This format requires a parenthetical reference in which you put the author's last name and page number of any summarized, paraphrased, or quoted material. It also requires a reference page at the end of the paper, titled "Works Cited," which gives the author's full name and all the publication information of a particular work. For more information, check the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the handouts "MLA Electronic Sources in Your Works Cited," "Printed Sources in Your Works Cited," and "Sources Within Your Paper."

American Psychological Association (APA):

The social sciences (psychology, sociology, education, etc.) use this style of documentation. It is designed for material that becomes outdated. Papers that have experimental data and statistical information are subject to change; therefore, papers with these types of sources need to be written in the APA format. The parenthetical reference then requires the name of the source, page number, and the year that it was published. At the end of the paper, a reference page, titled "References," shows all the information about the works cited within the paper. For more information, see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Turabian:

People who are writing papers for religious, philosophy, and history assignments often use this style of writing. The *Turabian* style includes footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references. The end of the paper also has a reference page, titled "Works Cited." For more information, consult *A Manual for Writers of Term papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian.

American Sociological Association:

This format of writing is widely used by sociology students and professionals. Like the APA, it is designed for material that quickly becomes outdated. For this reason, the author's name and date of publication are required in the text citations. At the end of the paper, a reference page, titled "References" with all the publication information about the sources used in the paper is also needed. For more information, consult *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual*.

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