

# Understanding In-Text Citations

In-text citations are brief references within your paper that direct readers to the full citation in your reference list. In APA style, every source mentioned in your paper must appear in both the in-text citation and the reference list. The basic format includes the author's last name and the year of publication, with page numbers required for direct quotes.

## Single Author Citations

When citing a work by one author, include the author's last name and the publication year. There are two ways to format this:

**Parenthetical citation:** Place both the author's name and year in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

- Research indicates that therapeutic alliance accounts for 30% of treatment outcomes (Norcross, 2011).

**Narrative citation:** Incorporate the author's name into your sentence with the year immediately following in parentheses.

- Norcross (2011) found that therapeutic alliance accounts for 30% of treatment outcomes.
- In 2011, Norcross demonstrated that therapeutic alliance significantly impacts treatment success.

## Multiple Authors Citations

**Two authors:** Always include both names every time you cite the source. Use "and" in narrative citations and "&" in parenthetical citations.

- Narrative: Thompson and Rodriguez (2022) examined cognitive behavioral therapy effectiveness...
- Parenthetical: Recent studies support this approach (Thompson & Rodriguez, 2022).

**Three or more authors:** Use "et al." (meaning "and others") after the first author's name in all citations, including the first mention.

- Narrative: Williams et al. (2023) investigated mindfulness-based interventions...
- Parenthetical: Mindfulness reduces anxiety symptoms by 45% (Williams et al., 2023).

**Note:** In your reference list, include all authors' names up to 20. If there are 21 or more authors, list the first 19, insert an ellipsis (...), and add the final author's name.

## Direct Quotes

Direct quotes require the author, year, and specific page number. Use "p." for a single page and "pp." for multiple pages.

**Short quotes (fewer than 40 words):** Incorporate into your text with quotation marks.

- According to Miller (2021), "The therapeutic relationship is the cornerstone of successful counseling interventions" (p. 157).
- The research concluded that "exposure therapy remains the gold standard for treating specific phobias" (Chen & Park, 2022, p. 89).

**Block quotes (40 words or more):** Start on a new line, indent the entire quote 0.5 inches, use double-spacing, and omit quotation marks.

Smith (2020) emphasized the importance of cultural competence:

Mental health professionals must recognize that culture profoundly influences how individuals perceive, experience, and express psychological distress. Without cultural awareness, clinicians risk misdiagnosing clients, overlooking important contextual factors, and inadvertently perpetuating harmful stereotypes that can damage the therapeutic alliance and impede treatment progress. (p. 234)

## Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing (putting someone else's ideas into your own words), you must still cite the source with author and year. Page numbers are encouraged but not required for paraphrases.

**Original text:** "Cognitive restructuring helps clients identify and challenge maladaptive thought patterns that contribute to emotional distress and problematic behaviors."

**Good paraphrase with citation:**

- Clients can learn to recognize and modify unhelpful thinking patterns through cognitive restructuring techniques (Anderson, 2023).
- Anderson (2023) explained that cognitive restructuring enables clients to discover and change problematic thought patterns that lead to emotional and behavioral difficulties.

**Important:** Simply changing a few words is not paraphrasing—it's plagiarism. You must completely rephrase the idea in your own words while maintaining the original meaning.

## Special Considerations

**No date available:** Use "n.d." (no date) in place of the year.

- (Johnson, n.d.) or Johnson (n.d.) stated...

**No page numbers:** For sources without page numbers (like websites), use paragraph numbers if available (para. 4) or section headings.

- (Roberts, 2022, para. 4)
- (Taylor, 2023, Methods section)

**Secondary sources:** When citing a source you found mentioned in another source (avoid when possible):

- Klein's study (as cited in Brown, 2021) revealed...
- Only Brown (2021) appears in your reference list.

**Multiple works by same author in same year:** Add lowercase letters after the year.

- Several studies (Green, 2023a, 2023b) examined...

**Multiple sources in one citation:** List alphabetically by first author's last name, separated by semicolons.

- Several researchers support this finding (Adams, 2022; Miller & Cohen, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

## Common Errors to Avoid

1. **Missing citations:** Every piece of information from a source needs a citation, not just direct quotes.
2. **Over-quoting:** Paraphrase whenever possible; save direct quotes for particularly powerful or precise language.
3. **Incorrect formatting:** Remember "&" vs. "and" usage, and ensure "et al." includes the period and is not italicized.
4. **Inconsistent citations:** The in-text citation must match exactly with the reference list entry.

## Quick Reference Examples

- **Book:** (Patterson, 2022) or Patterson (2022)
- **Journal article with DOI:** (Lee & Kim, 2023) or Lee and Kim (2023)
- **Website:** (American Psychological Association, 2023) or American Psychological Association (2023)
- **Chapter in edited book:** (Martinez, 2021) or Martinez (2021)
- **DSM-5-TR:** (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) or American Psychiatric Association (2022)