This column is designed to assist authors in becoming familiar with APA format and encourage even the most novice writers to try their hand at composing a manuscript. If there is a specific topic that you would like covered in a future issue, please send an email to katie@ajj.com with your suggestion.

Citing Journal Articles: The Basics

A properly formatted reference list will easily guide your readers to the sources you’ve utilized, making your manuscript much more sound. When citing a journal article in your manuscript reference list, there are numerous items that you must pay close attention to. This column will target the basics.

An important thing to note is the number of authors the journal article has. In an APA reference list, you need to include the names of up to the first six authors of any source. A common mistake in manuscript writing is with the use of “et al.” (which means “and others”) before it is acceptable. You may only use “et al.” after you have listed the first six authors’ names in your citation. For example, this journal article has seven total authors:


Note that only the first six are listed, and then “et al.” is used. Also note that both in the manuscript itself and in the reference list, “et al.” only has one period (at the end).

Another common oversight in preparing a manuscript in APA format is in the use of journal titles. All titles must be spelled out in the reference list. Do not use abbreviations or shortened names. For example:


Quick Tips: You should include as much information as you can (e.g., volume, issue, and page numbers). You’ll also notice in these examples that only the first word of an article’s title is capitalized. Only the journal name itself gets all initial capitals. Be sure to include complete page numbers as well. Do not shorten your citation by removing any digits within your page numbers (e.g., using only 1214-20 to represent 1214-1220). This would be incorrect.

Sources

The reference examples in this column were obtained from the following articles:


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