

# APA FAQ

In the past, we've noticed that several difficult questions about APA editorial style seem to come up; we've addressed these tricky issues below.

**Secondary Sources.** Often, in reviewing literature, you will find that one article (we'll call it Article A) cites useful information from another article (we'll call that one Article B).

Best practice is to get Article B out of the library and read it yourself, so you can cite it directly. But sometimes it may not be possible to get a copy of Article B. You can still use the information in your paper by citing Article B as a "secondary source." Such citation should be a last resort, as it means you are relying on another writer's report of what Article B said, and that report could be incorrect in some way.

To cite a secondary source, you add "as cited in" to your in-text citation; the reference list contains an entry for Article A, but not for Article B, since you haven't actually read Article B. The examples below are drawn from p. 247 (4.16.22) of the *Publication Manual* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.):

Seidenberg and McClelland's study (as cited in Coltheart, Curtis, Atkins, & Haller, 1993) found that . . .

Coltheart, M., Curtis, B., Atkins, P., & Haller, M. (1993). Models of reading aloud: Dual-route and parallel-distributed-processing approaches. *Psychological Review*, 100, 589-608.

**Electronic Citations.** Sometimes you need to put "[Electronic version]" in a reference list entry; at other times, you must put "Retrieved," with a date and URL. Which form do you use for a particular article?

"[Electronic version]"	"Retrieved January 3, 2001, from <a href="http://www">http://www</a> ..."
If you have downloaded an exact replica of a printed journal article, such as a .pdf file containing photocopies of the journal pages, use a standard periodical reference list entry, as though you had looked at a hard copy of the journal, but add "[Electronic version]" after the article title.	If you have downloaded a copy of the article that is altered in some way from how it appears in the printed journal (for instance, if it has been converted to HTML), use the normal periodical format. Then, after the article's page numbers, include "Retrieved," with the date and URL.

See p. 272-273 (4.16.71) of the *Publication Manual*.

**Personal Communications.** Personal communications (e-mail messages, for instance, or telephone conversations) are cited in the text of your paper, but do not get a reference list entry. Only retrievable information goes on the Reference List. See p. 214 of the *Publication Manual*.

**Tables of Contents.** The *Publication Manual* doesn't give any guidance on how to construct a table of contents (though it does have a table of contents, which might serve as a model). Because APA editorial style is oriented toward the production of journal articles, not course papers or dissertations, you may find other areas in which the manual doesn't have the answers you need (see p. 322-326 [6.02-6.03]). In such cases, we suggest seeking guidance from your instructor.