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Researchers can now access electronically many of the same types of authoritative, current sources previously available only in print or other fixed media (i.e., microfilm, DVD, CD-ROM). Reference works, as well as library catalogs at one’s own institution and around the world, can be found on the Internet. Many electronic research databases contain or link to full-text content of journal articles and gray literature. Communications posted to online forums and Weblogs can be archived for retrieval by other Internet users. Images and other audiovisual sources can also be found on the Internet in a range of formats and delivery methods, including streaming media and syndicated feeds. Many types of content can be delivered to a personal computer or to handheld reading or listening devices.

**Elements to Include in References to Electronic Sources**

Because not all Internet sources have title and copyright pages, the elements for a reference can be difficult to find. In general, include the same elements, in the same order, as you would for a reference to a fixed-media source, and add as much electronic retrieval information as needed for others to locate the sources you cited. Although the publisher’s geographical location and name are included in references to nonperiodicals retrieved in print or other fixed media, these elements are generally not
necessary in references to materials retrieved electronically. If the publisher identity is not clear from the author name, URL, database name, or other reference information, include it as part of the retrieval statement (see Examples 14 and 17).

For journal articles, always include the journal issue number (if available) along with the volume number, regardless of whether the journal is paginated separately by issue or continuously by volume. This change in reference style from the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual* is intended to make the format for journal article references more consistent.

Consistency in reference style is important, especially in light of new technologies in database indexing, such as automatic indexing by database crawlers. These computer programs use algorithms to capture data from primary articles as well as from the article reference list. If reference elements are out of order or incomplete, the algorithm may not recognize them, lowering the likelihood that the reference will be captured for indexing. With this in mind, follow the general formats for placement of data, and use common sense to decide which data are necessary to allow readers to access the sources you used.

**Retrieval date.** The date an electronic source was retrieved is important if the content you are citing is likely to be changed or updated. When no fixed publication date, edition, or version number can be cited, the retrieval date offers a snapshot of the content at the time of your research. For undated or otherwise changeable content retrieved from the open Web, as well as in-preparation, in-press, or preprint journal articles, include the retrieval date. No retrieval date is necessary for content that is not likely to be changed or updated, such as a journal article or book. See the Example References section for more guidance on when the retrieval date is and is not needed.

**Name and location of a source.** Direct readers as closely as possible to the source you used. Along with this general principle, consider these guidelines for citing sources:

1. All content on the Internet is prone to being moved, restructured, or deleted, resulting in broken hyperlinks and nonworking URLs in the reference list. In an attempt to resolve this problem, many scholarly
publishers have begun assigning a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to journal articles and other documents. A DOI is a unique alphanumeric string assigned by a registration agency to identify content and provide a persistent link to its location on the Internet.

When a DOI is available, include the DOI instead of the URL in the reference. Publishers who follow best practices will publish the DOI prominently on the first page of an article. Because the DOI string can be long, it is safest to copy and paste whenever possible. Provide the alphanumeric string for the DOI exactly as published in the article. When your article is published and made available electronically, the DOI will be activated as a link to the content you are referencing.

The DOI may be hidden under a button labeled “Article,” “Cross-Ref,” “PubMed,” or another full-text vendor name. Readers who wish to look up the source can then link to either the actual article, if they have authorized access, or an abstract and an opportunity to purchase a copy of the item (see the example below). If the link is not live or if the DOI is referenced in a print publication, the reader can simply enter the DOI into the “DOI resolver” search field provided by the registration agency CrossRef.org and be directed to the article or a link to purchase it (see Figure 1).

**Example of reference in electronic document with DOI hidden behind a button**


2. With the exception of hard-to-find books and other documents of limited circulation delivered by electronic databases, the database name is no longer a necessary element of the reference. This change is made in the interest of simplifying reference format. If you do include the database name in a reference, do not include the database URL.
3. Test URLs in your reference list at each stage prior to the submission and/or publication of your work. If the document you are citing has moved, update the URL so that it points to the correct location. If the document is no longer available, you may want to substitute another source (e.g., if you originally cited a draft and a formally published version now exists) or drop it from the paper altogether.

4. Give the home or menu page URL for works whose full text is accessible by subscription only.

5. Give the home or menu page URL for reference works, such as online dictionaries or encyclopedias.

6. Give the home or menu page URL for online material presented in frames. Frames are used in programming code to allow a Web page to be divided into two or more independent parts, with the result that several disparate items may share the same URL. Test your URLs in a fresh browser session or tab to be sure they lead directly to the desired content. If they do not, reference the home or menu page instead.

Figure 1. Digital Object Identifier resolver provided by CrossRef.org, a registration agency for scholarly and professional publications.
Understanding a URL

Critical evaluation of sources from the Internet can be a challenge; there are fewer gatekeepers in electronic publishing than in print publishing, and author and copyright information can be absent or hard to locate. Understanding the components of a URL can be helpful in this evaluation process.

The components of a URL are as follows:

```
Protocol Host name Path to document
http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct00/workplace.html
File name of specific document
```

The protocol indicates what method a Web browser (or other type of Internet software) should use to exchange data with the file server on which the desired document resides. The protocols recognized by most browsers are hypertext transfer protocol (http), hypertext transfer protocol secure (https), and file transfer protocol (ftp). In a URL, protocol is followed by a colon and two forward slashes (e.g., http://).

The domain name identifies the server on which the files reside. On the Web, it is often the address for an organization’s home page (e.g., http://www.apa.org is the address for the home page of the American Psychological Association [APA]). Although many domain names start with “www,” not all do (e.g., http://journals.apa.org is the home page for APA’s electronic journals, and http://members.apa.org is the entry page to the members-only portion of the APA site). The domain name is not case sensitive; for consistency and ease of reading, always type it in lowercase letters.

The domain name extension (in the preceding example, “.org”) can help you determine the appropriateness of the source for your purpose. Different extensions are used depending on what entity hosts the site. For example, the extensions “.edu” and “.org” are for educational institutions and nonprofit organizations; “.gov” and “.mil” are used for government and military sites, respectively; and “.com” and “.biz” are used for com-
mercial sites. Domain name extensions may also include a country code (e.g., “.ca” for Canada or “.nz” for New Zealand).

The rest of the address indicates the directory path leading to the desired document. This part of the URL is case sensitive; transcribe the URL correctly by copying it directly from the address window in your browser and pasting it into your working document (make sure the automatic hyphenation feature of your word processor is turned off). Do not insert a hyphen if you need to break a URL across lines; instead, break the URL before most punctuation (an exception would be http://). Do not add a period after the URL, to prevent the impression that the period is part of the URL.

Using the Archival Copy or Version of Record

As with references to material in print or other fixed media, it is preferable to cite the final version (i.e., archival copy or version of record). In-progress and final versions of the same work might coexist on the Internet, which can present challenges in determining which version is most current and most authoritative. Most journals now consider the paper version to be the archival copy; however, this is likely to change in the future. Some scholarly journals do not offer print; all their content is online. More and more publishers of print journals are adding value to their electronic content by publishing auxiliary electronic-only items such as peer commentary with author response, data analyses, and enhanced or extra graphics. For these items, the electronic version may be considered the version of record.
Journal Articles

1. Article with DOI assigned


- The final or archival version of the article is being referenced, so there is no need to include retrieval date.
- The article was retrieved from the PsycARTICLES database. However, no database name or URL is needed because the DOI functions as both a unique identifier of the content (taking the place of a database name or accession number) and a link to the content (taking the place of a URL).

2. Article with no DOI assigned


- If there is no DOI assigned, give the exact URL (if the content is open-access) or the URL of the journal home page (if the content is accessible by subscription).

- No retrieval date is included because the final version of the article is being referenced.

3. *Preprint version of article*


- Preprints are articles published online before they appear in print. The article has been peer reviewed and revised and has been assigned to a specific journal volume and issue. Final copyediting and pagination may or may not have been completed.

- The retrieval date is included because the version used at the time of the research was not the archival version.

- Readers who look up the article by DOI will be directed to the most recent version.

4. *In-press article, retrieved from institutional or personal Web site*

Some journal publishers allow authors to post a prepublication version of their article on their personal or institutional Web site. The definition of “prepublication” may vary. Check to be sure the article has been accepted for publication before referencing it as “in press.”

If the article is a draft version, or has been submitted for publication but not reviewed, do not list a journal title. Italicize the title of the article and add “Manuscript in preparation,” “Unpublished manuscript,” or “Manuscript submitted for publication” before the retrieval information (see Example 5).

Check and update your references as your paper’s submission or publication date approaches. For example, if you first referred to the preceding article in August 2004, before it appeared in Cognitive Science, and then submitted your paper to a journal editor in August 2008, you would need to update the reference to the following:


Manuscript in preparation, retrieved from institutional or personal Web site


Electronic Books

Electronic books are available in a variety of formats and delivery methods. They may be viewed page-by-page on a public Web site, downloaded
in part or in whole from a database (e.g., netLibrary, PsycBOOKS, Gutenberg Project), or purchased as audio files. Text or audio files can be delivered to computers and to personal audio devices or text readers.

If the content you are referencing is available only in electronic format, or is hard to find in print, include the source location.

6. **Entire book**


- Use “Available from” instead of “Retrieved from” when the URL leads to information on how to obtain the cited material rather than to the material itself.

7. **Book chapter**


- The database name is included in the reference to aid readers in finding an electronic version of the book because it may be difficult to find in print.

**Dissertations and Theses**

8. **Thesis retrieved from database**

The database name is included in the reference, followed by the accession number, if one is assigned.

9. **Dissertation retrieved from institutional or personal Web site**


10. **Dissertation defense**


- The format of the presentation is given in square brackets after the title for clarification.
- “Dissertation defense” is used rather than “Unpublished dissertation” because the presentation, rather than the dissertation itself, is being referenced.
- The catalog Web page is given rather than the full URL. In this case the full URL includes a long string of characters that would be burdensome to reproduce and that if transcribed incorrectly would affect the credibility of your paper.
Abstracts

11. **Abstract as original source**


- If a publication number is assigned, include it in parentheses after the title of the report.

12. **Abstract submitted for meeting, symposium, or poster session**


13. **Abstract from secondary source**


- Although it is preferable to cite the full text of an article, abstracts can be used as sources and included in the reference list.
The database is the source from which the abstract was retrieved. If you are citing the primary article as the source of the abstract, follow Examples 1 through 5 as applicable. In the last line, use “Abstract retrieved from” instead of “Retrieved from.”

Bibliographies

14. **Bibliography from Web site**


The content is static, so no retrieval date is included.

15. **Bibliography from courseware**


Insert a description of the source type in square brackets after the title, if needed for clarification.

16. **Bibliography as book chapter**

Curriculum and Course Material

17. **Curriculum guide**


18. **Lecture notes**


Book Reviews and Journal Article Commentaries

19. **Book review**


20. **Journal article peer commentary, no title**

21. **Peer commentary, titled**


- If the title of the book or article being reviewed is clear from the title of the review, no explanatory material in brackets is needed.

**Reference Materials**

22. **Online encyclopedia**


- If an entry has no byline, place the title in the author position.
- The date of the most recent change or update may not be clear from the entry, so include the retrieval date.
- Give the home or index page URL for reference works.

23. **Online dictionary**


24. **Online handbook**

25. Wiki


Wiki (including Wikipedia) are collaborative Web pages that anyone can write, review, and edit. They are “refereed” in the sense that anyone who reads the information and wishes to change it can do so. There is no guarantee that professionals or subject experts have contributed to the information found in a wiki.

Raw Data

26. Data set


Use “Available from” to indicate that the URL will lead users to a download site rather than directly to the data.

27. Graphic representation of data

28. **Qualitative data**


Interviews that are not retrievable (i.e., not captured in transcript or audio) should be cited in text as a personal communication (including month, day, year) and not included in the reference list.

**Computer Programs, Software, and Programming Languages**

Reference entries are not necessary for standard off-the-shelf software and programming languages, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Java, Adobe Photoshop, SAS, and SPSS. Do provide reference entries for specialized software or computer programs with limited distribution. In text, give the proper name of the software, along with the version number and year.

29. **Software downloaded from Web site**


If an individual has proprietary rights to the software, name him or her as the author; otherwise, treat such references as unauthored works.

Do not italicize names of software, programs, or languages.

In brackets immediately after the title and version number, identify the source type: for example, [computer program], [computer language], or [software]. Do not use a period between the title and the bracketed material.

To reference a manual, give the same information. However, in the brackets after the title, identify the source as a computer program or software manual.

If no version number is available, include the retrieval date.

Gray Literature

Gray literature is scientific information that falls outside the peer review process but is written by scholars or summarizes a body of scholarly work. Government departments, corporations and trade groups, independent research institutes (i.e., “think tanks”), advocacy groups, and other for-profit and nonprofit organizations produce gray literature. Target audiences for gray literature are broad and include policymakers and the general public. The examples that follow reflect the range of literature types and methods of retrieval currently available; it is not an exhaustive list.

30. Annual report


Refer to the latest edition of The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation for reference style of annual reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.
31. **Fact sheet**


- A description of the work is included in square brackets to aid in document identification and retrieval.

32. **Consumer brochure**


33. **Public service announcement**


34. **Conference hearing**

35. **Presentation slides**


36. **Technical or research report**


If a report number is given, insert it in parentheses after the title, as shown.

37. **Press release**


38. **Policy brief**

39. *Educational standards*


40. *White paper*


- A white paper is a short document that presents an organization’s philosophy, position, or policy on a particular issue.

41. *Newsletter article*


- Use the complete publication date given on the article.
- Some online newsletters are unpaginated, so no page numbers can be given in the reference.
- In an Internet periodical, volume and issue numbers often are not relevant. If they are not used, the name of the periodical is all that can be provided in the reference.
General Interest Media and Alternative Presses

42. **Newspaper article**


43. **Television feature, podcast**


44. **Audio podcast**


- Include as much information as possible, either date, title, or identifier.

45. **Online magazine content not found in print version**

Undated Content on Web Site

46. Article on Web site, no date


- The menu page URL is given because the article is presented within a frame and shares the same URL with other documents.

Online Communities

The Internet offers several options for people around the world to sponsor and join discussions devoted to particular subjects. These options include Weblogs (“blogs”), newsgroups, online forums and discussion groups, and electronic mailing lists. (The last are often referred to as “listservs.” However, LISTSERV is a trademarked name for a particular software program; “electronic mailing list” is the appropriate generic term.) Care should be taken when citing electronic discussion sources.

47. Message posted to a newsgroup, online forum, or discussion group


- If the author’s full name is available, list the last name first followed by initials. If only a screen name is available, use the screen name.
- Provide the exact date of the posting.
Follow the date with the subject line of the message (also referred to as the “thread”); do not italicize it. Provide any identifier for the message in brackets after the title.

Provide the address for the archived version of the message.

48. **Message posted to an electronic mailing list**


Include the information “Message posted to” followed by the name of the list to which the message was posted.

Provide the address for the archived version of the message.

49. **Weblog post**


50. **Video Weblog post**