

Form over Function? The Unintended Consequences of Discipline-specific Citation Styles

“A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.” Max Weinreich

“The correct form of a citation is whatever the person marking the paper says it is.” Melissa Svendsen

“Citation style remains the most arbitrary, formulaic, and prescriptive element of academic writing... Now a sacred academic shibboleth, citation persists despite the incredibly high cost-benefit ratio of trying to teach students something they (and we should also) recognize as relatively useless to them as developing writers.” Kurt Schick

Most professors spend their working lives using one style, but a student taking five courses has to juggle up to five styles at once...

	APA	MLA	CSE	ASA	Chicago
Online Journal Article	Simons, M., Bernaards, C., & Slinger, J. (2012). Active gaming in Dutch adolescents: A descriptive study. <i>The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity</i>, 9(1), 118-128. doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-9-118	Simons, Monique, Claire Bernaards, and Jantine Slinger. “Active Gaming in Dutch Adolescents: A Descriptive Study.” <i>International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity</i> 9.1 (2012): 118-128. <i>Academic Search Complete</i>. Web. 12 January 2016.	Simons M, Bernaards C, Slinger J. 2012. Active gaming in Dutch adolescents: a descriptive study. <i>Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act</i> [Internet]. [cited 2016 Jan 12]; 9(1), 118 -128. Available from: http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/9/1/118 doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-9-118	Simons, Monique, Claire Bernaards, and Jantine Slinger. 2012. “Active Gaming in Dutch Adolescents: A Descriptive Study.” <i>The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity</i> 9(1): 118 - 128.	Simons, Monique, Claire Bernaards, and Jantine Slinger. “Active gaming in Dutch adolescents: a descriptive study.” <i>International Journal Of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity</i> 9, no. 1 (2012): 118 -128. doi: 10.1186/1479-5868-9-118.
Authors' names	First and middle names given only as initials.	First and middle names spelled out in full.	First and middle names given only as initials.	Names given as they appear on the source.	Names given as they appear on the source.
	Initials followed by periods.	n/a	Initials not followed by periods.	Initials followed by periods.	Initials followed by periods.
	Multiple names conjoined by commas and “&.”	Multiple names conjoined by commas and “and.”	Multiple names conjoined only by commas.	Multiple names conjoined by commas and “and.”	Multiple names conjoined by commas and “and.”
	All names given in inverted order.	Only initial name given in inverted order.	All names given in inverted order.	Only the initial name given in inverted order.	Only initial name given in inverted order.
Date	Goes between the authors' names and the title.	Goes between the authors' names and the title.	Goes between the authors' names and the title.	Goes between the authors' names and the title.	Goes between the issue number and the page numbers.
	Enclosed in parentheses.	Enclosed in parentheses.	Not enclosed in parentheses.	Not enclosed in parentheses.	Enclosed in parentheses.
	Followed by a period.	Followed by a colon.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a colon.
Title of Article	In sentence case.	In title case.	In sentence case.	In title case.	In sentence case.
	Not enclosed in quotation marks.	Enclosed in quotation marks.	Not enclosed in quotation marks.	Enclosed in quotation marks.	Enclosed in quotation marks.
	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.
Name of Journal	Spelled out in full.	Spelled out in full.	Given in an abbreviated form.	Spelled out in full.	Spelled out in full.
	Italicized.	Italicized	Not italicized.	Italicized	Italicized.
	Followed by a comma.	Not followed by a comma.	Not followed by a comma.	Not followed by a comma.	Not followed by a comma.
Volume number	Italicized.	Not italicized.	Not italicized.	Not italicized.	Not italicized.
Issue number	Included only if the journal is paginated by issue.	Included.	Optional.	Included.	Optional.
	Enclosed in parentheses.	Separated from volume number by a period.	Enclosed in parentheses.	Enclosed in parentheses and followed by a colon.	Separated from the volume number by “no.”
Page numbers	Go after the volume and issue numbers.	Go after the volume and issue numbers.	Go after the volume and issue numbers.	After the volume and issue numbers.	Separated from the issue number by the date.
	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Followed by a period.
Digital Object Identifier (DOI)	Included.	Not included.	Included.	Included only if the article is not available in print form.	Included.
	Not followed by a period.	n/a	Not followed by a period.	Followed by period.	Followed by period.
Uniform Resource Locator (URL)	Included only if there is no DOI.	Not required for stable sources.	Included.	Included only if there is no DOI.	Included only if there is no DOI.
	Is the URL of the homepage of the journal.	Is the actual URL of the source.	Is the stable URL of the article.	Is the stable URL of the article.	Is the stable URL of the article.
	Preceded by “Retrieved from.”	Enclosed in angled brackets.	Preceded by “Available from” and a colon.	Preceded by “Retrieved from.”	Preceded by “Available from” and a colon.
	Not followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Not followed by a period,	Enclosed in parentheses and followed by a period.	Followed by a period.
Database	Included only if the item is unique to that database.	Included.	Not included.	Not included.	Not included.
Date of access	Included only if the resource is likely to change.	Included.	Included.	Included only if the resource is likely to change.	Allowed but not required.
	Given in the form: Month DD, YYYY.	Given in the form: DD Month YYYY.	Given in the form: YYYY Mon DD.	Given in the form: Month DD, YYYY.	Given in the form: Month DD, YYYY.
	Not followed by a period.	Followed by a period.	Enclosed in brackets and followed by a semicolon.	Not followed by a period.	Followed by a period.