



Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

FINDING INFORMATION FOR CITATIONS

As you may have noticed, a large amount of information is contained within a typical reference entry. While some of this information might be obvious, other information is harder to find or perhaps not even visible in the source. This document covers how to find the information needed for citations in a variety of media.

COMPOSING A REFERENCE

The three main goals of referencing are to give the original author due credit, to support your claim by showing others have come to the same conclusion, and to give the readers the ability to read the source themselves to confirm that your assertions are valid. The third goal necessitates a complete reference, giving the readers all the information needed to find and critique the source.

A common mistake is to include only some of the required citation information. References should be constructed according to the guidelines set in the citation style. Consider the following reference:

[1] Academic Writing, 2nd ed. [Book].

While the reference does indicate that the information came from a book called Academic Writing, this alone would be insufficient to find the book referenced. A Google search will turn up no fewer than a dozen books with this title, several of which have a second edition. A complete citation would look like this:

[1] S. Bailey, *Academic writing: a handbook for international students*, 2nd ed., Reprinted. London: Routledge, 2009.

With the complete reference, we now know the author, full title, year of publication, and the publisher, among other information. In any document, reference entries must be complete and uniformly formatted.

DETERMINING THE MEDIUM

The first step for creating a full reference entry is to decide what type of source it is. Each medium has a unique set of required information for its respective reference. The required information varies by citation style as well. The following table lists the reference information needed for sources in [IEEE](#) and [APA](#):

Medium	IEEE	APA
Book	author; title; edition; location; publisher; year	author; year; title; publisher
Journal Article (Periodical)	author; title; journal abbrev.; volume/issue; pages; date; DOI	author; year; title; journal; volume/issue; pages; DOI
Website	author; page title; website; URL; access date	author; date; page title; website; (retrieved date); URL
Online Lecture	presenter; date; title; medium; URL	presenter; date; title or description; name of hosting site; URL to login page
Unpublished (Private Communication or Unpublished Document)	source; private communication; date OR use the medium above, replacing URL with "unpublished." NOTE: unrecoverable sources are only for your references in your university reports. Actual guidelines say not to include them in reference lists.	

FINDING THE INFORMATION IN THE SOURCE

In most cases, the required information for a reference is located within the source itself.

TITLE

This should be the most obvious piece of information. It is the likely how you found the source to begin with. For books, it will be both on the front cover and the spine, and for journal articles, it will be at the top of the page in the largest font on that page. Websites can be more difficult because not all websites have clearly defined titles. What to do when information is missing is located in the third section of this document.

AUTHOR(S)

These are not always as obvious. For books, the name is likely in the listing and on the cover. For journal articles, it should be before the actual writing begins, either before or after the abstract. Websites sometimes have no listed author. When they do, it is likely immediately before the document begins or immediately after the document ends. Be sure to distinguish given names from family names, as this is important for references.


DATE/ACCESSED DATE

In some cases, the date is simply the year of publication. However, some media may also require a month, or even a day. For online sources, it might be necessary to indicate the date of access (IEEE)/retrieval(APA). This is simply the day when you read and used the source. For IEEE, this should be included for every website. However, the date of publication is not a required element in IEEE for webpages. The APA format is the opposite, requiring a date of publication but only needing a retrieval date if the contents are likely to change.

Article

The Use of Passives and Impersonal Style in Civil Engineering Writing

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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1050651917729864
journals.sagepub.com/home/jbt



PERIODICAL TITLE/CONFERENCE NAME

For journal articles or conference proceedings, the name of the journal or conference follows the title of the article. Note that in IEEE, the journal title must be abbreviated. A common location for this information is in the header at the top of the page or in a footer at the bottom of the first page. Alternatively, it might be in a full bibliographic listing at the beginning of the document.

VOLUME/NUMBER

These are specific to journal articles. This information might accompany the journal title in a header or footer, or it might be displayed on the first page amongst other information. The volume is listed first, followed by the number/issue, usually in parentheses.

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preparation for workplace writing is a widely acknowledged need in engineering education (e.g., Berthouex, 1996; Donnell, Aller, Alley, & Kendrowicz, 2011; Reave, 2004; Sageev & Romanowski, 2001). The study uses a

PAGE NUMBER

Page ranges are required when the source is a journal article or a chapter of a book (when only a single, discrete chapter is used). These can be found in headers or footers. If they are not present, they might exist in the bibliographic listing at the beginning of a document. Be careful not to confuse a listing of pages in a PDF

with the actual pages. When a PDF is downloaded, it sometimes retains the intended page numbering, but often the first page in the document becomes page 1, even if it was originally page 38. You are meant to use the original numbering, not the numbering from the PDF file.

LOCATION/PUBLISHER/EDITION

This information is typically only for books, though some exceptions do exist. While the edition may be found on the front cover, the rest of the information is most likely found on the title page inside the cover. The specificity of the place of publication varies by both style and location. For IEEE, city and country is used. If the country is the USA, then the state abbreviation is added between them. For Canadian cities, no provincial abbreviation is given. No place of publication is required in APA style, 7th Edition, but the previous version did require place of publication. Both IEEE and APA necessitate the inclusion of the publisher.

DOI/URL

A digital object identifier (DOI) is a persistent link to a digital object, which in many cases is a document. These are usually listed on the first page of a journal article, though the location will vary from document to document. Other online sources have DOIs as well. If a source was used in hard copy (i.e., paper), do not include a DOI.

A uniform resource locator (URL) is similarly a link to web address. This web address may contain a file, such as an HTML file, which would display as a webpage. URLs are needed in reference entries for online documents when DOIs are not available.

DEALING WITH MISSING INFORMATION

In some cases, the information needed to complete a reference entry is not located in the document itself. This type of information can be found in several ways. Sometimes, however, the information cannot be found. In such cases, special notes might be required in the reference entry.

USING CITATION MANAGEMENT TOOLS OR WEBSITES

One way to find missing information is to enter the source in bibliographic management software. Using a tool like [Zotero](#) will allow you to enter a DOI or ISBN to automatically fill in the information. You can add or edit information as needed. Alternatively, websites like [Citation Machine](#) will do the same, but the search can be done using additional strings, including title, URL, or keyword.

INDICATING THE INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE

Regardless of how much time you spend searching, some information may not be available. APA and IEEE have similar methods of dealing with missing information. When no date is available, the date is replaced with n.d. If there is no author listed, then list the organization as the author. If there does not seem to be an organization attached to the document, then move straight to the title. If there is no title, then use square brackets and briefly describe the source.

Remember that the more information you cannot find about a source, the less reliable that source might be. After all, how reliable is information that you heard from someone you do not know at some point in the past thirty years? Without proper source information, it is unwise to trust the source completely. Aim to use sources with identified authors and publication dates.