Citing References in Scientific Research Papers


Introduction
It is important to properly and appropriately cite references in scientific research papers in order to acknowledge your sources and give credit where credit is due. Science moves forward only by building upon the work of others. There are, however, other reasons for citing references in scientific research papers. Citations to appropriate sources show that you've done your homework and are aware of the background and context into which your work fits, and they help lend validity to your arguments. Reference citations also provide avenues for interested readers to follow up on aspects of your work -- they help weave the web of science.

When to Cite References in Scientific Research Papers
You should acknowledge a source any time (and every time) you use a fact or an idea that you obtained from that source. Thus, clearly, you need to cite sources for all direct quotations. But you also need to cite sources from which you paraphrase or summarize facts or ideas -- whether you've put the fact or idea into your own words or not, you got the fact or idea from somebody else and you need to give them proper acknowledgement (even if an idea might be considered "common knowledge," but you didn't know it until you found it in a particular source).

Details of Citing References in your Text
When you cite a reference in your text you should use one of the following three formats:

(1) Mention the author by last name in the sentence and then give the year of the publication in parenthesis:

According to Rodgers (1983), the Appalachian mountains were formed in three events.

(2) Give the facts or ideas mentioned by the author and then attribute these facts or ideas by putting both his or her last name and the date in parenthesis:

The first of the three events occurred in the Ordovician, the second in the Devonian, and the third in the Carboniferous and Permian Periods (Rodgers, 1983).

(3) Quote the author exactly--be sure to put the quoted phrase between quotation marks--and then list the author's name, the date, and the page number in parenthesis:

"All the climaxes produced mountainous islands or highlands that shed vast amounts of debris westward to form clastic wedges or delta complexes on the continental margin." (Rodgers, 1983, p. 229).

You only need to include the page number in the citation if you are quoting directly, or if the source is very long and the specific fact or idea you are citing can only be found on a specific
Direct quotations that are more than 4 lines long should be set off from the rest of your paper by use of narrower margins and single spaced lines.

If you have more than one source by the same author published in the same year, distinguish them both in the in-text citation and in the reference list, by appending the letters a, b, c... to the year, in the order in which the different references appear in your paper. (For example: Allen 1996a, 1996b.)

If the reference you are citing has two authors, use the following format:

Periods of glaciation have a large effect on sea level (Ingmanson and Wallace, 1985).

If the reference you are citing has more than two authors, use the following format:

Hot spots are formed by the drift of plates over mantle plumes (Vink et al., 1985).

**Details of Formatting References**
Your list of References should include all of the references you cited in your paper, and no more! It should be arranged in alphabetical order by the last name of the first author. If you have more than one entry by the same author, they should be further ordered by increasing publication date (more recent papers last). If you have multiple sources from a single author published in the same year, distinguish them both in the in-text citation and in the reference list, by appending the letters a, b, c... to the year, in the order in which the different references appear in your paper. (For example: Allen 1996a, 1996b.)

A good resource for how to format references in APA style can be found at the Purdue OWL website.