The Vancouver Style

Referencing with Confidence

As used in:
Biochemistry (as well as Harvard)
Biology (as well as Harvard)
Hull York Medical School (as well as Harvard)

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Using this Guide
This guide is intended to help you understand how to use source material effectively in this referencing style. It outlines the general features of the style, but it is important that you follow your department’s specific guidelines as there are some different interpretations and requirements that might be specifically required within your discipline. The guide has been compiled using ‘Citing medicine: the NLM style guide for authors, editors, and publishers, 2nd ed.’ Available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK7276/.

You will find more extensive examples of this style on the University website at www.york.ac.uk/integrity.

Why Reference?
Citing and referencing source material is a crucial aspect of academic writing. You will probably be aware that plagiarism (using someone else’s work as though it were your own) is a serious form of academic misconduct and it must be avoided at all costs. Referencing accurately and consistently is an important part of ensuring the distinction is clear between your words and the words and ideas of others in your assignments.

In-text citation is included in the body of your text and is there to directly show the reader where an idea, piece of information, and/or a quotation are from. The reader will then be able to match the source cited in the text to the full reference given in your works cited/bibliography where full details of the publication are presented.

Citing of source materials within your assignment is useful and beneficial to supporting your argument. However, be selective. Do not just use as many references as you can in a bid to impress the marker that you’ve read a massive amount. Your references should be relevant and integral to your argument, that is, you discuss or critique them in your writing.

For example, if you:

- Include data from your reading (eg tables, statistics, diagrams)
- Describe or discuss a theory, model or practice from a particular writer
- Want to add credibility to your argument by bringing in the ideas of another writer – for or against
- Provide quotations or definitions in your essay;
- Paraphrase or summarise information which is not common knowledge
Frequently asked questions

What is the Vancouver Style?
The Vancouver style originated in Vancouver, Canada, where members of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) agreed a system for presenting publications and citations. The US National Library of Medicine (NLM) produce the citation manual the ICMJE direct authors to, but the general rules of ‘Vancouver style’ have been adapted by individual institutions and publishers to meet their needs. Vancouver is a numeric system for citing sources in the text by giving a superscript number (¹) to each source referred to. The full details of the source are provided in a reference list at the end, ordered numerically according to first appearance in the text.

How do I use in-text citation?
Put your citation number directly after the source material referenced, not at the end of the sentence (unless this is where the reference is mentioned). The number should be placed within the punctuation. For example:

A recent study¹ has demonstrated the effectiveness of...

The results presented here have also been confirmed elsewhere⁴.

When must I use page numbers in my in-text citations?
It is important to give a page number with a reference in the following circumstances:

- when quoting directly
- when referring to a specific detail in a text (for example, a specific theory or idea, an illustration, a table, a set of statistics).

This might mean giving an individual page number or a small range of pages from which you have taken the information. Giving page numbers enables the reader to locate the specific item to which you refer. You should note the page in ( ) after the superscript number for the citation, for example:

Over 99% of the almost two million deaths each year from indoor air pollution are in developing countries³ (p.380).

How do I effectively cite quotations?
For short quotations (of less than 40 words), use a brief phrase to introduce the quotation and then use double quotation marks to enclose the direct text. For example:

In-text:
As Neville emphasises, "you should cite all sources and present full details of these in your list of references"¹ (p.37).

Reference:

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For longer quotations (of 40 words or more) you should give the quote as a new paragraph, without quotation marks, and clearly indent the quote to indicate these words are not your own. For example:

Neville comments that:

It can sometimes be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid using some of the author’s original words, particularly those that describe or label phenomena. However, you need to avoid copying out what the author said, word for word. Choose words that you feel give a true impression of the author’s original ideas or action1 (p.37).

The in-text citation is given at the end of the quotation and before the punctuation, with a full reference in the reference list being given as in the example above.

➢ Where else should I give an in-text citation?
For a summary or paraphrase, you must include an in-text citation. For example:

According to Neville1, sometimes it is unavoidable you will use a few words that the author used. The full reference is then given in the reference list as previously.

➢ What is the Vancouver convention for using capital letters?
For an article or book title, capitalise the first word and any proper nouns. Capitalise each major word of journal titles. For example:


➢ Should I use secondary references?
A secondary reference is given when you are referring to a source which you have not read yourself, but have read about in another source, for example referring to Jones’ work that you have read about in Smith. Wherever possible, you should avoid using secondary references and locate and reference the original source. If you do need to use a secondary reference, you can clearly show what source you are citing and from which location, using the following format:

In-text:

According to WHO, cited in Edwards and Langpap5, a lack of information influences the health impacts of poor fuel use choices.

Reference:


NB: Only the source you have read is cited and included in your reference list.
How do I cite source that has more than one author?
In your reference, you should name up to the first 6 authors of a paper and then add ‘et al.’ to indicate there are more than 6 authors. Alternatively, you can list all named authors of the source, giving each author’s surname/family name and initials, with each author separated by a comma, and a full stop at the end of the list. For example:


What if I want to use a number of sources in one in-text citation?
If, for example, you are pulling together a number of sources to support your argument you may want to use a number of sources in one citation. Simply separate out the numbers by a comma, for example 1, 3, 6. For a range of sources that appear consecutively in your reference list, simply use a hyphen, for example 5–7.

What happens if I cite the same source twice?
If you refer to the same source twice, repeat the earlier reference number from when the source was initially cited.

What if I cannot locate the name of an author of a source?
It is important to use quality sources to support your arguments and so you should carefully consider the value of using any source when you cannot identify its author. For online sources, look carefully for named contributors, such as in the ‘about us’ sections. For printed material, look carefully at the publication/copyright information which is often on the inside cover of a book or back page of a report. If you cannot locate the information, you could use the name of the organisation, for example ‘NHS’, for the author.

What if I cannot locate the date of a source?
Knowing when a source was created, published, or last updated is important, as this helps you to determine the currency of the source. How current a source is relates, for example, to being contemporary to an event or containing the latest research findings. For online sources, look carefully for created and/or last updated dates on the page(s) you are using, such as in the ‘about us’ sections. If you cannot identify an exact date, but clues in the content give an estimated date you can indicate this estimate, as in the example below. If no date can be established, you should indicate this, as in the example below.

Where an estimated date is possible from clues in the content:

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**NB:** the fact the date is estimated is distinguishable by the addition of [ ] and a ?

- Where no date can be found or estimated for the source:


- What abbreviations can I use?

  It is common in science publications to use standard abbreviations for common words in book and journal titles, to give more concise references (for example Adv Synth Catal for Advanced Synthesis & Catalysis). CASSI lists standard abbreviations for publication titles and for other key words, which can be found at: <https://www.cas.org/content/references/corejournals>. The appendices of ‘Citing Medicine’ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK7247> also contain lists of common abbreviations used in academia. If you use non-standard abbreviations, you should define what these are, at first use. Common abbreviations are also given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ch. or chap.</td>
<td>chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed.</td>
<td>edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed. or Eds.</td>
<td>editor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et al.</td>
<td>and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>no date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.</td>
<td>page (single)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp.</td>
<td>pages (page range)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ser.</td>
<td>series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supp.</td>
<td>Supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tab.</td>
<td>table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vol.</td>
<td>volume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further information

See more extensive examples for this style online: University of York referencing guides and A to Z of examples www.york.ac.uk/integrity


‘Referencing the Discussion’ Academic Skills Tutorial available through Yorkshare http://vle.york.ac.uk

Chemical Abstracts Service Source Index (CASSI). CAplus Core Journal Coverage List [Internet]; 2012. Available from: www.cas.org/content/references/corejournals

Vancouver reference list examples

Your reference list should be arranged to match the order in which sources appear in your report.

- **Book (one author)**

- **Book (two or more authors)**

- **Chapter in an edited book**

- **Conference paper (published)**

- **Journal article**

  NB: or write the journal title in abbreviated form: ‘Br J Nutr’.

- **Website with author**

  NB: the posted or last updated date should be given for the page, as well as when it was cited.

- **Website with no author**

  NB: the posted or last updated date should be given for the page, as well as when it was cited.