

# The basics of academic referencing

## A PEG guide for students

*(In a nutshell, referencing means acknowledging every source used in your academic writing.)*

### A single source, but can you see what's different in referencing style?

Examples of in-text citations for the same source:			
Ranger (2021: 46)	Ranger (2021, p. 46)	Ranger [5]	Ranger <sup>5</sup>
Examples of reference list styles for the same source:			
Ranger, A.C. 2021. <i>The best way to understand referencing</i> . Pretoria: PEG Press.			
Ranger, A.C. (2021). <i>The best way to understand referencing</i> . Pretoria: PEG Press.			
[5] Ranger AC. The best way to understand referencing. Pretoria: PEG Press; 2021.			
5 A.C. Ranger The best way to understand referencing (2021).			

**Note:** This table represents only some of the obvious differences in style. The style guide from your institution must be your first go-to for correct referencing. See more on this below.

### How do I reference correctly?

1. **Make sure you have a style guide**
  - a. **Students:** If you're a student, ask your supervisor, your department head or the departmental secretary for the style guide. If they don't have one, try contacting the university's Research Development and Support office, the library or, if available, the online Libguides created by each faculty. *It is your responsibility as the student to find and apply the correct style.*
  - b. **Editors:** If you're an editor, ask your client (the student) to provide the university's style guide. *Editors check that the correct style has been applied.*
2. **In-text citations** – be sure to know the following:
  - a. **Authors:** to be listed alphabetically or in date order (ascending or descending)
  - b. **Punctuation:** after the author's surname and between multiple authors – commas, spaces, colons, semi-colons
  - c. **And:** Use of 'and' or '&'
  - d. **Multiple authors:** use of 'et al.', including font and punctuation, and whether it must be used when three or more authors are cited for the first time or only when they are cited for the second time
  - e. **Page numbers:** how to cite page numbers for direct quotations (colon, pp, etc.)
3. **Reference list:** Every reference item has an author, date, title and source. Different reference styles list these elements in different order with different punctuation between them. Make sure you understand the following:
  - a. **Single author:** surname and initials, placement of initials (before or after) and punctuation (full stops, commas)

- b. **Multiple authors:** surnames, initials (before or after surname and which authors, first only or all), punctuation between initials/surnames and punctuation before final author (and or &)
- c. **Date:** punctuation on either side (full stops, brackets, commas)
- d. **Source type:** refer to the style guide to see how each type of source must be presented. A published book is different to a journal article which is different to a book chapter or a conference paper, and so on. For each source, you need to look at the font (italics or regular), use of quotation marks, full stops, the volume and edition of a journal, publisher and place of publication, online sources, dates of access, how to punctuate all of these.

## More on referencing:

### How do I know which referencing style to use?

- **Style guide:** your institution or department should provide you with a style guide that stipulates which reference style to use and how you need to reference (see above for more detail on what to look for in the style guide to ensure the correct style is used).

**Consistency is important, and is expected:** make sure all the citations and references follow the same style. It is your responsibility as a student to reference correctly.

### Where do I reference?

Every in-text citation must have a corresponding item in the reference list. Every item in the reference list must be cited at least once in the text.

- **In text:** every source from which you take information must be noted in your document at the point of use. These are called in-text citations. An in-text citation is usually the author's surname and the year of their work. If you use a direct quotation, a page number is also required. Always check the style guide for the type of in-text citation needed because citation styles differ from institution to institution and even between departments within the same institution.
- **Reference list:** everything referenced in your document (every in-text citation) must be included in a reference list at the end. In many reference styles, the sources that are not cited should not be included in the reference list. (If necessary, you could create a 'Further Reading' list for such documents). Some reference styles allow for all sources consulted to be listed (this is usually called a bibliography) – check your style guide to make sure of the requirement.

### Why is it important to reference correctly?

- **Integrity:** when you use information from someone else's work, you must state where that information came from. This shows your integrity as an author.
- **Credibility:** when you acknowledge where the information comes from, you show the extent of your commitment to the research and your understanding of what underlies your research. This makes you a credible author.
- **Consistency:** referencing correctly makes the document clean and tidy. Consistent, accurate referencing makes the material easier to read because it reduces distractions caused by unwanted or variable punctuation or changes in the order of information, for instance.
- **Competency:** for examinable texts specifically, but for all academic work generally, correct referencing is evidence of your level of competency. It is worth your while to take the time to understand what is required of you when referencing your work.