
How To Use Referencing Shortcuts Effectively

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Very few scholars enjoy the task of adding in-text or in-note references and the complete bibliographical lists that should accompany them to their scholarly documents. In fact, many academics and scientists pass the job of documentation along to graduate students or research assistants, returning to their text only to check and, if necessary, correct the work. For those who do not have or choose not to take advantage of this luxury, shortcuts for completing the tedious task of adding references are extremely appealing, but they are only effective if they are used with care and everything they do is meticulously checked before the document is considered complete and submitted for publication.

There are quite a few software programs available today that are designed to make referencing a more automatic and thus much easier process for scholars. You may therefore want to make use of a program such as EndNote to format and enter the complete bibliographical references in your list automatically. There is no doubt that a tool of this kind can save time and help with thoroughness and consistency, but if you choose to use such a program, it is essential that you also proofread with special care any references it formats for you. Never assume that the program has 'done everything correctly' because this is all too rarely the case. Although a style very close to what is required will usually be achieved, sometimes

ways. It is therefore essential to check every word, every number and every bit of punctuation; to make sure that all required information is present; to pay close attention to font styles and sizes as well as patterns of capitalisation; and to correct, adjust, add or delete manually anything that is incorrect, inconsistent, missing or extraneous.

Automatic referencing can present other editing challenges as well. In-text citations produced in this way can sometimes prove difficult to change and therefore correct, and the block format of reference lists constructed via automatic referencing programs often prevent any proofreader whose services you may engage from making marginal comments on individual features of the references in Microsoft Word. This is caused by the fact that the selection of any individual part or element of the list, no matter how small, results in the entire list being highlighted as a block, and the accompanying comment is therefore attached to the list as a whole instead of to the individual element. This can result in a less precise means of communication between you and your proofreader, so if you are planning to have a professional proofreader check your references, which is always a good idea, you may want to avoid automatic referencing techniques.

Another way in which to reduce the time and effort required to construct a list of complete bibliographical references is to copy references from elsewhere (from online documents, for instance, or from pdf files you have downloaded) and then paste them into your paper. This practice can be incredibly helpful as well, but since referencing styles vary and scholars frequently make mistakes when entering bibliographical information, the material you paste into your writing for each source will need to be checked in two ways. For one, you should ensure that all the necessary information is present and accurate by comparing the pasted material with the source itself. Secondly, you will need to make sure that the reference conforms to the style indicated by the scholarly journal or publisher to which you hope to submit your work, so you should consult the relevant author guidelines and adjust each reference until its format, including punctuation, capitalisation and special fonts, meets publisher requirements.

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