DAapted Guidelines for Citing Figures in Visual-Based Student Assignments

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Before You Go

Not Even “Real APA”

This document provides guidelines for citing images (called figures in APA style) in visual-based assignments like posters, pamphlets, information booklets, and presentations. Instead of following strict APA requirements, these guidelines adapt APA requirements and practices to better suit highly visual student assignments. We’ve noted and provided rationales for significant adaptations. We recommend that you ask your instructor if these guidelines work for your assignment.

Copyright and Permission

Most images are copyright protected. You need permission to reproduce a copyright-protected image. In most cases, the fair dealing aspects of copyright law grant students permission to reproduce an image. In other cases, you can gain permission by complying with the policy of the copyright holder. In a few cases, you will need to seek permission from the copyright holder. In some cases, as with images in the public domain, you won’t need permission because the image has no copyright holder.

No matter how you gain permission to reproduce the image, you should include copyright and permission statements. The copyright statement details the copyright date and copyright holder: “Copyright [year] by [copyright holder].” The permission statement will depend on how permission was determined. We suggest using one of these statements:

- “Reprinted as per fair dealing policy.”
  
  Use this phrase when your image qualifies under the fair dealing policy. According to the Lethbridge College (2012) policy, you must satisfy both of these requirements:
  
  1. The dealing is for educational use. That is, used for the purposes of “research, private study, criticism, review, news reporting, education, satire, and parody” (para. 2).
  2. The dealing is fair. That is, only “a short excerpt from a copyright-protected work” (Guideline 3). A short excerpt can take a variety of forms, but for images, Guideline 4 provides these descriptions:
    - “an entire artistic work (including a painting, print, photograph, diagram, drawing, map, chart, and plan) from a copyright-protected work containing other artistic works”
    - “up to 10 per cent of a copyright-protected work (including a literary work, musical score, sound recording, and an audiovisual work)”

- “Reprinted as per [license or url].”

  Use this phrase when you comply with the policy of the copyright holder. You can often access this policy, such as a Creative Commons licence, through a link on the page hosting the image. Many policies allow reproduction with adequate attribution. In most cases, adequate attribution means giving credit to the creator(s) of the image or the...
website. Following these citation guidelines will help you satisfy the attribution requirement. You can refine searches to help you find images with permissive Creative Commons licences. Ask your friendly library staff for tips!

- “Reprinted with permission.”
  Use this phrase when you contacted the copyright holder and received permission to reproduce the image. This process usually involves emailing the copyright holder to ask permission, detailing the image you want to use, and explaining your purposes. Make sure you get approval before you use the image. Keep a copy of the document that grants you permission.

- “In the public domain.”
  Use this phrase when the image is in the public domain, which means that it has no copyright holder or protection. Because images in the public domain do not have a copyright holder, you don’t need to put any copyright information—just this note about the public domain. You can refine searches to help you find images in the public domain. Ask your friendly library staff for tips!

Strict APA requirements include copyright and permission statements with figure captions (Lee, 2016a), but we recommend putting these statements in your reference entries so that your figure captions can remain relatively short. You can see more examples in the section on Reference Entries.
So How Do I Cite These Things Already?

The Basics

In APA (2010) practice, almost all images are referred to as figures. Figures can be charts, drawings, photographs, diagrams, and other visual representations (pretty much everything except tables). APA style requires that every figure has a figure caption. When a figure is reproduced or adapted from a source, the caption should credit that source. The source also requires an entry in the references list. In short, to cite a figure from a source, you should include two major elements:

- A figure caption
- A reference entry

Figure Captions

Template:

In APA (2010) standards, the figure number includes the word ‘Figure’ and the number, both in italics (e.g., Figure 1). Figures are numbered in the order they appear.

Your source may or may not provide a description or title for your figure. If there is no description/title provided, you should create one. The description/title should be short, but it must also adequately describe the figure and its relevance in the assignment (APA, 2010). The description may include short important information such as names, historical dates, key data, etc. Use the examples below as guides.

In strict APA practice, copyright and permission statements are included with figure captions (Lee, 2016a). For example, Lee (2016a) provides a template for complete copyright and permission statements for a journal article:

From [or Adapted from/Data in column 1 are from] “Title of Article” by A. N. Author and C. O. Author, year, Title of Journal, Volume, p. xx. Copyright [year] by Name of Copyright Holder. Reprinted [or Adapted] with permission. (para. 4)

You can see that these statements can be cumbersome and intrusive in highly visual assignments. Therefore, we recommend including copyright and permission statements in reference entries instead of in figure captions. Please be aware that this recommendation is a significant change from formal APA requirements. Always recognize the expectations of your audience and check with your instructor to determine the best course of action for your assignment.
Examples:

1) **Group creator**

![Anatomy of the swallowing mechanism](image1)

*Figure 1. Anatomy of the swallowing mechanism. (Nestle Health Science, 2011).*

Many websites don’t name the individual(s) who created the website or its images. As with other sources, you can often give credit to a group creator (the company, agency, organization, etc.).

2) **No title or date provided**

![Making conceptual connections with social learning](image2)

*Figure 2. Making conceptual connections with social learning. (Enspire, n.d.)*

Use the abbreviation ‘n.d.’ for ‘no date.’

Create a description/title that highlights the relevance of the image in the assignment.
3) **No creator or title**

![Image of an elderly person cooking]

*Figure 3.* Healthy meals improve quality of life. (2016).

If you can’t find a creator, you can’t name one. In this case, instead of the creator, the description/title will take the first position in the reference entry and allow your audience to match this figure with that entry. Only include the year of publication here.

As with the example above, create a description/title that highlights the relevance of the image in the assignment.

4) **All information available** (we saved this for last because it’s rare)

![Image of an interior of a home in Pompeii]

*Figure 4.* Province of Naples, Italy: Interior of home in Pompeii. (Hawkins, 2008).

The above four examples are far from comprehensive. Use discretion and follow citation practices outlined in our Resources to make decisions about the information to include in your figure captions. For help, ask your instructor or visit the library or Learning Café.
Reference Entries

Template:

Creator, I. C. (Creator’s Role). (Year). Title of work [Medium].

Publication or retrieval information. Copyright Date by

Copyright owner. Permission statement.

According to McAdoo (2010), this information is helpful for clarifying a type of source. You might use descriptions like [Online image], [Interactive map], or [Painting].

Here we have the permission statement. Like the copyright statement, strict APA style would include the permission statement in the figure caption (Lee, 2016a), but we recommend putting this statement in the reference entry because it fits better here. This way, you won’t add too much text to the body of your assignment. As always, seek instructor approval.

This part is the copyright statement. In strict APA style, this statement would be part of the figure caption (Lee, 2016a), but we recommend putting this statement in the reference entry because it fits better here. This way, you won’t add too much text to the body of your assignment. As always, seek instructor approval.

When you obtain an image from the internet, you will use retrieval information: Retrieved date, year, from http://url. If you use an image from a book or other paper publication, you can provide publication information: City, ST/PR/Country: Publisher.

Your instructor may prefer that you include your figure number in your reference entry. That practice is not typical of APA style, but it can help your audience to match the figures with their corresponding reference entries. If your instructor prefers this approach, we recommend adding the figure number in front of the basic template:

Figure 1. Creator I. C. (Creator’s Role). (Year). Title of work [Medium]. Publication or retrieval information. Copyright date by Copyright owner. Permission statement.
Examples:

1) **Group creator (Figure 1)**


2) **No title or date provided (Figure 2)**

   Use 'n. d.' for 'no date.' This description/title matches the one created for the caption.


3) **No author or date (Figure 3)**

   This reference entry starts with the description/title because there is no creator clearly identified. The group who created the website is often the group creator (as is the case with the first two examples). However, in this case, we know that the creator of the website is not the creator of the image because the images on this website are uploaded by users.


   Images in the public domain do not have a copyright holder, so you don’t need to put any copyright information—just this note about the public domain.
4) **All information available (Figure 4)**


These four examples are far from comprehensive. Please use discretion and follow practices outlined in Resources to make decisions about your reference entries. For help, ask your instructor or visit the library or Learning Café.

**Putting it All Together**

Many assignments will require both images and text. You will need to cite every source that you use, whether your source provided information or an image. You will also need to make it clear to your audience exactly what information or image is from which source. Notice how the figure captions and in-text citations provide clear attribution in this example poster:

**Egyptian, Roman, and Grecian Interior Design**

*Figure 1.* Description. (source A, year)

Egyptian interiors had . . . information from a source (source B, year).

*Figure 2.* Province of Naples, Italy: Interior of home in Pompeii. (Hawkins, 2008).

Pompeiiian interiors had elaborate painted frescos that depicted scenes in bright colours (Ireland, 2009).

*Figure 3.* Description. (source Y, year).

According to Source Z (year), Grecian interiors had . . . information from the source.

Once you have your assignment completed with figure captions and in-text citations, you should polish your references. You’ve been collecting information on your sources in a working references list, right? Depending on the type of assignment, you may want to include the references list at the end (like on the last slide of a PowerPoint presentation), or you may want to make a separate references list available (like on the back of a poster or as a handout). If
you’ve created an online presentation or website, you may decide to create a webpage for your references. In any case, ask your instructor what would work best with your particular assignment.

Your references list should include entries for all your sources. Put the entries in alphabetic order and use hanging indents. Your list might look much like this example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source A. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source B. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Y. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Z. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some instructors prefer separate lists for sources of information (references) and sources of images (figures). In this case, we recommend putting the references in alphabetic order and the figures in the order they appear. If your instructor prefers separate lists, you can follow this example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source B. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Z. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1. Source A. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3. Source Y. (year). . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You Want More?

FAQs

Q: How do I cite clipart?

A: According to Lee (2016b), you don’t need to cite clipart if it comes from software that you own. If the clipart comes from a website, you would treat the image as any other image and follow the guidelines we’ve presented.

Q: Do I need to follow APA word-processing requirements (like double-spacing, 12-point font, Times New Roman, and all that jazz) for these assignments?

A: No. APA word-processing requirements apply to papers. With visual-based assignments, you should make word-processing decisions based on the visual concerns of the assignment. For example, since this document is more of a guide and not an academic essay, we've made most of our lines single-spaced and used block-style paragraphs instead of using indents (among other word-processing and formatting choices).

Q: Shouldn’t titles be italicized?

A: In APA practice, certain titles are italicized while others are not. Lee (2012) states that titles of sources that “stand alone” should be in italics, while titles of sources that are “part of a greater whole” (para. 2) should not be in italics. Most images from websites are just a part of the whole website. Therefore, those image titles would not be in italics. If the image stands alone as a source (as with many works of art), you would italicize the title (and see the next question).

Q: What should I do for an online image of a work of art?

A: Although you’re actually using a photograph of the work, rather than the work itself, you’d still give credit to the original artist, not the creator of the photograph. Because most works of art stand alone, you would italicize the title. Hume-Pratuch (2010) suggests using the website url for the location information in your reference entry and provides some examples.

Q: What if . . . ?

A: Consult the resources below and use your best judgement. Ask your instructor or staff in the library or Learning Café. We’re here to help!
Resources

First, check out the resources in the references list. Those resources contain the most relevant information for citing images. For further guidance related to APA practice, here are some of our favourite resources:

- The Lethbridge College *APA Student Guide* provides essential APA information for students. Check out this resource for things like in-text citations, multiple author situations, and plenty of samples of reference entries.
- The eLearning Café has videos and interactive activities on APA style.
- The folks at APA style have plenty of good resources on their websites. From their homepage, their blog, or their FAQs page, you can search for just about anything you want. Here are some of the pages we think are most helpful:
  - The generic reference entry deals with four main elements: who, when, what, and where.
  - The frankenreference happens when you have to piece together disparate parts from different reference entries—just like Frankenstein!
  - They’ve created an awesome chart to deal with just about any situation you’ll encounter with online sources.
- The OWL at Purdue has plenty of great information on academic writing and citing.
References


