



How to Decide the Format and Verb Tense of In-text Citations in Research Writing

Reasons we cite the way we do:

- 1) In order to foreground the author and the research
- 2) In order to foreground the prominence of the authors and use their well-known, field specific research as evidence to build credibility

- ***Integral Citation (Author prominent)***

1. Muehlback and Walsh (1995) examined the effects of caffeine administered during a night-shift and its effects on subsequent daytime sleep.

Explanation: In this example, the author wants the reader to pay attention to both the researchers' names and their research. There is no clear difference of the importance when comparing “the cited researchers’ names” and their “research procedures.”

2. According to Jay et al. (2006), about 25 percent of the labor force in industrialized countries is involved in some form of shift-work.

Explanation: Compared with the first example of *integral citation*, using “according to...” to start a sentence shows that the author uses this kind of integral citation to highlight a well-known author or a pioneer of this field of study. This citation is often used when the writer relies on other expert’s findings to emphasize the importance of one’s own findings.

- ***Non-Integral Citation (Research prominent)***

1. Research illustrated that near 50 percent of night-shift workers extend their normal hours of wakefulness from the average 16 to 24 hours on the first night-shift of their schedule (Akerstedt, 1995).

Explanation: The writer places the cited author’s name and year in parentheses at the end of the sentence so that this information will not interrupt the flow of ideas. The reader can consequently focus on understanding the results of the research study rather than the author or publication year.

2. Numerous studies have reported caffeine-related reductions in both subjective sleepiness [8], [9], [10], and [11], and objective measures, such as sustained reaction time (RT) [12] and driving [7] performance.

Explanation: The writer places numbers in brackets to indicate which references in the bibliography contained supporting evidence for the subject matter in-





depth. This style of citation places less emphasis on scholars' names and shift the reader's attention to the number of studies found in the literature review.

We use different verb tenses for reporting verbs and argumentative verbs in writing a research paper. The general rules for verb tense are as follows:

1) Use **past tense** for reporting the findings of a completed and published study.

Examples:

- Arslan (2007) investigated the performance characteristics of biodiesel as a diesel engine fuel.
- The performance characteristics of biodiesel as a diesel engine fuel were investigated by Arslan (2007).
- Biodiesel was shown to have promise as an alternative to regular diesel (Arslan, 2007).

2) Use **present perfect tense** for referring to an area inquiry that contains some current/ongoing studies and completed/published studies. This verb tense is often used when the author wants to indicate the trend of research findings in a particular area.

Examples:

- The potential of biodiesel as an regular diesel has been widely investigated (Aslan, 2007; Pinnarat, 2006; Savage, 2005).
- There have been several investigations of the potential of biodiesel as an alternative to regular diesel (Aslan, 2007; Pinnarat, 2006; Savage, 2005).
- Many researchers have investigated the potential of biodiesel as an alternative to regular diesel.

3) Use **present tense** to refer to general accepted knowledge of the field that is still applicable for current situations. This tense is also commonly used when the author wants to talk to the reader to comment/explain the cited studies.

Examples:

- The scarcity of known petroleum reserves is making renewable energy resources increasingly attractive (Demirbas, 2007; Pinnarat, 2006; Savage, 2005).
- The scarcity of known petroleum reserves is making renewable energy resources increasingly attractive [1-3].

The citation examples are selected from: Feak, C. B. & Swales, J. (2009). *Telling a Research Story: Writing a Literature Review*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. pp.46, 52-53

