

# QUT Astrophysics Research Group Referencing and Citation Style Guide

Dr Michael COWLEY  
[michael.cowley@qut.edu.au](mailto:michael.cowley@qut.edu.au)

## Overview

This guide will provide you with instructions on how to adequately cite and reference sources in your QUT Astrophysics assessment items (e.g., essays, reports, and presentations). Note that this is a style guide and not instructions on why and when to reference. That said, correct and consistent referencing is critical to giving credit to others and important in providing evidence to support the claims in your writing. If you need assistance in this area, please refer to [QUT cite|write](#).

For scientific sources, such as journals, textbooks, conference proceedings, and theses, QUT Astrophysics has adopted the [AAS Journal](#) referencing style, or more specifically, the style adopted by the Astrophysical Journal (ApJ), one of the main astronomy journals of the AAS. Some **examples** are provided below.

For non-scientific sources, such as periodicals, magazines, print media, websites, and films, you should adopt a simple and consistent approach (e.g., [Harvard style](#)), which allows the reader to adequately locate and verify the information for themselves. Please refer to [QUT cite|write](#) for more help.

## Reference Management Software

Formatting your citations and references can be tedious, which is why you are encouraged to trial reference management software to automate the process. Such software also allows you to store your literature in a convenient way. Some common options include:

- [Endnote](#)
- [Zotero](#)
- [Mendeley](#)
- [Paperpile](#)

For a comparison, including their strengths and weaknesses, visit [QUT cite|write](#).

## In-text Citation Style

Within the body of your text, you should adopt the following convention when citing your sources:

- Single author – in brackets, include the surname of the first author and the year (no comma); alternatively, in brackets, include the publish year if the surname is part of the sentence:

**...therefore, we adopt the approach performed by Smith (2018), which confirmed their earlier theoretical work (Smith, 2016)...**

- Two authors – as above, but separate surnames with an ampersand:

**...while our findings contrast older studies (e.g., Smith & Jones 2014)...**

- Three or more authors – as with single author, but with “et al.” after the first author:  
...but are consistent with recent findings (e.g., Smith et al. 2021)...
- Two or more sources – separate citation with semicolon:  
...which has been shown in multiple studies (e.g., Smith & Jones 1998; Wright et al. 2006)...
- Two or more sources with the same author(s) – separate dates with a comma:  
...which has been shown in contradictory studies (Williams et al. 2017, 2018)...
- Two or more sources with same author(s) and same year – distinguish with a letter (e.g., a, b, c, ...)  
...similar findings have been found in earlier work (Smith et al. 2017a, 2017b)...

## Reference List Style

All in-text citations (including figures and tables) must appear in the reference list at the end of your document. In turn, all entries in the reference list must be cited in your document. Reference entries should be ordered alphabetically, starting with the surname of the first author, followed by the first author’s initial(s), and so on for each additional author. For sources with more than five authors, the surname and initials of the first three authors only should be listed, followed by a comma and “et al.” The names of frequently cited scientific journals should also be abbreviated (see list below).

- The general format for scientific sources is – Surname, Initial. Year, Journal, Volume, First Page:

Cowley, M., Spitler, L., Quadri, R., et al. 2017, MNRAS, 473, 3710

Many research papers are initially published on the internet prior to being refereed. Such work is called electronic preprints (aka “e-prints” or “preprints”). A common place to source this work is at arXiv, which is a free distribution service and an open-access archive: <http://arxiv.org/>. The citation style for these sources is the same as above, but you should also include the preprint number in the reference list.

- Electronic preprints – as above with the addition of a preprint number:

Cowley, M., Spitler, L., Quadri, R., et al. 2017, arXiv:1703.04536

## Journal Abbreviations

As shown in the above example, an abbreviation is used for the journal “Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society” (i.e., MNRAS). A list of accepted abbreviations is available from the [ADS website](#).