

How to cite unpublished works

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By [A. Adams](#)

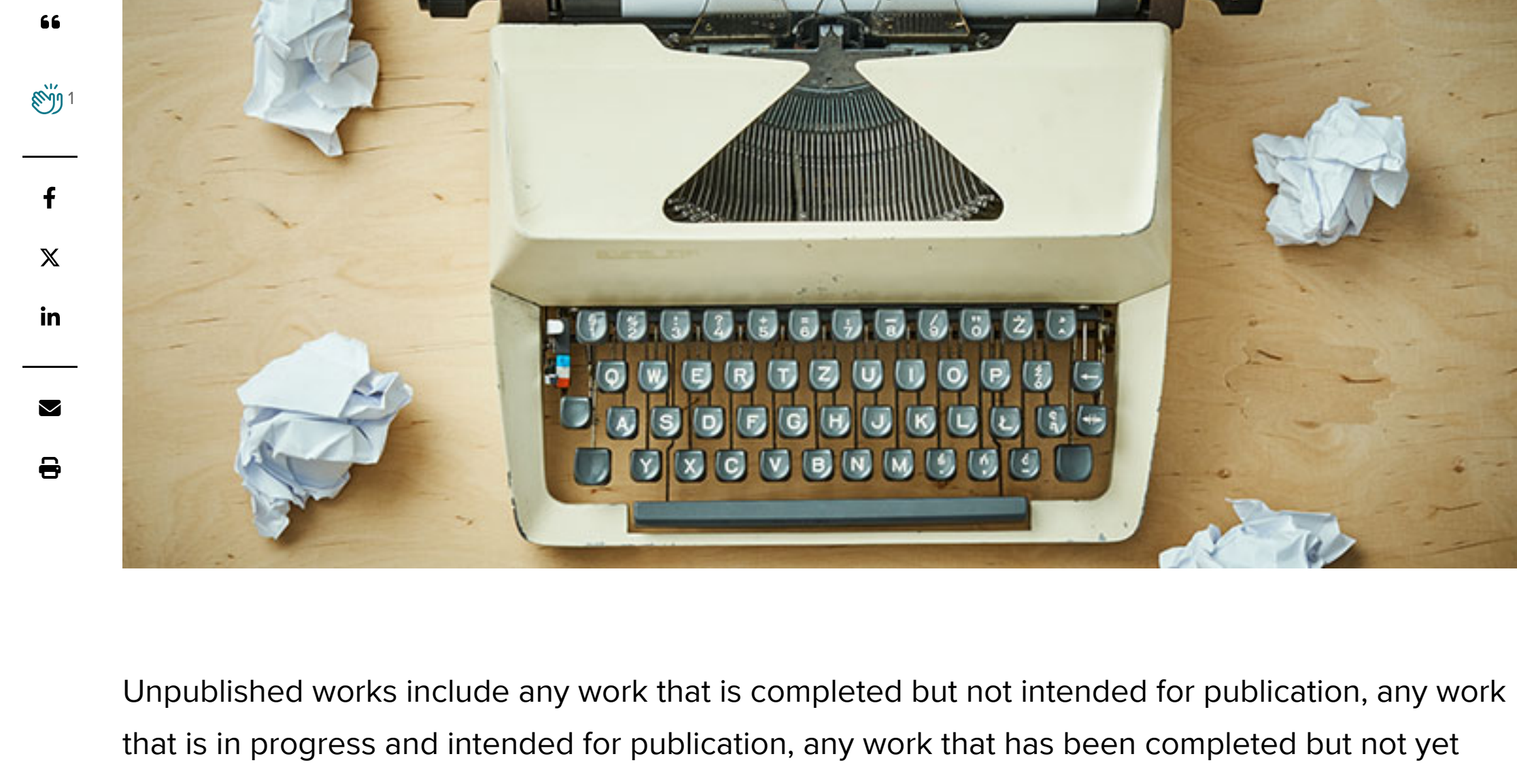
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References



Unpublished works include any work that is completed but not intended for publication, any work that is in progress and intended for publication, any work that has been completed but not yet submitted for publication, and any work that has been submitted but not yet accepted for publication. When a work has been submitted for publication and accepted by the publisher but not yet published, we consider it an [in-press work](#) rather than an unpublished work.

Usually, it is best to cite works after they have undergone peer review and been formally published—so that you can cite the version of record and ensure that other experts have assessed it for scientific accuracy. However, you may cite an unpublished work for a variety of reasons, including referring to emerging research.

To create a reference list entry for an unpublished work, provide the author, date, title, and source, which is the [standard pattern for APA Style references](#).

For the date, provide the year the work was completed, the year the draft was written, or, for raw data, the year(s) the data were collected. Do not use words like “in preparation,” “submitted,” and “submitted for publication” in the date element of the reference—this information appears elsewhere in the reference, and not in the date element or in-text citations.

After the title of the work in italic sentence case, describe the status and type of the work in square brackets—for example, “[Unpublished manuscript]” or “[Manuscript submitted for publication].” Many combinations of descriptions are possible (e.g., unpublished, in preparation, or submitted for publication for the status; manuscript, dissertation, thesis, raw data, or report for the type). Only the first letter of text in bracketed text is capitalized—per Section 9.21 of the *Publication Manual* (7th ed.).

The examples that follow are based on the template in Section 10.8—“Unpublished Works and Informally Published Works”—of the *Publication Manual* and illustrate common cases.

Unpublished manuscript

When the source of the unpublished work is known (e.g., a university or university department and so on), include it in the source element of the reference:

Yo, J., Minetti, K., Williams, G., & Taylor, P. (2025). *Blame the robot: Writing challenges in the age of AI* [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of English, University of Virginia.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Yo et al., 2025)
- **Narrative citation:** Yo et al. (2025)

Unpublished dissertation or thesis

In general, unpublished dissertations and theses must be retrieved directly from the institution that awarded the degree in print form. Thus, the name of the institution appears in the source element of the reference.

Long, V. (2024). *Instructor attitudes on the usefulness of writing across the curriculum* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Texas.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Long, 2024)
- **Narrative citation:** Long (2024)

If the dissertation or thesis has been published or archived in an online repository such as ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, it is not considered unpublished; instead, follow the [published dissertation or thesis reference examples](#).

Unpublished raw data

Citing data, whether published or unpublished, helps to acknowledge data creators for their scientific contributions. Data collecting takes time, so if you want to cite an unpublished data set, be sure to provide the year(s) of collection in the date element of the reference. When data collection spans multiple years, separate the years with an en dash, as shown in the following example.

Aims, O., Modelo, I., Kapowski, K. C., & Nguyen, Y. (2023–2025). *Scoring models and their impact on sales growth* [Unpublished raw data]. Hawthorne Advanced Sales Solutions.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Aims et al., 2023–2025)
- **Narrative citation:** Aims et al. (2023–2025)

Unpublished raw data for which the author is also the source

If the author of a data set is also the source, as might be the case with a group author such as an organization, do not repeat the author name in the source element of the reference. Therefore, the reference ends after the bracketed description:

Jackson Housing Authority. (2022). *Results of affordable housing initiatives on formerly transient persons* [Unpublished raw data].

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Jackson Housing Authority, 2022)
- **Narrative citation:** Jackson Housing Authority (2022)

Unpublished raw data with no title or source

For an untitled data set, provide a description in square brackets of the publication status and focus of the data. If the source of the data set is unknown, omit this element from the reference.

Carter, W. D. (2024). [Unpublished raw data on the correlations between sleep deprivation from playing video games and failing test scores of high school students].

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Carter, 2024)
- **Narrative citation:** Carter (2024)

When a data set is available online, you can create a [data set reference](#) following the standard format for published works. These references usually include the URL.

Work in preparation

To create a reference for any other type of work in preparation for publication, follow the same guidelines as other unpublished works (i.e., still following the template in Section 10.8). Note how the descriptor for the type of work (here, “Report”) can be customized:

Brown, R., & Diallo, E. (2024). *Style guides and student writing success* [Report in preparation]. University of Hawaii.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Brown & Diallo, 2024)
- **Narrative citation:** Brown and Diallo (2024)

Manuscript submitted for publication

To create a reference for a manuscript submitted for publication, follow a similar pattern as other unpublished works and cite the work as follows:

Casera, A., Kim, R., & Osaka, N. L. (2025). *Emotional support animals and their effect on easing depression symptoms* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of Psychology, University of Washington.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Casera et al., 2025)
- **Narrative citation:** Casera et al. (2025)

In-press work

For an in-press work, use the term “in press” instead of a year in the date element of the reference. This applies to many works such as journal articles, book chapters, books, and so on. The following example shows the format for citing a book that is in press.

Miller, Z. (in press). *How to improve college students’ writing in 10 easy practice stages*. American Psychological Association.

- **Parenthetical citation:** (Miller, in press)
- **Narrative citation:** Miller (in press)

Because in-press works are often close to publication, check their status as you are preparing your own work and update the reference as necessary. If the work is published before you submit your own work, update the reference with the appropriate details, including the year of publication. This advice applies to all unpublished works that transition to published status: Update your reference to include the most current details for readers.

Preprint works

A *preprint* is usually an informally published scientific or scholarly work. That is, the work is shared publicly—often online—before formal peer review. As with in-press works, preprints are not treated as unpublished works. Instead, follow the [preprint article reference examples](#).

Do you have questions about citing unpublished works? Let us know in the comments.

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