

Information Literacy Tip – APA Citation Builders – don't trust them!

Tools for creating APA bibliographic citations can be found in EBSCOHost, Microsoft Word 2007, and other software. But are they accurate? If you have used them, did you ever check the results against the APA's actual rules?

Maida Tilchen, Project Manager for Library Services for Cambridge College, has yet to find an APA citation builder that is accurate. She was especially disturbed by the one in EBSCOHost, since that is a major tool of our Cambridge College Online Library. EBSCOHost provides this tool and we at Cambridge College can do nothing to fix it, so she sent an email to EBSCOHost Technical Support, and here is their answer:

Thank you for contacting EBSCO.

Your EBSCO Publishing Customer Support Case Number and Title are: 315876 - "(SI 11510) APA formatting incorrect with Ehost 2.0".

Hi Maida,

Thank you for contacting EBSCO Publishing.

*I'm contacting you as a follow up to the issue you reported to Jeff Oliver regarding **EBSCO's APA Citation** formats. It appears that one of the issues discussed was the capitalized article titles which you reported as being incorrect.*

After further investigation into this issue, I've found that the reason these titles have not been capitalized as expected for the APA citation format is because EBSCO provides titles with the capitalization exactly as the publisher provides it. Like most other database vendors, EBSCO provides a disclaimer with each of our citations that recommends checking the citation for accuracy against the format guidelines or your institution's requirements.

You'll find a similar disclaimer included on our support site, here:

Can I view the citation formats for an article?

http://support.ebscohost.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?topic=&id=3880&page=1

As a workaround, you may also want to recommend that your patrons use an available bibliographic management program. Many of those software options include a feature to alter the capitalization of an article title based on the citation format guidelines. EBSCO supports the exporting of our records to bibliographic managers. For more information on exporting bibliographic records, you may want to see [this FAQ](#):

How do I use the Export Manager?

http://support.ebscohost.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?id=3009

Thank you again for the feedback that you've provided!

I will be happy to help if you have any other questions. To respond by email, please use the reply button.

Best Regards,

Jared

Translation into English: It doesn't work correctly and we aren't going to fix it, but that's ok because we have a disclaimer on our support site.

Conclusion: Learn the APA rules so that you can either construct the citations manually, or you can correct errors made by software.

Moral: Machines cannot replace humans!

PS: Make sure to check the results from the citation builder in Microsoft Word also!