

Some thoughts on species names and scientific citation styles

The genus name for an organism is a proper noun, so it is capitalized. The species name is an adjective, and is *not* capitalized. Both are Latin, a foreign language, so the entire name is italicized, like this:

Homo sapiens

Brassica rapa

Entamoeba histolytica.

Because it is a proper name, it usually doesn't act as an adjective. Say "*Brassica rapa* has been studied", or "plants of *Brassica rapa* have been studied", rather than "the *Brassica rapa* plants have been studied." [This last sounds rather like "the Jane Smith person".]

The second time you refer to a species, you may abbreviate its name by using the first initial of the genus: *B. rapa*. [Obviously this only works when the name is unambiguous. In a paper about human gut organisms, for example, you'd have to distinguish between *Eschericia coli* (a bacterium) and *Entamoeba coli* (an ameba).]

There are several citation formats in use in the scientific literature. One of the clearest and most widespread is to put embedded references in the text and complete citations in alphabetical order at the end of the paper. The embedded references look like this:

Jones (1999) found out that carrots contain vitamin A.

or

Carrots contain vitamin A (Jones, 1999).

If there are more than 2 authors, you can abbreviate the citation like this:

Jones, et al.

Page numbers are usually omitted. The complete citation at the end of the paper looks like this:

Author, initial, year. Article title. Journal name, Volume (#): pages.

It's not necessary to summarize your references one at a time. It might be more concise (and more useful to the reader) if you combined the results by topic, something like this:

Although the number of trichomes was not correlated with the total number of flowers or seeds, plants with more trichomes flowered later than those with fewer (Agren & Schemske, 1994, 1995).