

# APA References and Overleaf Compilation Timeouts

Some authors preparing submissions for **DGO 2026 (27th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research)** using **Overleaf** may encounter **compiler timeout errors** or **unexpected in-text citation formats**, particularly when using APA-style references.

This document provides background, explains why the issue occurs, and offers **practical, tested workarounds** to improve compilation reliability and ensure correct author–year citations.

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## Background

When using **bibtex** with **APA style** and the **biber** backend on Overleaf, some projects may experience:

- Long compilation times
- Repeated recompilation loops
- Compiler timeout errors

These issues have been observed **more frequently by authors using Overleaf free-tier accounts**, which have stricter limits on compilation time and computing resources. The problem may become more pronounced as the manuscript length or bibliography size increases.

This behavior appears to be related to the higher computational cost of **biber** in the Overleaf environment. Overleaf compilation timeouts have been observed **more frequently when multiple references are included in a single citation command**, for example:

- `\cite{paper1,paper2,paper3}`

If you prefer to continue using the original template or **bibtex** setup, the following practices may help:

- Limit the number of references within a single citation command (e.g., two or fewer)
- Split longer citation lists into multiple citation commands

While this does not guarantee elimination of timeout errors, it has been observed to improve compilation stability in some cases.

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## Recommended Workaround (APA-like, Overleaf-Friendly)

Authors who encounter Overleaf compilation issues may consider switching to an **APA-like bibliography setup using `natbib` and BibTeX**, which typically compiles **much faster and more reliably** on Overleaf.

While this approach does **not** produce strict APA 7 output, it is **visually very close** and is commonly accepted for conference submissions.

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## Important: Comment Out `biblatex` Configuration

If your document or the DGO template includes the following `biblatex` configuration, **these lines must be commented out or removed** when switching to `natbib`:

- `%\usepackage[bibstyle=apa,citestyle=apa,backend=biber]{biblatex}`
- `%`
- `% \DeclareFieldFormat{doi}{%`
- `% DOI: \url{https://doi.org/#1}}`
- `%`
- `% \addbibresource{dgo-template.bib}`

Do **not** use `biblatex` and `natbib` at the same time.

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## Step-by-Step Setup Using `natbib`

### 1. In the document preamble

- `\usepackage[authoryear]{natbib}`
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### 2. In-text citations

Use the following commands:

- `\citet{smith2023}`    % Smith (2023)
- `\citep{smith2023}`    % (Smith, 2023)

Avoid using plain `\cite{}` when author–year citations are required.

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### 3. Bibliography at the end of the document

- `\bibliographystyle{apalike}`
- `\bibliography{dgo-template}`

Ensure that:

- `dgo-template.bib` is uploaded to Overleaf
  - All entries include `author` and `year` fields
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## Ensuring Author–Year In-Text Citations Appear Correctly

If citations appear as **numbers** (e.g., [1]) instead of **author–year**:

Check that **all** of the following are true:

1. `natbib` is loaded with the `authoryear` option
2. An author–year bibliography style is used (`apalike`, `plainnat`, etc.)
3. `\citet` / `\citep` are used instead of `\cite`
4. `biblatex` is fully disabled

5. BibTeX has run successfully (recompile twice on Overleaf)

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## Additional Template Note (DGO Template Users)

Some versions of `dgo-template.sty` include a `hyperref`-related patch intended to preserve reference formatting. When using the **APA-like natbib workaround**, this block may interfere with author–year citations.

If citation formatting issues persist, authors are advised to **comment out the following block** in `dgo-template.sty`:

- `%Updated 2017. If hyperref is used, do not change references styles`
- `% \RequirePackage{etoolbox}%`
- `% \AtEndPreamble{\@ifpackageloaded{hyperref}`
- `% {%`
- `% \makeatletter`
- `% \def\@lbibitem[#1]#2{%`
- `% \@skiphyperreftrue`
- `% \H@item[%`
- `% \ifx\Hy@raisedlink\@empty`
- `% \hyper@anchorstart{cite.#2\@extra@b@citeb}%`
- `% \hyper@anchorend`
- `% \else`
- `% \Hy@raisedlink{%`
- `% \hyper@anchorstart{cite.#2\@extra@b@citeb}\hyper@anchorend`
- `% }`
- `% \fi`
- `% \hfill`
- `% ]%`
- `% \@skiphyperreffalse`
- `% \if@filesw`
- `% \begingroup`
- `% \let\protect\noexpand`
- `% \immediate\write\@auxout{%`
- `% \string\bibcite{#2}{#1}%`

- % }%
- % \endgroup%
- % \fi%
- % \ignorespaces%
- % }%
- % \makeatother%
- % }%
- % }%