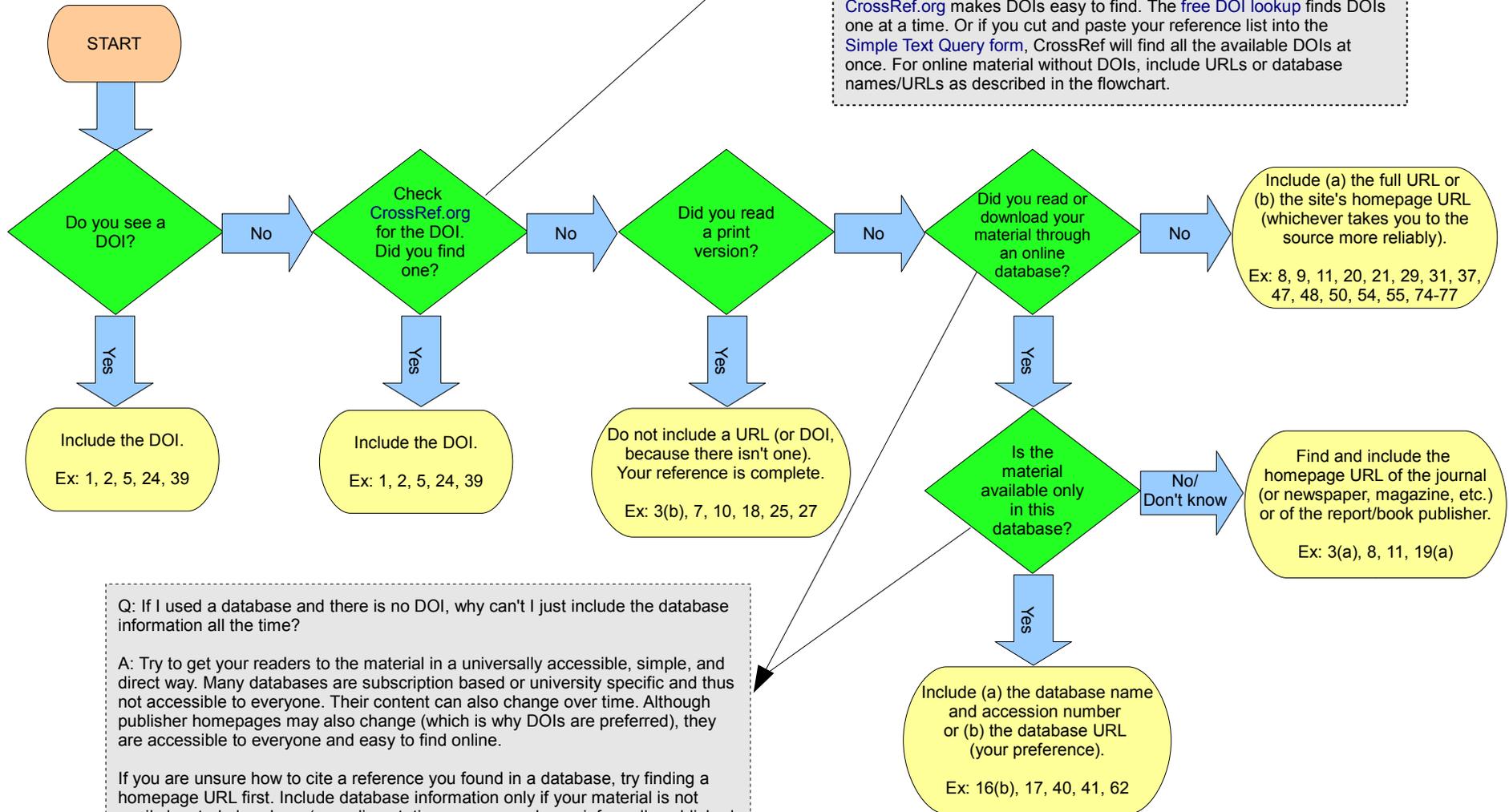# DOI and URL Flowchart

Use the flowchart below to determine when to include DOIs, URLs, or database information for your reference citations. The notation "Ex: 1, 2..." refers to a few relevant examples in Chapter 7 of the 6th ed. of the *APA Publication Manual* (see also pp. 188–192).

Q: What do I need to know about DOIs? When do I use them?

A: A DOI is a unique alphanumeric string that provides a persistent link to content online. Try to include a DOI for every reference. (DOIs are actually quite prevalent—publishers who use them assign one to all their online content, even if it was published pre-Internet.)

CrossRef.org makes DOIs easy to find. The free DOI lookup finds DOIs one at a time. Or if you cut and paste your reference list into the Simple Text Query form, CrossRef will find all the available DOIs at once. For online material without DOIs, include URLs or database names/URLs as described in the flowchart.

START

Do you see a DOI?
Yes → Include the DOI.
Ex: 1, 2, 5, 24, 39

No →

Check CrossRef.org for the DOI. Did you find one?
Yes → Include the DOI.
Ex: 1, 2, 5, 24, 39

No →

Did you read a print version?
Yes → Do not include a URL (or DOI, because there isn't one). Your reference is complete.
Ex: 3(b), 7, 10, 18, 25, 27

No →

Did you read or download your material through an online database?
No → Include (a) the full URL or (b) the site's homepage URL (whichever takes you to the source more reliably).
Ex: 8, 9, 11, 20, 21, 29, 31, 37, 47, 48, 50, 54, 55, 74-77

Yes →

Is the material available only in this database?
No/Don't know → Find and include the homepage URL of the journal (or newspaper, magazine, etc.) or of the report/book publisher.
Ex: 3(a), 8, 11, 19(a)

Yes → Include (a) the database name and accession number or (b) the database URL (your preference).
Ex: 16(b), 17, 40, 41, 62

Q: If I used a database and there is no DOI, why can't I just include the database information all the time?

A: Try to get your readers to the material in a universally accessible, simple, and direct way. Many databases are subscription based or university specific and thus not accessible to everyone. Their content can also change over time. Although publisher homepages may also change (which is why DOIs are preferred), they are accessible to everyone and easy to find online.

If you are unsure how to cite a reference you found in a database, try finding a homepage URL first. Include database information only if your material is not easily located elsewhere (e.g., dissertations, monographs, or informally published papers, which may be available only through databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, or ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database).

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