

A Guide to Citations



What Does It Mean To "Cite" And Why Must I Cite My Sources?

- Citation is a matter of doing what is right. It is important to give credit to the sources you used for your research. This is standard practice at every level of education and in every job.
- All new ideas have been built on the work of others and you respect those experts whose work you use.
- Someone reading your paper should always be able to tell when you are presenting your ideas and conclusions and when you are using someone else's ideas.
- Someone reading your paper may want to find the same resources you used for their own research purposes.
- Using another person's words or ideas without giving that person credit is plagiarism! Plagiarism means to steal someone else's work and pretend it is your own. This can get you in a lot of trouble!

How Do I Cite My Sources?



You must cite your sources in TWO ways:

- A list of all your sources at the end of your paper titled **Works Cited** or **Bibliography**.
- Brief citations within the text of your paper called **Parenthetical References**.

There are several styles for citing sources. Your teacher will tell you which style is preferred. Common styles include MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychological Association).

What Is A Works Cited List?

A Works Cited list includes all the sources you used for your research. It may also be called a Bibliography ("biblio" refers to books and "graphy" refers to description). Since students today use online sources as well as books, many use the term Works Cited, but Bibliography is also acceptable.

A Works Cited list helps anyone who reads your paper find out more about your ideas and where they came from.

KEY TO SUCCESS: Save time and cite as you go! When you find a source you will use, add it to your Works Cited list right away.

What Type Of Source Am I Citing?

Decide first what the source is and then indicate where you found it.

BOOK:

Is it a book or a reference source? If you are using a book that you might read all the way through, choose **BOOK**. If it is a book you would use to find factual information but not read all the way through, choose **REFERENCE SOURCE**. If the book has a Reference label on the spine, it comes from the reference section of the library, so **REFERENCE SOURCE** is probably the best choice.

JOURNAL:

A journal has scholarly articles with many citations. A scholar is someone who has studied something for a long time and knows a lot about it. Articles are peer-reviewed, which means they are evaluated by experts in the field. Journals are the way scholars share their research. A journal may be print or online.

Journal Examples: JAMA: the Journal of the American Medical Association; American Economic Review; Journal of American History; Teacher Librarian.

MAGAZINE:

A magazine is designed to appeal to a general audience. Magazine articles do not have citations, although they may provide suggestions for further reading. Choose **MAGAZINE** for an online magazine article (like CQ Researcher), not **WEB SITE**.

Magazine Examples: National Geographic; Odyssey; Smithsonian; Discover.

NEWSPAPER or NEWSWIRE:

For online newspaper articles, be sure to choose NEWSPAPER, not WEB SITE. A newswire is a service that provides articles to news media.

Newswire Examples: AP; UPI; Reuters.

REFERENCE SOURCE:

Choose REFERENCE SOURCE for articles from reference books, whether in print or online.

Reference Source Examples: Encyclopedias (print or online); history, science and biography subscription databases.

WEB SITE:

Choose WEB SITE for almost anything you find using a search engine (like Google) that is not an online newspaper, journal, or magazine.

A Common error:

Choosing WEB SITE for every online source. The fact that your source is online doesn't make it a web site!

Where Do I Find The Information I Need For Citations?

**BOOK:**

Everything you need for your citation is on the title page and the back of the title page (called the verso). Don't always trust the cover! If you photocopy pages from a book, make it a habit to also copy the title page and the verso and staple it all together.

- If there are several cities of publication, use the first one.
- If there are several copyright years, use the latest one.
- The easy way: Search for the book in the library catalog using keywords from the author, title or subject. When you click on the title, you'll see all the information you need for your citation: author, title, and publication information (city, publisher and publication year).

REFERENCE BOOK ARTICLES:

If the author's name is given, it may appear at the beginning or the end of the article.

ONLINE SUBSCRIPTIONS & DATABASE ARTICLES:

Most of these provide the citation at the end of each article. If there are several citation styles, choose your teacher's preferred style.

WEB SITE:

You may need to do a little detective work. If the author's name is given, it may be at the top or bottom of the page. You will also need the name of the specific page or article, the title of the entire web site and the name of the sponsoring organization.

- Look for an About link on the page for information about the sponsoring organization. If you can't determine the author or sponsoring organization for a web site, don't use it! Your sources should all be written by experts.

IMAGE:

If the image doesn't have a title, create a description yourself.

Examples: "Mitosis;" "Panda;" "Vision Chart."

What Are Parenthetical References?



Parenthetical references are short citations (placed in parentheses) within the text of your paper that show exactly where you found information within a source in your works cited list.

The MLA style uses parenthetical references for citing sources within the text of your paper. Every source you cite in your paper must also appear in your works cited list.

Within the text of your paper, when you need to cite a source, simply put in parentheses the first word or several words from the works cited list for that source followed by the page number if it is a print source. This sentence includes a parenthetical reference for the page in MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers where you will find complete instructions for using parenthetical references (MLA 214).

KEY TO SUCCESS: Insert parenthetical references as you write, not after! You'll be glad you did.

MLA Format Tips:

- Don't use any punctuation within the parentheses, and if there is no author, just use the first important word or two of the title (not "a", "an", "the").
- For a print source, don't use the abbreviations p. or pg. or write the word "page" before the page number. This sentence includes a reference for information from page 26 of a book by Francesca Baines (Baines 26).
- For a web site, use the author's last name if given, or the first word(s) of the bibliographic entry (no page number needed). Here's a web site example for information from a web page authored by Daniel Flueck and titled "Protanopia" that a student used for research on color blindness (Flueck, "Protanopia"). The article title is included here because there are two online articles by the same author in the Works Cited list.

Why Do I Need Parenthetical References?

Your Works Cited list shows the sources you used for your research, but you also need to indicate the specific facts or ideas you used and exactly where you found them.

Citing sources within the text of your paper allows you to use the work of others without plagiarizing.

Citing sources within the text of your paper strengthens your work by providing support for your ideas.

KEY TO SUCCESS:

Enter your sources in your citation tool as you find them. Then create a parenthetical reference for that particular source. Cite as you write! EasyBib provides the parenthetical citation for you; just click to copy it.

What Do I Have To Cite?



Any important facts, ideas or statistics taken from the work of others, whether you quote directly or paraphrase.

Someone else's exact words that you quote.

Any opinions, interpretations or conclusions that are someone else's work. Even if you put these into your own words, you must still cite them!

Any image, photograph, illustration, graph, chart or diagram you did not create yourself. Use the same format for parenthetical references (don't copy and paste the URL), but instead of at the end of a sentence, place it under the image like a caption.

If you're not sure if you should cite something, it is better to cite it. If you skip a necessary citation, it might be considered plagiarism, even though you did not mean to plagiarize.

When in doubt, CITE.

[You Quote It, You Note It!](#) is a very clever online tutorial to help you avoid plagiarism. Ten minutes here could save your academic life!

What Don't I Have To Cite?



Commonly known, generally accepted facts.

For middle school students, this means things that most people in your grade would know.

Freely-available clip art.

Phrases that are part of everyday speech such as "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Your own ideas, opinions or conclusions. Remember that the personal pronoun "I" should not be used in a research paper.

Examples:

- That George Washington was the first president of the United States is a commonly known fact which does not require a citation. The fact that he was an accomplished dancer does require a citation.
- That H₂O is the chemical symbol for water is a commonly known fact which does not require a citation. The fact that the tetrahedral crystalline structure breaks down when ice melts to form liquid water does require a citation.

CITATION MYTH:

"I don't need to cite it because it's not a quotation."

This is not true. You must use a citation for someone else's idea - even if you paraphrase it.

What about Images?

If it is not your own original photograph, illustration, graph, chart or diagram, you must cite it.

If you found your online image through a Google image search, choose WEB SITE as your citation type in your preferred citation tool. If the image doesn't have a title, create a description yourself.

Examples: "Mitosis;" "Vision Chart."

If your online image is from a source you used for your research, you don't need to create a separate citation in your works cited list. Just use the parenthetical reference as a caption for the image.

To cite an image within the text of your paper, use the form for parenthetical references, but instead of at the end of a sentence, place it under the image like a caption. Don't copy and paste the URL.

Freely-available clip art does not need to be cited.

But I Still Can't Figure It Out!



Okay, citing sources is not easy.

Ask a teacher, ask a librarian, or use the MLA website or the APA website.

Just do your best!

What Should My Citations Look Like?

Click [here](#) for an example of what parenthetical references and a Works Cited list looks like!

Click [here](#) for a printable MLA Guide with examples from EasyBib.