

Citing Sources: How to Document Your Sources

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For many students the most frustrating part of writing a paper occurs when they try to cite sources. It takes time to collect, organize, and use research properly, and it can be difficult to decide which is the exact format required to cite specific materials. Check out these segments to find out why you need to cite sources, what to cite, when to cite, and finally, how to cite.

Highlights in this Segment:

Why Cite?

In this segment, learn why it is important to cite your sources.

What to Cite?

Do you know what to cite? If not, read on.

When to Cite?

Knowing when to cite a source is critical; learn about it in this segment.

How to Cite?

In this segment we'll show you the basics of how to cite a source.

Test Your Knowledge

After you have read the information in this section quiz yourself about citing sources.

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Why Cite?

The FANS acrostic will help explain why it is important to cite your sources:

Find: Readers need to know where you have found your ideas and examples, and citations help them to locate your research.

Avoid Plagiarism: When you acknowledge sources, you become less likely to accidentally copy a sentence, quote, or idea from someone else.

Norms: Researchers and scholars cite in **ALL** of their writing. You are also a researcher and scholar as a college student.

Support: Showing evidence that you have used more than your own ideas and have incorporated multiple sources into your writing proves that you did extensive research. Doing a sizeable amount of research will help you to create a thoughtful and informative paper, and adds to the credibility and strength of your paper. The result of your effort: you earn a good grade!

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What to Cite?

You must cite every source that you use (ideas, words, etc.) and give credit for any other person's intellectual property:

Written

Books (including on-line), periodicals (journals, magazines, newspapers), pamphlets, charts, statistics, graphs, maps, letters, internet webpages, online databases, emails, graphics, government documents, etc.

Spoken

Speeches, lectures, personal interviews, etc.

Other

Performances, recordings, television, radio, film, etc.

While you don't have to cite "common knowledge" (facts that are widely known by non-experts, such as the name of the current President of the United States). BE VERY CAREFUL. You will find that when you are doing research that many experts state the same facts. YOU MUST GIVE CREDIT through an appropriate reference to one of the experts if the facts are not widely known by NON-EXPERTS – at is, the person on the street.

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When to Cite?

If you use **another person's exact words** you must always do **both** of the following:

Provide a citation, either in the text or in a footnote **and**

Enclose the words in quotation marks or place them in a block of indented single spaced text if the quote is over 40 words long.

If you use **another person's ideas/thoughts/creations** you must:

Paraphrase/summarize your understanding of these ideas in your own words without distorting the original meaning

and

Cite the source in the text or in a footnote. No quotation marks are needed because these are not the exact words of another.

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How to Cite?

First, know the appropriate citation style. Always check with your instructor to confirm the style required for the paper. You will then need to use a *style guide* to learn the rules for that style.

The most commonly used styles are:

- American Psychological Association (APA)
- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- Chicago/Turabian
- Check the Pollak Library webpage <http://www.library.fullerton.edu> for other styles used by specific departments such as anthropology and biology at How do I cite sources?

The Pollak Library also provides several one-page guides for citation which include examples of the following styles:

- APA
- MLA
- Chicago

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APA Citation Style

References:

- A reference list should appear at the **end of your paper**.
- Consult the following for formatting requirements. **Publication Manual** of the American Psychological Association (6th edition) <http://www.apastyle.org>
- **Each source** you cite in the paper must appear in your reference list
- Each source in the **reference list** must appear somewhere in the body of the paper.
- If there is **no author** to cite, such as when you are citing a web page that lists no author, use an abbreviated version of the title of the page in quotation marks to substitute for the name of the author.
- If you are citing a work that has no author and **no date**, use the first few words from the title, then the abbreviation n.d. (for “no date”).
- If the work has **two authors**, cite both names every time the reference appears in the text.

In-Text Citations:

- Give both the **author and the date of the publication** in parentheses after you refer to the information from that source (paraphrase, summarize). (Leiker, 2002)
- If you are **directly quoting** from a source, include the author, year of publication, and the **page number** for the reference in parentheses after you use the material. (Leiker, 2002, p 102)

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MLA Citation Style

Work Cited Page

- At the end of the essay; on a **separate page** from the text of your paper
- Consult the following for formatting requirements. The MLA **Handbook** for Writers of Research Papers (5th edition), <http://www.mla.org>.

In-Text Citation

- Use parenthetical citation: **author's last name and the page number(s)**, no comma, from which you got the information. (Leiker 102)
- If you include the author's name in the sentence you will place the **page number** at the end of the sentence in parentheses

There are two components in accurate citation:

- A **brief citation** within the text of the paper

This is a brief note to alert the reader to the origin of a thought, quote or resource which can then be pursued by checking the complete citation which gives the full information needed to retrieve the document.

- **Complete citation** in the footnotes or at the end of the paper in the "References" "Bibliography" or "Works Cited" section.

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Parts of a Citation (examples)

The basic components of any **journal citation** include the author, title of the article, title of the journal, volume (issue), date, pages.

The basic components of any **book citation** include the author, title of the book, place of publication, publisher, year.

For **electronic resources** including web pages, the rules are not as well defined but generally require adding to the basic information the date you looked at the site and web address and database name. Guidelines:

- Reference should include document title or description, date of publication and/or date of retrieval, URL and author if known.
- Direct readers as closely as possible to the information being cited; reference specific documents not homepages
- Provide addresses that work. The easiest way is to copy it directly from the address window in your browser and past it into your paper. Be sure to test it once you have entered it into your paper.
- Comparison of book citation (paper/electronic) in APA style:

Paper: Leiker, J.N. (2002). *Racial borders: Black soldiers along the Rio Grande*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Electronic: Leiker, J. N. (2002). *Racial borders: Black soldiers along the Rio Grande*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press. Retrieved January 27, 2004, from NetLibrary database.

In-text citation: (Leiker, 2002) – summary/paraphrase, (Leiker, 2002, pg. 78) – direct quote

- Comparison of book citation (paper/electronic) in MLA style:

Paper: Leiker, James N. Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 2002.

Electronic: Leiker, James N. Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 2002. NetLibrary. Cal State Fullerton, Pollak Library. 27 Jan. 2004 <http://www.netlibrary.com>.