

Citation: The Key to Responsible Research

Documentation and University Scholarship

Proper documentation clearly indicates the difference between your own original work and the words, thoughts, and ideas of others. Citation shows your reader the extent of your research, gives the weight of authority to your argument, and credits others for their ideas. In addition, documentation directs your readers to your source so they can evaluate that evidence or obtain more information about the ideas you refer to in your work.

University policy requires students to document sources “[w]hen using the words or ideas of another, even if paraphrased in your own words” and warns that “ignorance is no defense” (“Code of Academic Conduct”). Not knowing how to cite a source does not exempt you from responsibility for doing so—or from the consequences of failing to cite borrowed material.

Bibliographic Styles

Because the kinds of information included in a citation will vary from subject to subject, citation styles vary by discipline. Most social science classes prefer that you follow the American Psychological Association (APA) style. In many scientific fields, publishers favor the style recommended by the Council of Biology Editors (CBE). Articles in medical journals, government documents, and technical documents must follow the style mandated in each field. Your instructors will direct you to the appropriate citation style for papers and other reports.

Publications in English and the humanities typically follow Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines. The information in this online tutorial models MLA style and will provide instructions and examples, here and in the tutorial and quizzes, using MLA format. For more information on APA, CBE and other citation styles, please refer to the links available in the Webliography (a collection of web-based sources) that follows the citation tutorial.

The Two Jobs of Citation:

1. To point out the difference between the thoughts of others and your own original work.

When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing the ideas of others, you must clearly indicate which words, thoughts or ideas belong to your source and which are your own. To do so, you might use a signal phrase that introduces the author and the title of her work before referring to her ideas. Some citation styles recommend using a footnote to insert complete bibliographic information at the bottom of a page; others prefer endnotes, which provide the information at the end of a chapter or at the back of the book.

MLA style requires a parenthetical reference, also called an in-text citation. A parenthetical citation appears at the end of a sentence that paraphrases or quotes from a source and includes enough information for the reader to locate a complete reference in the works cited list at the end of the paper. Only essential information such as the author's name and the page number appear in the parentheses. Complete bibliographic information will follow in the works cited list at the end of the document.

2. To direct your reader to the original document you refer to.

If you do not include complete bibliographic information in a footnote or endnote, you must submit an alphabetized works cited list that includes all the works referenced in the paper, or a formal bibliography that includes all the works consulted while preparing your paper or report. The choice will depend on the style you follow and the guidelines for the project. Because MLA style mandates in-text citations rather than footnotes, papers following MLA format must also include a list of works cited.

Three Common Methods for Integrating Sources

Direct quotation indicates the exact words of others. A borrowed phrase must be attributed to a source by using quotation marks. Sometimes just one or two words, especially if they are particularly inventive or unique, must also be clearly referenced with quotation marks and followed by appropriate and complete documentation.

Paraphrase restates the ideas in one section of a source by using your own words to selectively condense the material. A paraphrase must not closely follow the sentence structure of the original work and must clearly indicate any exact language taken from the source with quotation marks. Like direct quotations, paraphrased material must be cited.

Summary restates the central idea in a larger portion of a work. Where a paraphrase might closely review the ideas in a paragraph or section of an article or book, a summary will capture the essential elements of an entire article, chapter, or book. Like direct quotation and paraphrase, a summary must clearly identify the source of these ideas with appropriate documentation.

Common errors that could be considered plagiarism

No quotation marks around borrowed language

Be sure to clearly mark the exact words of others by using quotation marks and providing an in-text citation that points to your source. To avoid accidental use of original material, carefully compare your language to the source after finishing a summary or paraphrase.

Paraphrase that uses the exact language or sentence structure of a source

Just changing a few words or restating only part of your source material, even if you provide the author's name and a page number, is not sufficient. You must rephrase the ideas in a passage **and** refer to the author and page number when paraphrasing.

Inaccurate or incomplete references

The bibliographic information in your works cited list must lead to the source you cite. You must both point out the work of others and provide directions to that source. Failure to complete both aspects of proper documentation could result in a referral to SJA.

Special concerns about electronic sources

Some Internet sources do not include an author or a page number. When this information is not available, you will start your works cited entry with the title of the page. Your in-text citation will also refer to the source by that title.

When using material from a website, the address you reference should match the source you cite. The homepage is not an adequate address for an article or image that you located through that homepage. For more information on citing Internet sources using MLA format, refer to the links at the bottom of the "Print and Electronic Citation Guides" page available from Shields Library @ <http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/instruc/cites.html>

Consequences for violating the Code of Academic Conduct, including cases of plagiarism resulting from inaccurate or inadequate documentation, range from **disciplinary sanctions** such as disciplinary probation, deferred separation, suspension, and dismissal to **educational interventions** such as attending a workshop or writing a paper. In addition, any work that is the product of plagiarism is generally assigned a grade of zero by the instructor. For more information on student discipline, see "The Student Disciplinary System at UC Davis" @ <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/Integrity1.pdf>

Common problems that warrant attention

Dropped quotations

A dropped quotation hangs between two sentences—suspended by quotation marks. Instead of dangling between two sentences, quotations should be smoothly integrated. Often, a signal phrase introduces the source and puts the selection in context. Integrating select portions of a source into the prose of your own sentence, rather than inserting entire sentences from the reference, will improve the clarity of your prose and aid the development of your ideas. Typically, analysis applying the source material to a larger point in an argument will follow lengthy quotations.

Overuse of quotations

To avoid excessive citation, use quotations selectively and with a purpose. For example, you might cite a number of sources at the beginning of your paper in order to put your position in context. You might also cite sources throughout the paper in order to support your own ideas — or to explain and then refute the ideas of others. However, if quotation, summary and paraphrase dominate a paper, you may need to develop your own ideas further. Do not expect cited sources to make an argument for you.

Poorly chosen sources

Choosing accurate and authoritative sources will add credibility to your argument. When selecting sources, evaluate the author, the target audience, the publisher, and publication date. For more information on choosing Internet sources, see “Evaluating Web Sources” @ <http://cai.ucdavis/caihandouts/evaluatingwebsites.html> and the links that follow in the Webliography below.

Incorrect format

Punctuation errors in your references can annoy and sometimes confuse readers. Using one format consistently and correctly will improve the clarity of your prose and your documentation.

Strategies for Success: Mastering Proper Citation Procedure

To avoid plagiarizing when using sources:

- **develop a note taking system that clearly distinguishes your thoughts from the language, thoughts and ideas in your sources.**
- **close the book when writing your own phrase or summary.**
- **compare the language in your paraphrase to the language of the original author.**
- **set off any borrowed words or phrases with quotation marks.**
- **educate yourself on the proper citation procedure for your discipline.**
- **practice evaluating paraphrases, summaries and quotations in the tutorial below.**
- **visit the resources in the Webliography below.**
- **attend a workshop on writing research papers — sponsored by Shields Library, the Learning Skills Center or the Computer-Aided Instruction program.**

Works Cited

“Code of Academic Conduct.” Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. September 15, 2003
<<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/CAC.pdf>>.

“The Student Disciplinary System at UC Davis.” Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. 18 July 2003
<<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/Integrity1.pdf>>.