UNIT 15: DOCUMENTING YOUR SOURCES

Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due
When you research a topic you may use information from published sources (articles, books, reports) or the Web to support your ideas. Throughout the research process, you have taken notes, copied articles, and searched the Web for information. By the time you have thoroughly researched what has been written, you will start to form ideas of your own, see patterns, and be able to write about the topic in your own words.

You must now credit the original authors of all these sources by citing them in your list of references. To cite a source means that you state where you found the information so that others can locate the exact same source again.

Why You Must Cite Your Sources
Do you know everything there is to know about protozoa? What about post-impressionist art? You are in college to learn. No one expects you to be an expert. However, when you conduct college research, you are expected to consult the experts.

The practice of citing allows us to build upon the ideas and knowledge of others. Demonstrating that you have read what the experts have to say gives credibility to your work. It allows your instructors to look at the sources you used to further their own understanding of the topic, as well as evaluate your understanding of it. Properly citing your sources will also protect you from accusations of plagiarism.

PLAGIARISM

You've heard of it, but what exactly does it mean to you?
Let's start with a definition

Plagiarize \(^{pla-je-riz} \) (verb): to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own; use a created production without crediting the source; to commit literary theft; present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

from \textit{Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 9th ed, (Springfield, MA: Merriam 1981)}

In short, \textit{plagiarism} is copying something without crediting the source. It is, in effect, stealing.

Consequences of Plagiarism

Plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty according to MiraCosta College Administrative Policy VIII.E. (see MiraCosta College Catalog, p. 173). Incidences of Academic Dishonesty are reflected on your transcript.

Students who are accused of plagiarism could:

- Fail the assignment
- Fail the class
- Be expelled from school
Avoiding Plagiarism

As incidents of plagiarism increase, more professors are on the alert, and many have powerful detection tools at their fingertips. Learning to avoid plagiarism is critical to your success in college. Here are some useful strategies:

- Use your own ideas. It should be your paper and your ideas that are the focus.
- Use the ideas of others- but only to support or reinforce your own argument.
- When taking notes, include complete citation information for each item you use.
- Use quotation marks when directly stating another person’s words.
- Write a draft of your paper without any notes to help think through what you want to say.

What to Cite

One of the most common questions from students is “Do I have to cite everything?” There is no simple answer. You will need to make some judgment calls. There are some certainties.

You must cite (give credit):
- To the original words of another person
- To the paraphrased ideas of another person

What Not to Cite

You don't have to cite some sources of information because they are considered to be common knowledge. Common knowledge is not considered to be the work of any one particular person and are items such as facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.

Examples of common knowledge

- John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.
- There are four seasons in the year.
- The sun sets in the west.
- The U.S. entered World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
- Eureka! is the state motto for California.

How can you tell if something is common knowledge?

- Common knowledge is information that the majority of people either know or can find in a number of sources.
- Common knowledge is factual information that is beyond dispute.

Sure, you might not remember (or ever have known) what California's state motto is, but you can easily look it up in an almanac, encyclopedia, the state's Web site, or other resources. When in doubt, cite the source.
Quoting vs. Paraphrasing

Sometimes something you read is exactly the point you want to make, and is written so well you want to use it directly. You can do so legally by quoting. Quoting a source means you are stating what someone else has written, word for word, using their words. Anything you directly quote must be put in quotation marks and referenced (cited).

**Example of a quotation**

“Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper.” (Lester 46).

Sometimes you like the content of a paragraph or section of something you read, and want to paraphrase, or restate it in your own words for your paper. To paraphrase is to say the same thing, but in your own words.

You need not use quotation marks unless the statement is word-for-word as it appears in your source. You must, however, give credit whenever you paraphrase (restate or write in your own words) a thought, idea, or words within the research paper and also in your list of references;

**Example of paraphrase**

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

How To Cite Your Sources

There are two steps to citing your sources:

1. Citing your sources within your paper: Giving credit within a research paper through footnotes or parenthetical citations.
2. Preparing a list of sources you consulted: Giving credit at the end of a research paper in the bibliography, also called *Works Cited* or *References* list.

How you do this depends on what "style" or format you use to document your sources. When your instructor assigns a research assignment, he or she will usually tell you what "style" of documentation to use. There are many styles of citation. Whatever style you end up using, it is essential that you apply the citation standards consistently.

**Documentation Styles:**

The Modern Language Association *(MLA)* style is used in literature, arts, and humanities papers.

The American Psychological Association *(APA)* style is used in psychology, education, social sciences, and sometimes scientific papers.
Some instructors prefer to use Turabian or Chicago Style (used most commonly in history.)

**MLA** and **APA** are the most common citation styles used in college. We will focus on these two styles. They are actually quite similar in that they require you to cite your sources within your paper using parentheses (parenthetical citation) and provide a list of the sources you cited at the end of your paper (a *Works Cited* or *References* list.)

**Parenthetical Documentation**

When you quote or paraphrase an external source in your paper, you must provide in parentheses brief information about the sources you have consulted. The parenthetical citations direct readers to the full bibliographic citations listed in your *Works Cited* (MLA) or *References* (APA) list located at the end of the document.

How you cite a source depends on whether the author is mentioned in the text of your paper. Both APA and MLA have specific rules on how to write a parenthetical citation.

**MLA Example:** When author is mentioned:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

**MLA Example:** When author is not mentioned:

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

**APA Example:** When author is mentioned:

Jones found "students often had difficulty using APA style" (1998); what implications does this have for teachers?

**APA Example:** When author is not mentioned:

The author stated, "Students often had difficulty using APA style," (Jones, 1998), but she did not offer an explanation as to why.

Sometimes one of your sources may not have an author. Again, there are specific rules for citing these sources in APA and MLA when there is no author. You will usually use the first few significant words of an article or book title.

**APA example:** No author

In another study of students and research decisions, it was discovered that students succeeded with tutoring ("Tutoring and APA," 2004).

**MLA example:** No author

An anonymous Wordsworth critic once argued that his poems were too emotional ("Wordsworth Is A Loser" 100).
Exercise 1: Citing in the Text
1. Here is a quotation (with basic source information) that might be used in a paper.

"It is surely possible to become a 'Simpson'-style couch potato, imprisoned by the endless wash of images, immobilized, imbecilic, impotent."


What is the correct way to cite this quote using the MLA style for parenthetical documentation?
________________________________________________________________________

What is the correct way to cite this quote using the APA style for parenthetical documentation?
________________________________________________________________________

2. Here is a quotation (with basic source information) that might be used in a paper.

Source: author is Gordon Wood. Article is "Jefferson in His Time." Publication is Wilson Quarterly, Spring 1993 p.36

“Jefferson, who was once one of the most revered American founders and early presidents, is now looked upon as a racist and as someone who was ruthless, self-righteous, and unconcerned for basic civil liberties.”

What is the correct way to cite this quote using the MLA style for parenthetical documentation?
________________________________________________________________________

What is the correct way to cite this quote using the APA style for parenthetical documentation?
________________________________________________________________________

Works Cited or References List

Now you must list all the sources you cited in your paper in a separate page. The Works Cited (MLA) or References (APA) list is where you will provide the complete bibliographic citation (author, title, publication date, etc.) for the sources you cited in your paper.

In both MLA and APA you list the sources in alphabetical order by the author’s last name. When no author is listed, you alphabetize by first letter of the article or book name. There are other rules, such as the citations should be double spaced and the second and successive lines of a citation should be indented (a hanging indent).

As you have learned over the course of this workbook, there are many types and formats for information sources. There are equally as many citation examples. **Below is an example a citation for a magazine article accessed from ProQuest**
**LIBR 101: Library & Information Strategies**

*APA example*


*MLA example*


The good news is that you are not expected to memorize every citation example. The MiraCosta College Library provides handouts for with sample citations for selected sources (ask the librarian for the MLA and APA handouts). These handouts, however, are by no means complete. For a complete list of citations rules you must consult the official guides provided by APA and MLA.

REF LB2369 .G53 2003

REF BF76.7 .P83 2001

There are also a number of online resources you may consult. For example, the website published by author Diana Hacker is very helpful. [http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/index.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/index.html)

If you do consult an online source, be sure the source is credible, for example, a college or university library.

**Exercise 2: Works Cited and References**

If you have not already done so, ask the librarian for the APA and MLA handouts. You may select either APA or MLA style to complete this exercise. Put the bibliographic information provided into a proper citation as shown in the handout.

Are you using MLA or APA?_____________________________________

**BOOK**: *Major in success: make college easier and fire up your dreams* by Patrick Combs, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA 2003

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Now go back and number each citation 1-5 in the order the citation would appear in a Works Cited or References list.