DOCUMENTING 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 the topic, 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.


In short, plagiarism is copying something without crediting the source. In effect, it is 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—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 you use your own words and ideas.

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):

► the original words of another person
► 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 described as items such as facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people. Common knowledge is not considered to be the work of any one particular person.

**Examples of common knowledge**

- John F. Kennedy was elected President of the USA in 1960.
- There are four seasons in the year.
- The sun sets in the west.
- The U.S. entered WWII 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 will 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 you’ll read an article or web page that makes exactly the same point you want to make, and is written so well you want to use it directly. In this case, you might want to quote directly from the source. Quoting a source means you are stating what someone else has written, word for word. 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).

In the example above, the quotation used was written by an author with the last name “Lester” and the quotation appeared on page 46 of this author’s document (could be a book, journal article, etc.)

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.

When you paraphrase something you do not need to 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 note take notes that are exact quotes from books (Lester 46-47).

In the example above, the student paraphrased information that they found on a couple of pages (46-47) written by the author Lester.

How To Cite Your Sources

There are two steps to citing your sources:

Step 1: Citing your sources within your paper: Giving credit within a research paper through footnotes or parenthetical citations (also commonly called in-text citations).

Step 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 MLA style. 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 (Works Cited or References list.)

Parenthetical Documentation (also known as in-text citations)

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) 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. MLA has 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).

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

Notice in the APA example, the information has been paraphrased and NOT directly quoted. Hence, no page number is required.

MLA example: No author

An anonymous Wordsworth critic once argued that his poems were too emotional ("Wordsworth Is A Loser" 100).

In the case of MLA, whether you use a direct quotation or paraphrase of the information, the page number(s) is required.

Exercise 1: Citing in the Text

Refer to the text on the previous page on parenthetical documentation for guidance with this exercise. 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."


1. What is the correct way to cite this quote using the MLA style for parenthetical documentation? Place your citation in the parentheses ( ).

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


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

Gordon Wood notes, “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” ( ).

Works Cited or References List

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

In MLA 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 are examples of a citation for a journal article accessed from ProQuest:


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 (You can also print it out here). These handouts, however, are by no means complete. For a complete list of citation rules you must consult the official style guides published by the Modern Language Association: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition).
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/

If you do consult an online source, be sure the source is a credible one published by a university such as Calvin College’s KnightCite or the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University.

**Exercise 2: Finding the Citation Information & Works Cited and References**

When you retrieve an article from ProQuest or any other online database, the citation information is usually available in several locations. The databases make it very convenient to locate the necessary information for you to cite in your *Works Cited* list. The same is true of an e-Book. The citation information is readily available. When you use a monograph (book in print form), you have to search for the relevant citation information. For this exercise, you are given two sample pages, which can be found in the initial pages of a book. Use the information to answer the accompanying questions.

Also, if you have not already done so, ask the librarian for the MLA style sample handouts or print them out from the library homepage under the “Citation Guides” tab. You will need to use these to answer questions in this exercise.

---

**Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age**

Diana Hacker

Make sure you complete Questions 1-4 on page 5 before you start on the next set of exercises.

3. What is the title of the work? ____________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
4. Who is the author? _________________________________

5. Where is the book published? _____________________ Year? _________________

6. Who is the publisher? ______________________________

7. Using the MLA style handout, fill in the missing citation information for the above book:

   Hacker, Diana. ________________________________________. Boston:

**Directions:** Fill in the missing citation information based on their accompanying source:

**BOOK SOURCE:** Major in Success: Make College Easier and Fire up Your Dreams by Patrick Combs, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA 2003


   Berkeley, CA: _________________, 2003. ____________.


9. “Motivation Defines First Generation College Students.” ____________________________

   June 2004: ___________. Print.

**JOURNAL ARTICLE:** Students' Characteristics that Facilitate the Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges by Valerie E. Lee and Kenneth A. Frank. Sociology of Education Vol. 63, No. 3 (Jul., 1990), pp. 178-193.


**A General Note**

11. Keep in mind that a Works Cited list is alphabetized according to the first word of each entry (usually last name, but by title if there is no author). From the three citations above, which one would appear first on the Works Cited page. Circle the correct answer:

   a) Patrick Comb’s Major in success: make college easier and fire up your dreams
   b) “Motivation defines first generation college students”
   c) Valerie E. Lee’s and Kenneth A. Frank’s Students' Characteristics that Facilitate the Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges