

Chapter 10.1: Ethically Using and Citing Sources



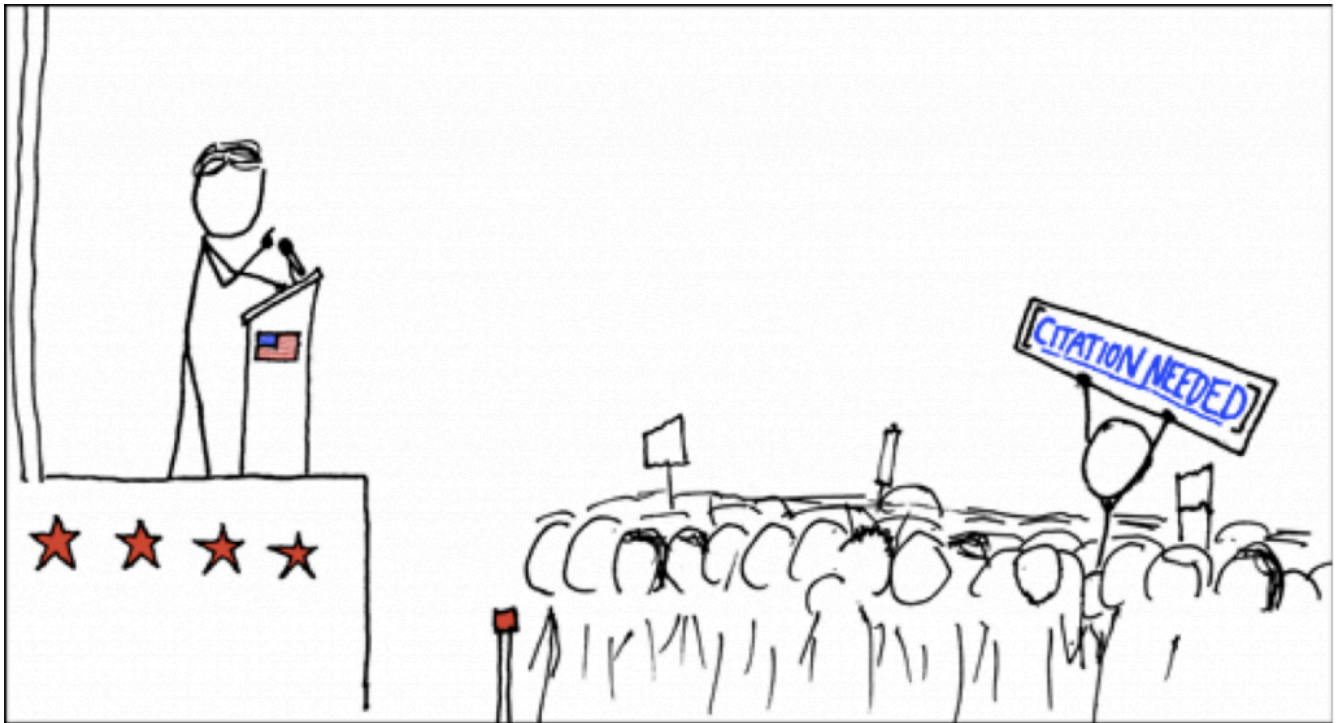
It's helpful to understand why to cite your sources.

You likely know that research projects always need a list of references sometimes called a bibliography. But have you ever wondered why?

There are some big picture reasons that don't often get articulated that might help you get better at meeting the citation needs of research projects. It's helpful to understand both the theory behind citing, as well as the mechanics of it, to really become a pro.

This section introduces the concept of citing sources, so you can begin your search for sources with it in mind. See [Steps for Citing](#) for examples and the steps for citing appropriately.

In everyday life, we often have conversations where we share new insights with each other. Sometimes these are insights we've developed on our own through the course of our own everyday experiences, thinking, and reflection. Sometimes these insights come after talking to other people and learning from additional perspectives. When we relate the new things we have learned to our family, friends, or co-workers, we may or may not fill them in on how these thoughts came to us.



In everyday conversation and political speeches, evidence for arguments is often not provided. (Image source: [XKDC](#))

Academic research leads us to the insight that comes from gaining perspectives and understandings from other people through what we read, watch, and hear. In academic work, we must tell our readers who and what led us to our conclusions. Documenting our research is important because people rely on academic research to be authoritative, so it is essential for academic conversations to be as clear as possible. Documentation for clarity is a shared and respected practice, and it represents a core value of the academy called “academic integrity.” It is a way to distinguish academic conversations from everyday conversations.

It is hard to talk about citation practices without considering some related concepts. Here are some definitions of those concepts that are often mentioned in assignments when citing sources is required.

What Is Academic Integrity?

Different universities have different definitions. Ohio State University uses this definition:

Academic integrity is a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action.

Please take a few moments to read the [University of Northern Iowa Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

In other words, you must take full responsibility for your work, acknowledge your own efforts, and acknowledge the contributions of others' efforts. Working with integrity requires accurately representing what you contributed, as well as acknowledging how others have influenced your work. When you are a student, an accurate representation of your knowledge is important because it will allow both you and your professors to know the extent to which you have developed as a scholar. Part of that development is evidenced by how you apply the rules for acknowledging the work of others.

What Is Academic Misconduct?

As you might imagine, academic misconduct is when you do not use integrity in your academic work. Academic misconduct includes many different unacceptable behaviors, but the one most relevant to what we are discussing here is submitting plagiarized work:

Submitting the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own, including paraphrases or direct quotations, without full and clear acknowledgment such as adequate footnotes, quotations, and other reference forms

To see the full definition of plagiarism, refer to the Academic Ethics Violations section of the [University of Northern Iowa Student Academic Ethics Policy](#). Plagiarism can be intentional (knowingly using someone else's work and presenting it as your own) or unintentional (inaccurately or inadequately citing ideas and words from a source). It may be impossible for your professor to determine whether plagiarized work was intentional or

unintentional. But in either case, plagiarism puts both you and your professor in a compromising position.

While academic integrity calls for work resulting from your own effort, scholarship requires that you learn from others. So in the world of academic scholarship, you are actually expected to learn new things from others AND come to new insights on your own. There is an implicit understanding that as a student you will be both using other's knowledge as well as your own insights to create new scholarship. To do this in a way that meets academic integrity standards you must acknowledge the part of your work that develops from others' efforts. You do this by citing the work of others. You plagiarize when you fail to acknowledge the work of others and do not follow appropriate citation guidelines.

What Is Citing?

Citing or citation is a practice of documenting specific influences on your academic work. See [Steps for Citing](#) for details.

In other words, you must cite all the sources you quote directly, paraphrase, or summarize as you:

- Answer your research question
- Convince your audience
- Describe the situation around your research question and why the question is important
- Report what others have said about your question

Why Cite Sources?

As a student citing is important because it shows your reader, in many cases your professor, that you have invested time in learning what has already been learned and thought about the topic before offering your own perspective. It is the practice of giving credit to the sources that inform your work.

Our definitions of academic integrity, academic misconduct, and plagiarism, also give us important reasons for citing the sources we use to accomplish academic research. Here are all the good reasons for citing.

To Avoid Plagiarism & Maintain Academic Integrity

Misrepresenting your academic achievements by not giving credit to others indicates a lack of academic integrity. This is not only looked down upon by the scholarly community but it is also punished. When you are a student this could mean a failing grade or even expulsion from the university.

To Acknowledge the Work of Others

One major purpose of citations is to simply provide credit where it is due. When you provide accurate citations, you are acknowledging both the hard work that has gone into producing research and the person(s) who performed that research.

Think about the effort you put into your work (whether essays, reports, or even non-academic jobs): if someone else took credit for your ideas or words, would that seem fair, or would you expect to have your efforts recognized?

To Provide Credibility to Your Work & to Place Your Work in Context

Providing accurate citations puts your work and ideas into an academic context. They tell your reader that you've done your research and know what others have said about your topic. Not only do citations provide context for your work but they also lend credibility and authority to your claims.

For example, if you're researching and writing about sustainability and construction, you should cite experts in sustainability, construction, and sustainable construction in order to demonstrate that you are well-versed in the most common ideas in the fields. Although you can make a claim about sustainable construction after doing research only in that particular field, your claim will carry more weight if you can demonstrate that your claim can be supported by the research of experts in closely related fields as well.

Citing sources about sustainability and construction as well as sustainable construction demonstrates the diversity of views and approaches to the topic. In addition, proper citation also demonstrates the ways in which research is social: no one researches in a vacuum—we all rely on the work of others to help us during the research process.

To Help Your Future Researching Self & Other Researchers Easily Locate Sources

Having accurate citations will help you as a researcher and writer keep track of the sources and information you find so that you can easily find the source again. Accurate citations may take some effort to produce, but they will save you time in the long run. So think of proper citation as a gift to your future researching self!

When to Quote, Paraphrase, or Summarize



This section features advice for using sources well in your writing projects.

If your final product is a research paper, essay, or presentation much of your writing will be devoted to:

- Reporting what others have said about your research question.
- Describing the situation surrounding your research question for your audience and explaining why it's important.
- Convincing your audience that your answer is correct or, at least, the most reasonable answer. Giving them evidence.

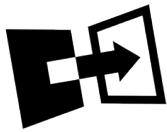
To accomplish this you will often paraphrase, summarize, or use direct quotes when appropriate. But how should you choose which technique to use when?

Tip: Citing Sources

Remember to cite your sources when quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. See [How to Cite Sources](#) for details.

Choose a direct quote

- when what you're quoting is the text you're analyzing
- when a direct quote is more accurate and concise than a summary or paraphrase would be and conciseness matters
- when the author is a particular authority whose exact words would lend credence to your argument
- when the author has used particularly effective language that is just too good to pass up.



Choose to paraphrase or summarize rather than to quote directly when the **meaning** is more important than the particular language the author used and you don't need to use the author's preeminent authority to bolster your argument at the moment.

Choose to paraphrase instead of summarizing when you need **details and specificity**. Paraphrasing lets you emphasize the ideas in source materials that are most relevant to your research project instead of the exact language the author used. It also lets you simplify complex material, sometimes rewording to use language that is more understandable to your reader.

Choose to summarize instead of paraphrasing when you need to provide a brief overview of a larger text. Summaries let you condense the resource material to draw out particular points, omit unrelated or unimportant points, and simply convey how the author's message.



For more tips on paraphrasing and summarizing, including an example of how to do one of each we suggest visiting the [Excelsior Owl Writing Lab](#). While you're at this site, you'll notice other helpful information available about the writing process.

Challenges in Citing Sources

Here are some challenges that might make knowing when and how to cite difficult for you. Our best advice for how to overcome these challenges is in the first item.

Running Out of Time

When you are a student taking many classes simultaneously and facing many deadlines, it may be hard to devote the time needed to do good scholarship and accurately representing the sources you have used. Research takes time. The sooner you can start and the more time you can devote to it, the better your work will be. From the beginning, be sure to include in your notes where you found the information you could quote, paraphrase, and summarize in your final product.

Having to Use Different Styles

Different disciplines require that your citations be in different styles: which publication information is included and in what order. So your citations for different courses could look different, particularly for courses outside your major.

Not Really Understanding the Material You're Using

If you are working in a new field or subject area, you might have difficulty understanding the information from other scholars, thus making it difficult to know how to paraphrase or summarize that work properly.

Shifting Cultural Expectations of Citation

Because of new technologies that make finding, using, and sharing information easier, many of our cultural expectations around how to do that are changing as well. For example, blog posts often “reference” other articles or works by simply linking to them. It makes it easy for the reader to see where the author’s ideas have come from and to view the source very quickly. But in these more informal writings, blog authors do not have a list of citations. The links do the work for them. This is a great strategy for online digital mediums, but this method fails over time when links break and there are no hints (like an author, title, and date) to know how else to find the reference, which might have moved.

This example of cultural change of expectations in the non-academic world might make it seem that there has been a change in academic scholarship as well, or might make people new to academic scholarship even less familiar with citation. But in fact, the expectations around citing sources in academic research remain formal.

Citation and Citation Styles



Sources that influenced your thinking and research must be cited in academic writing.

Citing sources is an academic convention for keeping track of which sources influenced your own thinking and research. See [Ethical Use and Citing Sources](#) for many good reasons why you should cite others' work.

Most citations require two parts:

- The full bibliographic citation on the Bibliography, References or Works Cited page of your final product.
- An indication within your text that tells your reader where you have used something that needs a citation. In-text citations usually include the author and publication date and maybe the page number from which you are quoting.

With your in-text citation, your reader will be able to tell which full bibliographic citation you are referring to by paying attention to the author's name and publication date.

Let's look at an example.

Example: Citations in Academic Writing

Here's a citation in APA style in the text of an academic paper:

Studies have shown that compared to passive learning, which occurs when students observe a lecture, students will learn more and will retain that learning longer if more active methods of teaching and learning are used (Bonwell & Eison 1991; Fink 2003).

The information in parentheses coordinates with a list of full citations at the end of the paper. At the end of the paper, these bibliographic entries appear in a reference list:

Bonwell, C.C., & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom* (Report No. 1). ASHE-ERIC Higher Education. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED336049.pdf>

Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences*. Wiley.

Citation Styles

Style guides set the specific rules for how to create both in-text citations and their full bibliographic citations. There are over a dozen kinds of citation styles. While each style requires much of the same publication information to be included in a citation, the styles differ from each other in formatting details such as capitalization, punctuation, the order of publication information, and whether the author's name is given in full or abbreviated.

Example: Differences in Citation Styles

Below are bibliographic citations for the same article in four common styles. Notice they contain information about who the author is, article title, journal title, publication year, and information about volume, issue, and pages. Notice the small difference in punctuation, order of the elements, and formatting that **do make a difference**.

APA:

Rosenhan, D. L. (1973). On being sane in insane places. *Science*, 179(4070), 250-258.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.179.4070.250>

Chicago:

Rosenhan, D. L. 1973. "On Being Sane in Insane Places." *Science* 179, no. 4070: 250-258.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.179.4070.250>

MLA:

Rosenhan, D. L. "On Being Sane in Insane Places." *Science*, vol. 179, no. 4070: 250-258, 1973, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.179.4070.250>.

AMA:

Rosenhan, DL. On being sane in insane places. *Science*.1973, 179(4070):250-258. doi:10.1126/science.179.4070.250.

Compare citation elements including punctuation and spacing to see how each style handles each element.

Citing Data (See also – Ethical use of Sources)

Unlike many other types of resources, data is not copyrightable, but the expression of data is. So as with any other information source, you should cite any data you use from a source, whether it appeared in an article or you downloaded the data from a repository on the Web.

Some data providers will have recommended citations on their web pages. Unfortunately, data citation standards do not exist in many disciplines, although the [DataCite initiative](#) is working on them. Current workarounds include:

- Citing a “data paper,” where available.
- Citing a journal article that describes the dataset.
- Citing a book that includes the data.
- Citing the dataset as a website, where possible.

Examples: Citing Data

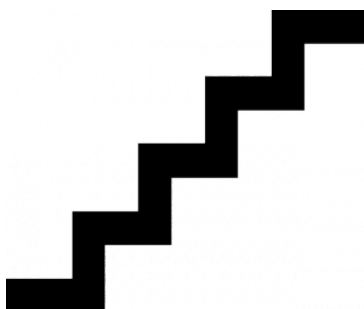
Data from a research database:

- APA: Department of Agriculture (USDA). (2008). “Crops Harvested”, Crop Production [data file]. Data Planet, (09/15/2009).
- MLA: “Crops Harvested”, Department of Agriculture (USDA) [data file] (2008). Data Planet, (09/15/2009).

Data from a file found on the open Web:

- APA: Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health. (2012, November). Mortality Table D1. Age-Adjusted Rates for Leading Causes of Cancer for Residents, 2002-2011. [Microsoft Excel file]. Washington State Department of Health. Available from <http://www.doh.wa.gov/>
- MLA: Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health. Mortality Table D1. Age-Adjusted Rates for Leading Causes of Cancer for Residents, 2002-2011. Washington State Department of Health, Nov. 2012. Microsoft Excel file. Retrieved from <http://www.doh.wa.gov/>

Steps for Citing



To write a proper citation we recommend following these steps, which will help you maintain accuracy and clarity in acknowledging sources.

Step 1: Determine Your Citation Style

Find out the name of the citation style you must use from your instructor, the directions for an assignment, or what you know your audience or publisher expects. Then search for your style at the [Excelsior Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) or use [Rod Library's citation guide](#).

Step 2: Create In-Text Citations

Find and read your style's rules about in-text citations, which are usually very thorough. Luckily, there are usually examples provided that make it a lot easier to learn the rules.

For instance, your style guide may have different rules for when you are citing:

- Quotations rather than summaries rather than paraphrases
 - Long, as opposed to short, quotations.
 - Sources with one or multiple authors.
 - Books, journal articles, interviews, emails, or electronic sources.
-

Step 3: Determine the Kind of Source

After creating your in-text citation, now begin creating the full bibliographic citation that will appear on the References or Bibliography page by deciding what kind of source you have to cite (book, film, journal article, webpage, etc.).

Example: Using a Style Guide to Create an In-Text Citation

Imagine that you're using APA style and have the APA style guide rules for [in-text citations open in Excelsior OWL](#). In your geography paper, you want to quote from the book *The Experience of Nature* written by Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan and published in 1989. You want to quote a passage from page 38.

Here's what you want to quote:

“The way space is organized provides information about what one might want to do in that space. A relatively brief glance at a scene communicates whether there is room to roam, whether one's path is clear or blocked.”

1. Skim the headings in the style guide to remind yourself of the topics covered by its rules. Since it has rules about the length of quotations, you count the number of words in what you want to quote and find that your quote has 38, which is within the range for short quotations (less than 40), according to the APA style guide. According to the rule for short quotations, you see that you're supposed to introduce the quote by attributing the quote to the author or authors (last name only) and adding the publication date in parentheses. You write:

According to the Kaplans (1989), “The way space is organized provides information about what one might want to do in that space. A relatively brief glance at a scene communicates whether there is room to roam, whether one's path is clear or blocked.”

2. Then you notice that the example in the style guide includes the page number on which you found the quotation. It appears at the end of the quote (in parentheses and outside the quote marks but before the period ending the quotation). So you add that:

According to the Kaplans (1989), “The way space is organized provides information about what one might want to do in that space. A relatively brief glance at a scene communicates whether there is room to roam, whether one's path is clear or blocked” (p. 38).

3. You're feeling pretty good, but then you realize that you have overlooked the rule about having multiple authors. You have two and their last names are both Kaplan. So you change your sentence to:

According to **Kaplan and Kaplan** (1989), “The way space is organized provides information about what one might want to do in that space. A relatively brief glance at a scene communicates whether there is room to roam, whether one's path is clear or blocked” (p.38).

So you have your first in-text citation for your final product:

According to Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), “The way space is organized provides information about what one might want to do in that space. A relatively brief glance at a scene communicates whether there is room to roam, whether one’s path is clear or blocked” (p.38).

Step 4: Study Your Style’s Rules for Bibliographic Citations

Next, you’ll need a full bibliographic citation for the same source. This citation will appear on the References page or Bibliography page or Works Cited page. APA style, which we’re using here, requires a page called References. Bibliographic citations usually contain more publication facts than you used for your in-text citation, and the formatting for all of them is very specific.

- Rules vary for sources, depending, for instance, on whether they are books, journal articles, or online sources.
- Sometimes lines of the citation must be indented.
- Authors’ names usually appear with the last name first.
- Authors’ first names of authors may be initials instead.
- Names of sources may or may not have to be in full.
- Names of some kinds of sources may have to be italicized.
- Names of some sources may have to be in quotes.
- Dates of publication appear in different places, depending on the style.
- Some styles require [Digital Object Identifiers](#) (DOIs) in the citations for online sources.

Step 5: Identify Citation Elements

Figure out which bibliographic citation rules apply to the source you’ve just created an in-text citation for. Then apply them to create your first bibliographic citation.

Example: Using a Style Guide to Create a Bibliographic Citation

Imagine that you're using APA style and have the APA style guide rules for [bibliographic citations open in Excelsior OWL](#).

Your citation will be for the book called *The Experience of Nature*, written by Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan and published in 1989.

1. You start by trying to apply OWL's basic rules of APA style, which tell you your citation will start with the last name of your author followed by their first initial, and that the second line of the citation will be indented. So you write: **Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, S.** and remind yourself to indent the second line when you get there.
2. Since you have two authors, you look for a rule regarding that situation, which requires a comma between the authors and an ampersand between the names. So you write: Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S.
3. Because you know your source is a book, you look for style guide rules and examples about books. For instance, the rules for APA style say that the publication date goes in parentheses, followed by a period after the last author's name. And that the title of the book is italicized. You apply the rules and examples and write the publication information you know about your source: Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). ***The Experience of Nature***.
4. You look at the examples and learn in APA, the first word of a book title and any proper nouns are capitalized. You write: Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). ***The experience of nature***.
5. Next, you look at the rules and examples of book citations and notice that they show the publisher of the book. So you find that information about your source (in a book, usually on the title page or its back) and write: Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The Experience of Nature*. **Cambridge University Press**.

Congratulations, especially about remembering to indent that line! You have created the first bibliographic citation for your final product.

Kaplan, R., & Kaplan, S. (1989). *The Experience of Nature*. **Cambridge University Press**.

Exercise: APA citations

Review these APA citations and identify the type of resource in the citation.



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Step 6: Repeat the steps for creating an in-text citation and a bibliographic citation for each of your sources.

Create your bibliographic citation by arranging publication information to match the example you chose in Step 4. Pay particular attention to what is and is not capitalized and to what punctuation and spaces separate each part that the example illustrates.

Citation Management

You may be familiar with the many citation generators that allow you to auto-generate reference lists from citation data. Some allow you to save and store citations to reuse them in different lists and in a different work, as needed.

Such tools are worth investigating and learning about for any long-term research project. Zotero and Mendeley are online and available for free to anyone from anywhere. RefWorks and EndNote are fee-based services that some libraries subscribe to.

Good reasons to use a citation generator include:

- To save time: it takes citation generation software only a few seconds to create a citation.
- To easily convert citations from one style to another.
- To have a centralized source list that is not attached to a specific project, which allows you to reuse references and their citations in various projects.

Things to **watch out** for with citation generators:

- Citation generation software is only as good as the information entered into it. In other words, if you provide incorrect information or do not include some information, then your citation will be incorrect.
- Most citation generation software can create citations by searching for the information online. Sometimes software can pull the information from the wrong edition of a source, for example, or specific formatting (such as italics) might be lost. Or perhaps the generator didn't use the latest version of the style guide.
- **Always review the citations you create with this software.**

When to Cite

Citing sources is often described as a straightforward, rule-based practice. But in fact, there are many gray areas around citation, and learning how to apply citation guidelines takes practice and education. If you are confused by it, you are not alone – in fact, you might be doing some good thinking. Here are some guidelines to help you navigate citation practices.

Cite when you are directly quoting. This is the easiest rule to understand. If you are stating word-for-word what someone else has already written, you must put quotes around those words and you must give credit to the original author. Not doing so would mean that you are letting your reader believe these words are your own and represent your own effort.

Cite when you are summarizing and paraphrasing. This is a trickier area to understand. First of all, summarizing and paraphrasing are two related practices but they are not the same. Summarizing is when you read a text, consider the main points, and provide a shorter version of what you learned. Paraphrasing is when you restate what the original author said in your own words and in your own tone. Both summarizing and paraphrasing require good writing skills and an accurate understanding of the material you are trying to convey. Summarizing and paraphrasing are difficult to do when you are a beginning academic researcher, but these skills become easier to perform over time with practice.

Cite when you are citing something that is highly debatable. For example, if you want to claim that the PATRIOT Act has been an important tool for national security, you should be prepared to give examples of how it has helped and how experts have claimed that it has helped. Many U.S. citizens concerned that it violates privacy rights won't agree with you, and they will be able to find commentary that the Patriot Act has been more harmful to the nation than helpful. You need to be prepared to show such skeptics that you have experts on your side, too.

When Not to Cite?

Don't cite when what you are saying is your own insight. As you learned in previous chapters, research involves forming opinions and insights around what you learn. You may be citing several sources that have helped you learn, but at some point, you must integrate your own opinion, conclusion, or insight into the work. The fact that you are not citing it helps the reader understand that this portion of the work is your unique contribution developed through your own research efforts.

Don't cite when you are stating common knowledge. What is common knowledge is sometimes difficult to discern. In general, quick facts like historical dates or events are not cited because they are common knowledge.

Examples of information that would not need to be cited include:

- The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.
- Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States in January, 2009.

Some quick facts, such as statistics, are trickier. For example, the number of gun-related deaths per year probably should be cited, because there are a lot of ways this number could be determined (does the number include murder only, or suicides and accidents, as well?) and there might be different numbers provided by different organizations, each with an agenda about gun laws.

A guideline that can help with deciding whether or not to cite facts is to determine whether the same data is repeated in multiple sources. If it is not, it is best to cite.

The other thing that makes this determination difficult might be that what seems new and insightful to you might be common knowledge to an expert in the field. You have to use your best judgment, and probably err on the side of over-citing, as you are learning to do academic research. You can seek the advice of your instructor, a writing tutor, or a librarian. Knowing what is and is not common knowledge is a practiced skill that gets easier with time and with your own increased knowledge.

Tip: Why You Can't Cite Wikipedia

You've likely been told at some point that you can't cite Wikipedia, or any encyclopedia for that matter, in your scholarly work.

The reason is that such entries are meant to *prepare* you to do research, not be evidence of your having done it. Wikipedia entries, which are tertiary sources, are already a summary of what is known about the topic. Someone else has already done the labor of synthesizing lots of information into a concise and quick way of learning about the topic.

So while Wikipedia is a great shortcut for getting context, background, and a quick lesson on



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Wikipedia, while good for early research and background information, shouldn't be cited as a source because it's already a summary.

topics that might not be familiar to you, don't quote, paraphrase, or summarize from it. Just use it to educate yourself.

Exercise: To Cite or Not to Cite

Review the following statements and determine if you need a citation for the statement or not.



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<https://minnstate.pressbooks.pub/ctar/?p=201#h5p-25>