

Citation Basics: Three Golden Rules for College Academics

Potsdam College Writing Center

When In Doubt, Cite It! Always Cover Your...self, & Resist Academic Temptation

In other words:

- You can't cite too much. Keep track of information and ideas from all your sources and cite as often as you need to.
- Save your sources in case you need to correct mistakes or answer questions about where your information came from.
- And start writing early, in stages: don't wait until the last minute and make risky mistakes under pressure.

When using a source in your writing, choose one of these three ways:

- Incorporate into your own thinking and language -- with citation in text and in bib.
- Paraphrase completely into your own words -- with citation in text and in bib.
- Put quotation marks around any and all original words, unless you indent a quote that is 40 words or longer. Cite every quotation.

Follow these Guidelines for Giving Credit:

1. Cite every source you use.

2. Keep exact words from your source in quotation marks.

3. Paraphrase completely into your own words.

4. Cite paraphrases in parentheses.

5. Include every text you use in your bibliography.

1. ***Cite every source you use in your paper.*** Cite all websites, films, conversations, textbooks, etc. Cite in your text AND in a bibliography. Keep track of where all words, information, and ideas have come from, and include citations in every draft, however rough they are. Be ready to answer questions from your teacher about your sources and citations.
2. ***Keep exact words from your source in quotation marks.*** Presenting others' words without quotation marks looks like you're claiming those words as your own; that's plagiarism.
3. ***Paraphrase completely into your own words.*** That is, if you put a concept or info from your source in your own words, put it completely in your own words. If your words are too close to their words, you are verging on plagiarism.
4. ***Cite paraphrases in parentheses.*** Cite author in parentheses to show where an idea or info comes from, even if it's in your own words. If you put it in your own words and fail to cite, you are presenting the idea/info as your own. That's plagiarism.
5. ***Include every text you use in your bibliography.*** This is a key to academic integrity: disclose every source so that readers can learn more and confirm the information for themselves. If you leave the source out of your bib and cite poorly, that looks like you're claiming those words, info, or ideas as your own. That's plagiarism.

Remember, you get credit for giving credit. Citations let you show off your good research and share the credibility of your expert sources.

Basics of MLA Format

Paraphrase: (Gillespie and Lerner 32) – no comma necessary in MLA style. No page numbers for web-based sources.

Short quote: Gillespie and Lerner point out that “[i]f you’ve had any experience with a writing center . . . , you know that not all sessions start with a draft of a paper” (31). You can always weave three or more words right into your sentence like this. Just keep original words in quotation marks and indicate changes with square brackets and cuts with ellipses, as in the example.

Name the author in your sentence: If you name the author of any quote or paraphrased material clearly in the text, then provide only page numbers, if there are any, in parentheses. (See example.)

Work with no author: Instead of the author’s name, use the first two words of the title. Put those words in quotes for articles or chapters but in italics for books, journals, films, etc.

Long quote: Indent exact quotes that take up more than three full lines of text. Drop the quotation marks, because indenting shows us that it’s a quote. Move the period. For example:

Moore Howard argues that universities too often see plagiarism as a moral crime or sin, rather than as an indication of confusion and new thinking:

Morality is not a necessary component of plagiarism, and ignorance of citation conventions is not its sole alternative. . . . A third possibility, too seldom recognized, is that students have commendable reasons for engaging in patchwriting . . . (797)

Works Cited: Readers follow the clues in parentheses to find the buried treasure of your bibliography. There, they can get all the information they need to find each source for themselves.

In MLA, list all sources used in a “works cited” list at the end of your paper. Alphabetize sources by author’s last name; do not number them. Insert works without authors in alphabetical order by title. You must provide the date you looked at an electronic source and the library database where you found it, if relevant. However, no urls are needed in your bibliography, if we can use the title of the work to find it easily.

Follow a correct, updated format for presenting detailed information about your source. You must consult a resource like Diana Hacker’s research and documentation website, the Purdue OWL website, *Keys for Writers*, or *Rules of Thumb: A Guide for Writers* (the source of next examples).

Book: Love, Louise. *The Complete Book of Pizza*. Evanston, IL: Sassafra, 1980. Print.

Website:

Slomon, Evelyne. “Viva Latino Pizza!” *PMQ*. Pizza Marketing Quarterly, April-May 2006. Web. 20 March 2009.

Article found through Library Computer System:

Hickman, Martin. “Fast-food ‘Healthy Options’ Still Full of Fat and Salt.” *Independent* [London] 1 Dec. 2005. LexisNexis. Web. 20 March 2009.