

The When, Where, How, and Why of Citation (MLA Style)

Why do We Cite?

The main reason for citation is to mark the data and ideas that you owe to other scholars, in order not to claim someone else's work as your own. Citation also provides a "paper trail," so that someone reading your work and interested in your ideas can trace them back to the scholars whom you are citing. In a classroom setting, we can use your citations to check how well you seem to be understanding the texts that you're citing. Last but not least, proper citation prevents you from inadvertent plagiarism.

When to Cite

There are two situations in which you need to cite your sources; the first (and most obvious) is when you are using a quote from a text, and the second is when you are using data from a text.

Quotations

Quotations are obvious; any time you want to use a direct quote, you should enclose that quote in quotation marks and cite it.

For example: "At the same time, however, countering traditional moralistic biases and middle-class hostility toward the poor should not come at the cost of sanitizing the suffering and destruction that exists on inner-city streets" (Bourgeois 11-12).

Common Errors:

Formatting errors (quote marks after citation; citation wrong format) -- see "Format of the Citation Itself," below.

Wrong use of ellipsis -- see "Format of Data," "Use of Ellipsis."

Alteration of quotation -- for proper use of [square brackets] to make quotations flow grammatically, see "Format of Data," "Integrating Quotes Grammatically with the Use of Ellipsis."

Other alteration of quotation cannot be done without the use of square brackets; you must either use the quote as it stands or summarize it in your own words and cite it *without* quote marks, making it a *summary citation*. It is very, **very** important to be sure to put the material in your own words *entirely* when you do this. See "Summary Citations" immediately below.

Summary Citations

Data from the text that you have summarized in your own words is a little more complex. In brief, if you use specific data from the text, you must cite it. Do not cite material that is generally known; the fact that the !Kung are hunters and gatherers, for example, does not need to be cited. Any specific details about their system of hxaro exchange, percentages of contributions towards subsistence, or changes in their lifestyle due to colonialism, however, are gotten from particular books or articles and should be cited.

Incorrect: A good example of differences in !Kung gender roles can be

seen in their mode of subsistence; most of men's contribution to the food supply is made through hunting and most of women's is made through gathering. Gathered plant foods make up to eighty percent of the !Kung diet, yet meat is more highly valued than these gathered foods, perhaps because it is so scarce, and perhaps also because meat contains more fat than most plant foods.

Correct: A good example of differences in !Kung gender roles can be seen in their mode of subsistence; most of men's contribution to the food supply is made through hunting and most of women's is made through gathering. Gathered plant foods make up to eighty percent of the !Kung diet, yet meat is more highly valued than these gathered foods (Shostak 12-13), perhaps because it is so scarce, and perhaps also because meat contains more fat than most plant foods.

Note that the citation comes before the statement of opinion on the part of the essayist; you don't need to cite your own opinions. In fact, don't!

Common Errors

Example quote: "The uninsured receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical interventions); having health insurance would reduce mortality rates for the uninsured by 10-15 percent; and better health would improve annual earnings by about 10-30 percent (depending on measures and specific health condition) and would increase educational attainment" (Kaiser Foundation, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

Note that this citation has no page numbers because it is website; instead, the name of the page is used. If page numbers are present, they must be used.

The Cut-and-Paste-"Summary"

When using material from articles found via web searches or webpages, many students have found it useful to cut-and-paste large amounts of material into a master reference document. However, **beware** of then cutting and pasting from that document into your final paper. Why? Because any material put into your paper via cut-and-paste **has been written by someone else. Using a summary citation on this is therefore plagiarism, since a summary citation states that it is your own writing.** Therefore, you need to enclose it in quotes and cite it as a quotation if you wish to use it. If you're using whole paragraphs, this can be a problem. Read your references thoroughly and write your own paragraphs instead.

Incorrect (plagiarism): The uninsured receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical interventions); having health insurance would reduce mortality rates for the uninsured by 10-15 percent; and better health would improve annual earnings by about 10-30 percent (depending on measures and specific health condition)(Kaiser Foundation,"Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

This is plagiarism because it leads the reader to believe that the author wrote this piece, which is incorrect -- it is from the Kaiser Foundation webpage (the URL should appear in the Works Cited section, see how to format web page bibliographic references below in "Format of Works Cited Section.").

Correct: "The uninsured receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical interventions); having health insurance would reduce mortality rates for the uninsured by 10-15 percent; and better health would improve annual earnings by about 10-30 percent (depending on measures and specific health condition)" (Kaiser Foundation, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

Easily corrected. Put quotes around it.

The "I changed a few words" Summary

Sometimes people will change a word here and there in their source sentences and summary-cite instead of quotation citing. This is not correct citation. In fact, as in the example above (a technique it is sometimes combined with), **it is plagiarism**. If more than thirty percent of the words -- a percent, you will note, which is quite low -- are the original author's, this is plagiarism. You cannot even use half of the original author's material, let alone change a phrase here and there. Responsible authors will even avoid -- or choose to direct-quote -- key, memorable phrases.

Incorrect (plagiarism): The uninsured receive less prevention, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less drugs and surgical interventions. Having health insurance would reduce mortality rates for the uninsured by 10 to 15 percent, and better health would improve annual earnings by about 10 to 30 percent, depending on measures and their specific health -- it would also increase education (Kaiser Foundation, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

Note the changes here and there. **These changes do not absolve the author of plagiarism.** The bones of this writing were still done by the author(s) of the Kaiser foundation webpage.

Correct: "The uninsured receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical interventions); having health insurance would reduce mortality rates for the uninsured by 10-15 percent; and better health would improve annual earnings by about 10-30 percent (depending on measures and specific health condition)" (Kaiser Foundation, 5/10/2002, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

There are two ways to correct this error. This is one of them. Just direct-quote the webpage.

Here is another way to correct the error:

Correct: According to the Kaiser Foundation, uninsured people face a

distinct disadvantage -- they receive less preventative care, tend to be diagnosed when their diseases are more advanced, and then receive less disease intervention in the way of drugs and surgery. Having health insurance would reduce mortality rates by 10-15 percent and the resulting rise in health would improve people's earnings by 10 to 30 percent (depending, of course, on their specific circumstances) (Kaiser Foundation, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," par. 2).

It's not actually that difficult to put things in one's own words.

The "Frankenstein's Monster Sentence" Summary

You cannot take a piece of a sentence from one part of the article or webpage or book, and another from another part, and put them together to form a new sentence. This simply cannot be done. While you can shorten quotes with the use of the ellipsis (see "Format of Data," "Use of Ellipsis," below), you cannot take bits of sentences that are not even on the same page and put them together. You cannot cite this as a summary -- and you obviously cannot cite this as a quotation, since it isn't what the author said -- originally, a great deal of material occurred in between!

Original Quotes: "The question is how, despite and because of our relation to power, informants will decide to trust our authority with their truth" (Ong 354).

"Margaret Mead once said that everyone is an immigrant in the twentieth century" (Ong 368)

Incorrect (plagiarism): The question is how, despite and because of our relation to power, informants will decide to trust our authority with their truth, now that everyone is an immigrant in the twentieth century (Ong 1995).

There is no way to fix this. Just don't do it. This is a sort of plagiarism that's really more work than writing your own sentences. Ong didn't write this and neither did the purported author of this paper. There's no proper way to cite it and it's really an awful piece -- just don't do it.

Other Issues

How often should you put in a citation when you are citing a great deal of summary material from the same text? This actually depends on the material. In general, the rule is that a citation *only stands for the sentence it is attached to* -- however, with summary material, having a citation attached to every sentence can break up the paragraph something awful. There are a few rules you can follow when you're doing something like this:

In general, cite more complex and detailed information -- longer sentences.

You can usually get away with citing every *other* sentence. (Or, if you write really *short* sentences, every third sentence, but in general, stick to the every other sentence rule.)

However, if you're suddenly switching subjects, you should probably cite! If you were talking about exchange and suddenly are talking about gender, or giving an example, you should cite.

Definitely cite when you switch: subjects, areas in the text, articles, and authors.

Remember -- don't cite your own ideas! See below: "When Not to Cite."

When Not to Cite

Don't cite your opinions or your own analysis; that's tantamount to giving someone else the credit

for your ideas.

You do not have to cite **summary** material if you have **already** cited it in the paper (for example, if you are referring, in your conclusions, to some things you have already discussed, you do not need to cite them again).

You do not have to cite **summary** material if you intend to describe it in more detail and cite it. For example, if you mention a story in general from one of the ethnographies, and then go on to either quote it or summarize it in more detail and cite it, you do not have to cite the first, more general introduction.

You do not need to cite **brief** (two to ten-word) quotes that have been abstracted from **already-cited quotations**. For example, if I had already quoted a passage from Malinowski that included the phrase "the native's point of view," I could then go on to quote that phrase later in the paper without citing it. (I could assume that my readers would all know where it came from.)

How and Where to Cite

This handout covers MLA in-text citation procedure. There are, of course, other ways to cite, but we will not be covering them here.

Format of the Citation Itself

MLA Citations follow this general format: **[Data or quotation] ([Author's last name] [page number or numbers])**. *Please note that in this handout, phrases and words in [square brackets] indicate the types of information you must use in citations; square brackets should NOT actually appear in citations!*

Example: He states that he "intended to give a concrete example showing that a subject like sex cannot be treated except in its institutional setting, and through its manifestations in other aspects of culture" (Malinowski lviii).

Note that the closing quote mark *always* occurs before the citation itself.

The **author's name is not optional**. It **must** appear in either the sentence or the citation itself.

And last, but NOT least, the **period** of the sentence always occurs **after the citation**. This is because the citation stands for or is attached to that sentence *only*. It cites *one* quotation or *one* sentence of summary material.

There are **four** situations in which the citation style will be different. These situations and the way to cite them are as follows:

Quoted Material

If you want to use something that is quoted in one of your texts (i.e., the author of the text you are using quotes someone else, and you want to use that quote), the format is **([Name of Original Author] in [Author of Text] [page])**. This is simpler than it looks in this schematic, for example: Fieldwork also has other functions, of course, such as "the comprehension of self by the detour of the comprehension of the other" (Ricoeur in Rabinow 5).

Note that in this case the only work that will appear in the Works Cited section should be the text which you are using, not the text that author cited (since you did not actually see that text, but used

the text which cited it). To clarify, in the above example, you would NOT include Ricouer's text in your Works Cited sections, but would instead provide Rabinow's.

Material from a Discussion

If you are quoting or using data from a discussion with someone, the format is ([**Name of Person**], **personal communication**, [**date of discussion**]). Other people also insist on the uncanniness of dolls (Judith A. McLaughlin, personal communication, 5/24/2000).

Material from Class Lectures

If you are using quotes or information from class lectures, the format is ([**Title of class**], [**date of lecture**]). For example: An excellent illustration of how the basic forms of language may influence what is seen as important is the Kwakwaka'wakw example, in which the speaker must indicate how the knowledge spoken of has come to be known (such as "I saw the lady washing clothes") (Anth 1A, 10/18/02).

Material from Webpages

If you are using quotes or data from a webpage, the format we prefer you to use is ([**Author of Webpage**] [**"Title of Webpage"**], [**paragraph number referenced**]). The actual URL of the page should appear in the bibliography of the Works Cited section. *There are many other ways to cite webpages!* This is the MLA version. For example: Here is a typical disclaimer: "Just a disclaimer - I'm 28 with no psychiatric problems, am in good health, and have a masters degree from a reputable university, so I don't think I'm intellectually impaired, either. I don't want to seem like I'm 'ill' or delusional or making this up" ("Obiwan," "Scary Spirits," par. 1).

Changes in the Format of Citation

In certain circumstances, your citation format changes. Specifically, if you mention certain data in the sentence, such as the name of the author, you do not then have to repeat yourself in the citation.

Author Name in the Sentence

If you mention the author's name in the sentence, you may omit it in the citation. You **must** mention the actual name of the author, however; sentences referencing "he" or "she" do **not** count!

Example: As Ortner points out, "Bourdieu... held out against the idea of the intentional subject: for Bourdieu there are practices, there are actors, but there are no significant intentionalities" (11).

Format of Data

Punctuation

When you are citing direct quotes, there are a couple of things to remember. Firstly, the citation is part of the sentence, so the period should *always* occur *before* the period that closes the sentence (except in the case of block-quotes, where the citation occurs after the period because the block-quote format indicates that everything belongs together). For this reason, you omit the period at the end of your quotation, if there is one. If your quotation ends with a question mark, exclamation point, or ellipsis, however, you can leave those in -- but remember to put the period in at the end of your citation!

Simple omission of a period at the end of a sentence: When Shostak speaks about her

anthropological experience, she ends with saying "but I did not understand how they felt about their relationships and their lives. I needed information that could not be observed; I needed the !Kung to start speaking for themselves" (6-7).

Note that the quote goes over two pages, thus two pages are cited here.

Inclusion of punctuation at end of quoted material: "Almost a fifth of the American population reports frequent paranormal experiences, a finding that dazzles our social science colleagues as it does us. How could such an extraordinary phenomenon be overlooked for so long? Better yet, why has it been overlooked for so long?" (Greely in Hufford 247-8).

Note that the period is still used! "Nail" the quotation to the end of your sentence with a period!

Use of Ellipsis

One can use an ellipsis to shorten quotes, if one wants to use them but they seem too long for practical inclusion in the paper. You must beware, however, that you do not change the *meaning* of the quoted material!

Correct: "When I read a book by one of my anthropological colleagues, I am, I must confess, frequently bored by the facts. ...I read the books by Professors Firth and Fortes not from an interest in the facts but as to learn something about the principles behind the facts" (Leach 277).

Incorrect: "I read a book by one of my anthropological colleagues... from an interest in the facts... to learn something about the principles behind the facts" (Leach 277).

The second quote makes Leach seem to say something that is really quite the opposite of what he actually wrote.

Integrating Quotes Grammatically With the Use of [Brackets]

Sometimes you wish to integrate a quote with a sentence in your paper, but it will not work grammatically, because of the tenses of the verbs or the pronouns, or so on. In this case, it is permissible to make **purely grammatical** changes as long as you mark them with square brackets.

Example Quote: "I was now lost in a different wilderness, the wilderness of success in the university system... Fresh from the horror of being a translated woman, I would now turn around and translate another woman for consumption on this side of the border" (Behar 335).

Integrated as a sentence: Behar writes movingly of this experience, as she "was now lost in a different wilderness, the wilderness of success in the university system... Fresh from the horror of being a translated woman, [she] would now turn around and translate another woman for consumption on this side of the border" (335).

You can also use square brackets to make short remarks in the text to clarify anything that you think the reader might find unclear (see the next example for a case depicting this). For longer explanations, however, you should use footnotes.

How to Use Block Quotations

Block quotations should be used whenever you can shorten the space used by utilizing a block quotation. As a rule of thumb, with most typefaces, block quotes should be used for all quotes that exceed four lines.

Block quotes should be **single-spaced** (remember, they're meant to save space), and **indented** (*not* centered). You should **not** enclose block quotations in quote marks, and because of this, block quotations are the single exception to the citations inside of the period rule. For block quotations, you can place the citation outside of the period (because it is clear that the citation is for the entire indented piece).

It is always good to introduce your block quotations, the same as you would with any other quotations:

Geertz depicts rapport with the natives of a culture as necessary for the anthropologist, remarking that

Getting caught, or almost caught, in a vice raid [on an illegal cockfight] is perhaps not a very generalizable recipe for achieving that mysterious necessity of anthropological field work, rapport, but for me it worked very well. It led to a sudden and unusually complete acceptance into a society extremely difficult for outsiders to penetrate. It gave me the kind of immediate, inside-view grasp of an aspect of "peasant mentality" that anthropologists not fortunate enough to flee headlong with their subjects from armed authorities normally do not get. (Geertz 416)

Again:

Indent, but do not center!

No quotations needed!

Citation outside period!

ALWAYS single-space for block-quotes!

Format of Works Cited Section

At the end of your paper, you should have a Works Cited page, which lists the texts that you have *cited* in your paper. If you mention a text in passing, it should NOT be included here; this is only a list of texts from which you have made actual **citations**.

The Works Cited section should be listed **alphabetically by author's last name**. Anonymous sources should be listed at the top.

There are only two cases where if you cite a source, you do NOT have to include it in the Works Cited section. The first is if you are citing a personal communication (see the example above); the second is if you are citing a class lecture (again, see example above). These do not need to appear

in the Works Cited section.

The general format is as follows:

Works Cited

The Works Cited page should be on a separate piece of paper; should be headed with Works Cited, either italicized or bolded, and the works should be listed **in alphabetical order by last name**.

Also, works cited should be formatted with a hanging indent, as shown below (that is, they are indented *except* for the first line).

In general, Works Cited sections are single-spaced (although you may double-space them if they are short). The examples that follow will show you a proper way to format a number of different possible texts.

Anonymous material is listed first, under author, "Anonymous."

Example: a book

[Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name]. [Name of Book]. [Place of Publication]: [Publisher], [Year of Publication].

Sklar, Deidre. *Dancing With the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas, New Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Example: an article from a journal

[Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name]. "[Name of Article]." [Name of Journal]. [Volume Number]. [Issue Number, If Any]. ([Year of Publication]): [Pages].

Buttrey, Theodore. "Comment on Jeremiah Epstein's Pre-Columbian Old World Coins in America: An Examination of the Evidence." *Current Anthropology* 21 (1980):12-13.

Humphrey, Richard V. "The Untenable 'Pattee hypothesis' for Mystery Hill." *NEARA Journal* 14.3(1980): 50-56.

Example: an article from an edited book

[Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name]. "[Name of Article]." [Name of Volume]. Ed. [Editor(s) Names,] [Place of Publication]: [Publisher], [Year of Publication].

Lootens, Tricia. "'Whose Hand Was I Holding?': Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*." *Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women*. Ed. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

Example: a webpage

[Author's Last Name], [Author's First Name]. [Date Page Was Last Updated Or Copyright Date]. [Name of Page]. [Date Page Last Referenced For Research Purposes]. <[URL]>

"Obiwan." 6/2002. "Obiwan's UFO-Free Paranormal Page." 10/17/2001. <<http://www.ghosts.org/>> (Note that the name of the author in this example is a pseudonym, which is not uncommon on the Internet.)

Juliano, Dave. n.d. "Shadowlands Ghosts Page." 10/17/2001. <<http://hometown.aol.com/shadoland2/ghost.html>> (n.d. stands for No Date - there was no date for last update or copyright the last time I visited this page.)

Other Issues

Always remember that a **book** title is either underlined or *italicized*! For example, if you mention that Lee wrote *The Dobe Ju'/hoansi*, it should appear like this.

An **article** title is enclosed in "quote marks," as follows: Ortner's article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?"

Further Information

I highly recommend the comprehensive *Chicago Manual of Style*, which can be found in any college library.

For a more comprehensive discussion of online citation, see "The Columbia Guide to Online Style," at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/idx_basic.html

It is to be noted that most social science journals use a variation of the APA guidelines, and APA format is also considered correct.

I strongly recommend the Owl at Purdue for a fuller discussion of MLA guidelines.

Purdue OWL. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." The Online Writing Lab at Purdue. 10 May 2008. Purdue University Writing Lab. 12 May 2008
<<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>>.