

CITING SOURCES

American academic ethical writing standards require that writers be credited for their work and their writing. As such, any information obtained from an outside source must be cited. A citation may come in the form of a footnote, endnote or parenthetical citation. The following handout illustrates what should be cited as well as how citations are created.

What should be cited?

- Every quotation;
- Every paraphrase;
- Every idea and all information unique to a single source.

You must cite all ideas, opinions, facts, data, words, and phrases that you quote or paraphrase from any source (written, electronic, audio, visual, etc). You must cite each sentence containing information you quote or paraphrase. Even if two or more consecutive sentences contain information from the same source, each sentence must be cited with a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical reference. Depending on the documentation style you use, you may be able to shorten identical consecutive references with either an abbreviated form of the original citation or the word “ibid.” Check the appropriate documentation style manual for instructions on identical consecutive citations.

Constructing a List of Works Cited in Your Paper

Most style manuals require that you assemble a list of the works that have been cited in your paper. This list, found at the end of your paper, is referred to as “works cited,” “reference list” or “bibliography” depending on the citation style you use. For guidelines on how to document sources on the works cited page consult the appropriate style manual.

In addition to citing every quotation, paraphrase or reference you make, even when it is not a quote or paraphrase (i.e., “Smith notes that...”), it is important to understand when quotations and paraphrases are necessary.

When to Quote? When to Paraphrase?

Be sure to quote:

1. when giving the wording of laws, official rulings and important edicts;

2. when citing mathematical, scientific and other formulas;
3. when the exact words of a writer seem to be absolutely essential; and
4. when the significant thought has been particularly well expressed.

Consider paraphrasing (paraphrasing means to re-state something in your own words and when you do so you must always give credit to the source):

1. lengthy discussions. Be careful in doing this. The idea is to reduce the discussion to its main ideas, but you have to be careful not to distort the original emphasis;
2. boring factual data (there's no need to quote it verbatim).

*For more information regarding when to quote and/or paraphrase see the “Quoting, Paraphrasing and Summarizing” handout.