

When to Cite Your Sources

Have you ever wondered why or when you need to cite sources in your papers? This video will help answer your citation questions.

It's important to cite properly in your papers in order to give credit to the people whose ideas you're using, to avoid plagiarism, give your work credibility, and maintain academic integrity.

You must cite the source for any idea you use in your assignment which is not your own. This includes quoting something word for word, paraphrasing some else's writing, or taking an idea from another source.

You do not need to cite facts that are common knowledge, such as "the sky is blue".

No matter where you get your information from—books, course lectures, blogs, images, graphs, or the Web—you always need to cite.

If you're ever in doubt, remember that it's better to over-cite than to under-cite.

Citations always have two parts: an in-text citation and a list of citations at the end of your paper, which can be called a reference list, bibliography, or works cited.

You need to have both parts in order to cite properly.

The in-text citation is short. It shows what part of your paper came from another source and directs the reader to the complete citation for that specific source at the end of your paper.

Each complete citation requires that you include enough information so that someone could find this source again, like the author name, title, year of publication, and publisher.

Your prof may direct you to use APA, MLA, Chicago, Harvard, or another citation style.

A citation style is just a specific way to format all this information consistently, which helps readers to understand the information.

The difference between citation styles is how they format information.

Differences like spacing, capitalisation, order, and punctuation all matter.

To find guides on the different citation styles, start from the library homepage at lib.uwaterloo.ca and click on the Online Reference Shelf link, which is 6th from the top in the right hand menu.

Click the Citation/Style Guides link and you'll be taken to a new page that lists the citation resources we have at the library.

If you have any other questions about citations, just ask a librarian. We're happy to help!