

# Don't Fear Citations: Citing Sources in a Paper

To cite a source is often thought to be the act of “[quoting] someone as an authority or an example” (*Webster's Dictionary*). However, citing a source also refers to the act of giving credit to the original source of information and/or way of articulating that information. This means that ideas, too, are cited to give credit to the original author or source.

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## 1. Why should I cite sources in my essay?

Citing sources serves many purposes:

- ❖ A citation guides readers to your sources so they can read further and learn more about the subject
- ❖ A citation also lets the reader know you have carried out accurate research
- ❖ Basically, it gives credit where credit is due by leading a path back to the original source
- ❖ By citing sources appropriately, a writer can build their own credibility and ethos as a writer and researcher by demonstrating their understand and respect to another author's work

Overall, citation is an important practice and skill set in academic settings and your ability to cite sources properly will be valuable.

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## 2. What happens if I don't cite someone's work?

When a writer uses or incorporates another's ideas or work into their own writing and fails to cite or give credit to the source, it is considered **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is considered unethical and a violation of academic integrity and honesty policies. Plagiarism may occur in several ways and for several reasons:

- ❖ **Direct plagiarism:** When another writer's exact words are used without quotation marks or proper documentation. If a few words are changed, but the majority of the structure and words are the same, it is still considered direct plagiarism.
- ❖ **Paraphrasing plagiarism:** When direct quotations are documented, but paraphrased material and ideas are not cited narratively or in-text. Poor attempts at paraphrasing and putting ideas into your own words can result in plagiarism.

- ❖ **Global plagiarism:** When a writer attempts to pass an entire work from another author off as their own. If someone writes a paper or does an assignment for you, that is global plagiarism.
- ❖ **Patchwork plagiarism:** When a writer copies phrases and ideas from multiple sources into a paragraph or essay without any credit or attempt to denote every source. For example, if you do not indicate when a new author or idea from a source appears in a paragraph where another source was already mentioned, then that can be considered plagiarism.
- ❖ **Accidental plagiarism:** Whenever a writer misquotes a text, doesn't cite properly, cites the wrong source, forgets to include in-text or narrative citation, or paraphrases a source poorly without intent to pass off those sources as their own work or ideas. Most plagiarism is accidental, but even accidental plagiarism is still harmful and can result in consequences.

When writers fail to document, it destroys credibility of both the research and the researcher and it often results in serious consequences.

However, if you have information that is common knowledge to the reader, then you would NOT need to cite it. For example, you wouldn't need to cite that Taco Bell's food is cheap. If you were to say environmentalists were suing Taco Bell in 1999, then you would document that information.

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### 3. How do I cite my sources?

Any idea taken from another source should be documented whether a **direct quotation**, **paraphrase**, or **summary**.

- ❖ A **direct quotation** uses the exact word-for-word statement or phrasing of another author copied directly from a source. Quotation marks must be used to indicate what is a quotation and in-text citation and/or narrative citation is used in the body of the text to reference the original source.
  - When to use **direct quotation**: when the voice of another author would add authority or ethos to your own arguments and ideas (i.e. an expert or person with experience in the subject); when the words of the text cannot be rephrased without taking away meaning or impact; when you want to highlight beautiful or powerful phrase
- ❖ A **paraphrase** reports information from a source in your own words and uses in-text and/or narrative citation to reference the original source, but no quotation marks are needed unless citing a specific word or phrase that cannot be altered.

- **When to use paraphrase:** when you want to make the point from the original source clearer and more concise for your audience (removing jargon or technical language); when you want to demonstrate your understanding of another source or concept in your own words; when you want to vary your style of source integration in the body of your text; when you want to report numerical data or statistics (preferred in APA papers)
- ❖ A **summary** condenses information from a source, perhaps summing up an entire work or section of a larger work in a paragraph or single sentence. In-text and/or narrative citation are used to reference the original source, but no quotation marks are needed.
  - **When to use summary:** when you want to reference a larger body of work; when you want to reference the main idea or argument from another source; when you want to describe several sources and their main ideas for the sake of background information or research; when you want to provide background information and context to your research or argument

**NOTE:** Neither a summary nor a paraphrase borrows extensive language from a source because if any part is copied verbatim, it must be treated as a direct quote. When you summarize or paraphrase, it is not enough to name the source; you must restate the source's meaning using your own words. Otherwise, why would the reader want to reference your work when the original source exists in nearly the same words?

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#### **4. What are examples of direct quotation, paraphrase, and summary?**

The following passage is from "In-house writing support: who uses supplemental resources, and how, and for what purpose?" by Christopher D. Kilgore and Courtney Cronley and published in *Teaching in Higher Education* in 2021. Each example is cited in APA documentation style.

Finally, and crucially for administrators, graduate students demonstrated a strong preference for asynchronous email appointments. . . . However, our students – and our master's-level students in particular – tend to hold full-time jobs, to have family obligations, and to pursue aggressive daily schedules during business hours. Even though the WR office was able to offer after-hours appointments and synchronous online support, master's students still tended to prefer asynchronous appointments, allowing them to submit papers and process feedback at their own convenience. Although we must be cautious about generalizing, it does seem as though limiting asynchronous options may lead to graduate students' underuse of resources, as observed in earlier studies. (Kilgore & Cronley, 2021, p.277)

**Direct quotation:** According to Kilgore and Cronley’s (2021) survey on what student populations uses in-house writing resources, “graduate students demonstrated a strong preference for asynchronous email appointments” (p. 277).

- **IMPORTANT:** Notice that the period/punctuation goes AFTER the parenthetical citation at the end of the entire sentence.

**Paraphrase:** According to a study conducted by Kilgore and Cronley (2021) regarding who uses the in-house writing resources and what indicated repeat usage, graduate students were more likely to utilize asynchronous writing appointments, which may be attributed to the tendency for those students to have full-time jobs and rigorous schedules outside of university.

**Summary:** One study by Kilgore and Cronley (2021) out of the University of Texas Arlington conducted a survey in their social-work department to determine what parts of their student population utilize their supplemental writing services and what determined repeat visits from those students. In their findings, they noted that graduate students were more likely to use asynchronous writing services than other student populations they surveyed. This may be evidence to support the argument to administrators for more asynchronous services at other writing support centers.

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## 5. So, how do I cite in my paper?

When citing in the body of your paper, you will use **in-text citation**. In-text citations mark places in the essay where information from outside sources are included. Depending on the documentation style, you will either use parenthetical ( ) style or footnote/endnote citations.

**Parenthetical citation** is most common in MLA and APA documentation styles (see section on “What documentation style should I use?”). This type of in-text citation includes relevant source information in parentheses at the end of a direct quote or paraphrase. The source information needed for the parenthetical citation varies by documentation style.

- ❖ **MLA Format** – Author’s Last Name and Page Number
  - (Kilgore and Cronley 227)
- ❖ **APA Format** – Author’s Last Name and Date of Publication
  - (Kilgore and Cronley, 2021)

Different documentation styles have different rules and expectations, so review each style to know how to use parenthetical citations properly.

**Narrative citation** occurs whenever source information is incorporated as part of the text. For example, using an author’s name and date of publication in a signal phrase that prefaces the quotation:

In 2019, Kilgore and Cronley conducted a quantitative analysis to determine what demographic of students were utilizing the in-house academic support center at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Relevant source information can be included narratively in the body of the text, but is not always possible for quotation and paraphrase. Parenthetical citation should be used to supplement missing source attribution. For example:

Based on Kilgore and Cronley's survey on what student populations uses in-house writing resources, they found that "graduate students demonstrated a strong preference for asynchronous email appointments" (p. 277).

Place the in-text citation as near as possible to the material without interrupting your sentence. Cite each time you refer to a source, except when all sentences in a single paragraph refer to the same source.

Every in-text citation has a matching entry in a list of references/ works cited at the end of the essay that tells the reader how to find the source. For example, here is the APA reference page citation for the above quote from Kilgore and Cronley's survey:

Kilgore, C. D., & Cronley, C. (2019). In-house writing support: who uses supplemental resources, and how, and for what purpose? *Teaching in Higher Education, 26*(2), 265–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1657397>

Notice that the in-text citation matches the information in the reference page citation. This ensures that a reader can easily find this source in a reference page filled with other sources easily. Furthermore, the reference page citation includes all necessary information to locate that source in a research database or library.

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## 6. How do I integrate sources into my paper?

### I. Provide a Signal Phrase for Your Sources.

A signal phrase as a short introduction to the context of a quote or source. A signal phrase is necessary to properly citing and integrating sources into the body of your writing, especially for quotations.

Be sure to provide context for when, where, and under what special circumstances the quotation or source was first used. Remember, too, that a signal phrase often contains source information (date and author's name) that counts as narrative citation.

*In front of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said these famous words...*

**II. Use Transitional Words or Phrases (and Brackets when Necessary).**

When integrating sources into the body of your essay, you should use transitional phrases to ensure sources do not appear out of place or “dropped in.” Phrases like “Furthermore,” “In addition,” and “For example,…” are popular transitions used to introduce sources and move between ideas or topics.

NOTE: If you need to alter a word in a quotation to make it fit grammatically with your signal phrase or transitional phrase, use square brackets [].

*Furthermore, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., boldly **concluded** “[that] if America is to be a great nation, this must become true” (13).*

**III. Use a Variety of Verbs for Source Attribution.**

Add variance to your signal phrases and transitional phrases by using some alternative verbs:

<b>add</b>	<b>remark</b>	<b>exclaim</b>
<b>announce</b>	<b>reply</b>	<b>state</b>
<b>comment</b>	<b>respond</b>	<b>estimate</b>
<b>write</b>	<b>point out</b>	<b>predict</b>
<b>argue</b>	<b>suggest</b>	<b>propose</b>
<b>declare</b>	<b>criticize</b>	<b>proclaim</b>
<b>note</b>	<b>complain</b>	<b>opine</b>
<b>observe</b>	<b>think</b>	<b>note</b>

*To a distressed and torn nation, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., emotionally **exclaimed**...*

**IV. Explain the Significance of the Source.**

Much better, but don’t stop there! Why are you using this source in the first place? Link the source to your topic. In so doing, be sure that you’re using more of your own words and less of others’ words. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shouldn’t be writing your essay for you.

*Racial tension still exists, and racial profiling continues to run rampant in American cities. Many Americans around the country are still looking for the day when Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, dream will come true...*

**V. Provide In-Text Citation for the Source.**

As noted earlier, most references to sources need in-text citation. For quotations especially, in-text citation is required. Take care to cite consistently in the format required by your professor (MLA, APA, etc.). Remember to consult specific documentation styles to

determine where and how parenthetical citation is formatted in the body of your essay. This is an MLA style example of parenthetical citation.

*...Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., emotionally exclaimed these famous words, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (King 12).*

## **VI. Put it all together:**

Finally, add a sentence or more that explains the relevance of the source to the paragraph. As a general rule of thumb, don't end a paragraph with a quote; end on your own words since it is YOUR essay.

*Racial tension still exists, and racial profiling continues to run rampant in American cities. In front of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, Dr. King emotionally exclaimed, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (King 12). Many Americans around the country are still looking for the day when Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, dream will become reality. Furthermore, Dr. Martin King, Jr., boldly concluded "[that] if America is to be a great nation, this must become true" (13). We finally have an African American president, but outbreaks of racially-charged violence, like the Ferguson shooting in the summer of 2014, remind us that America has a far way to go until all races in this country live in peaceful harmony and are beautifully colorblind.*

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## **7. Which documentation style do I use?**

More often than not, your instructor will specify which style guidebook to follow. Here is a general list of who uses what:

- MLA (Modern Language Association) – Humanities, Arts, English, Education
  - Uses parenthetical in-text citations (author's last name page #).
- APA (American Psychological Association) – Social Sciences, Psychology
  - Uses parenthetical in-text citations (author's last name, date of publication).
- CMS (Chicago Manual Style or Turabian) – History, Humanities
  - Uses endnotes/footnotes

For additional questions, you can find a complete reference manual on each of these documentation styles in the Center for Academic Support.

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**Information adapted from these sources:**

*The Everyday Writer* by Andrea Lundford and Robert Connors  
*A Writer's Guidebook* by Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper  
*A Pocket Style Manual* by Diane Hacker

"The Writing Center: Quotations" from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
"Don't Fear Citation: The Freedom of Employing Quotations in Your Essays" by Kelly Cochran