Proper Citations and References

In the body of your paper, when you are referring to information from some publication that you read, you need to cite the source of the information. If you do not cite the source, then you are implicitly saying this is your own work, your own thinking. That's plagiarism. There are many ways of citing a publication: [Jones, 1994], (Jones94), [3], etc. You may use any style of citing the works you read, so long as it is clear which publication you are citing.

At the end of your paper, there should be a references section. Every publication in the references section should be cited somewhere in the body of your paper. Every citation should clearly point to a specific reference.

URLs are not acceptable unless you are citing something like a blog post. Note that blog posts and similar web postings are of little credibility. If you are citing something, it should be something worth citing, not just someone's opinion. Wikipedia entries and similar "well-known" websites are slightly more credible. Peer-reviewed journals and conferences are the "gold standard" of references. Books are somewhat less credible, because anyone can publish a book, whether credible or not. Admittedly, the reputation of the author can weigh in favor of a valid reference, even for a blog post.

Each reference should completely identify the publication. The examples below typify acceptable references, although a writing style guide will have many variations on these.

- J. Smith, "Paper Title," Journal Name, Month, Year, pages.
- J. Doe, M. Jones, and T. Adams, "Conference Paper Title," Conference Name, City, Month, Year, pages.
- E. Roe and A. Doe, Book Title, Publisher, Year.
- "Website Title," <URL: http:xxx.com>. Last visited Date.

Journal references may include a volume and issue. They may not be published on a monthly basis. E-journals may not have page numbers.

Conference papers may include the specific dates of the conference or just the year. They may not have page numbers, especially if published electronically.

Book references may include the city of the publisher, but publishers frequently have offices in many cities.

Website references frequently fall prey to dead links. There may be a specific author who can be identified… or not. The date may be the date of publication on the web, or the date when the site was visited.