

FAQ and Guidelines for Writing Papers and Reports

(Taken from Prof. Foxwell's Courses)

What references are allowable?

- *Academic research articles* from peer-reviewed journals are among the preferred references, especially those from IEEE and ACM (check the Mason Library for access).
- *Articles by industry analysts*, industry “whitepapers”, technical news articles and Web sites.
- *Relevant books* on the assigned topics.
- *Personal communications* from work colleagues.
- *All of the above must be properly cited.*
- Wikipedia should *not* be used as a primary reference (see the *sources* that they cite)
 - See: [WatersNoWikipedia.pdf](#)

What citation style should be used?

- *Chicago Manual of Style*, *APA*, and *MLA* are *all* acceptable:
 - *APA Style Quick-Guide*:
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16103/original/APAQuickGuide.pdf>
 - *Chicago Citation Style Quick-Guide*:
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16105/original/ChicagoQuickGuide.pdf>
 - *MLA Citation Style Quick-Guide*:
 - https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/22775/original/MLA_Quick_Guide.pdf
 - *Turabian Style Quick-Guide*:
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16145/original/TurabianQuickGuide.pdf>

Regardless of style, all references *must* include (in some order):

Title, Author(s), Publication Date, Publisher or URL

In-text citations are *important* and *necessary*:

- Must *distinguish* between student's vs other's content.
- Will be *checked* with *SafeAssign* or *TurnItIn*.
- Numeric style [1] or author style (Foxwell, 2016) may be used.
- Include an in-text citation when you *refer to*, *summarize*, *paraphrase*, or *quote* from another source. *For every in-text citation in your paper, there must be a corresponding entry in your reference list.*
 - See here for guidance: <http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/apaquickguide/intext>

Figures, graphs, diagrams, etc. *must* include a *caption* and a *source citation*.

Additional Citation Guidance:

- Quotation, Paraphrase, Summary, and Analysis:
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16132/original/QuotationParaphraseSummaryAnalysis.pdf>
- When to Summarize, Paraphrase, and Quote:
 - <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16146/original/WhentoSummarizeParaphraseandQuote.pdf>
- Signal Phrases
 - https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/22528/original/Signal_Phrases_2016_.pdf

What is Plagiarism?

- Plagiarism: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/chssweb/documents/16128/original/Plagiarism.pdf>

Mason Honor Code:

- <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>
- <http://oai.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016-2017-Honor-Code-and-Honor-System-Final.pdf>
- Faculty are *required* to *investigate* and *report* suspected violations of the Honor Code.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

- <http://cs.gmu.edu/resources/honor-code/statement-on-academic-integrity/>
- *Practice integrity!*

How many pages are required for a paper/report?

- *Enough* to prove you understand the assignment and to prove you learned how to answer it.
- In other words, *I do not specify paper lengths*; use your judgement!
 - However, *minimal effort* will generally result in a *minimal evaluation*.

What font and spacing should be used?

- This question is largely *irrelevant*; papers are submitted in digital, not printed, format.
 - However, for *readability*, Times New Roman at 12pt is typical.
- Paper *organization* is more important:
 - Clearly marked introductory, body, conclusion, and references should be used.

What file format should be used?

- Unless otherwise specified, submit all assignments in PDF format.
- File names should include your last name and the assignment name:
 - Example: HFoxwell_Assignment1.pdf

What technical terms need to be explained, and why?

- Assume you are writing for a reader who does not understand all the technology you are writing about. Unfamiliar technical terms should be *briefly explained* when used, or in a *Glossary* at the end of the paper
- *Do not simply parrot terms which you do not understand*; demonstrate that you understand the content of your references.

Where can I get writing help?

- <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>
- <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/helpful-links>