How to Cite Sources and Avoid Plagiarism

Contents

Critical Thinker Academy

Introduction

In this lecture series on essay writing we're going to look at an issue that many students are uncertain of and find confusing, namely, **how and when to cite sources**. But before doing that we need to look at *why* we need to cite sources, and that gets us into the topic of **plagiarism**.

Part 1 will focus on plagiarism. We'll go over the basic definition of plagiarism, and give examples of plagiarism that start from the most obvious cases and move to the least obvious cases, at least from a student perspective.

Part 2 will focus on principles for when and how to cite sources. We'll wrap up with an introduction to the most commonly used citation styles that you'll encounter in academic writing, and some tips on when to use one or the other.

Part 1:
What is Plagiarism?

1. Plagiarism: The Basic Definition

Here's a widely cited definition of plagiarism. It's from the *Modern Language Association Style Manual*:

> Scholarly authors generously acknowledge their debts to predecessors by carefully giving credit to each source. Whenever you draw on another's work, you must specify what you borrowed, whether facts, opinions, or quotations, and where you borrowed it from. Using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source constitutes plagiarism. Derived from the Latin *plagiarius* (which means "kidnapper"), plagiarism refers to a form of intellectual theft. . . In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you wrote or thought something that you in fact borrowed from someone else, and to do so is a violation of professional ethics.

This is the basic idea that we try to convey to students. You plagiarize when you take someone else's ideas or words and pass them off as your own.

Now, there's a lot of agreement over this core definition, and over obvious examples of plagiarism, like paying for someone else to write your paper for you. But there are also lots of cases where students simply aren't aware that what they're doing constitutes plagiarism.

In the next few lectures we'll take a look at a range of examples of plagiarism, starting with the most obvious and egregious cases.

2. Downloading or Buying Whole Papers

Of course there's no question that handing in a paper that you downloaded from an essay mill or paying for someone to write your paper for you constitutes plagiarism. What may surprise some people is just how easy it is to do this, and how large and sophisticated an industry there is devoted to fulfilling student demand for essays.

The common term for these online sources for papers is "paper mills". There are two broad categories. You've got your free essay sites, where you can search for and download essays for free, and you've got your for-pay sites, where the student pays a (sometimes hefty) fee for the essay, usually by the page. These sites often offer a range of services, including writing original essays that are custom-designed for your particular writing assignment.

Here is a sample of the websites that currently offer these services, there are plenty more.

Free Essays

- www.freeessays.cc
- www.essays.cc
- www.wowessays.com
- www.goldenessays.com
- www.free-essays-free-essays.com
- www.free-essays.us
- www.termpapers-termpapers.com

Custom, For-Pay Essays

- www.thepaperexperts.com
- www.essayacademy.com
- www.schoolsucks.com
- www.writework.com

- www.speedypapers.com
- www.homeworkjunction.com
- www.termpaper-experts.com
- www.thesisexperts.com
- www.education-majors.com
- www.mathreports.com
- www.nursingpapers.com
- www.vietnam-war-papers.com

As you can see, a recent trend in the for-pay site category is to specialize in certain topic areas or niches, like anthropology essays or english literature essays, or computer science essays, and so on. These sites employ people with PhDs in the relevant field to write the essays. You can even pay to have your masters or doctoral thesis written for you, there are sites that specialize entirely in thesis writing for graduate students.

From a student perspective (apart from the ethical issue), the main disadvantages of the free essay sites are that the quality of the essays varies widely, from very good to totally awful. And, because there will likely be multiple copies of the essay online that are accessible to search engines like Google, it's much easier for a teacher to find the original copy online and confirm the plagiarism.

Because there's a demand for original papers, for-pay sites often advertise that they offer original content that won't be detected by search engines and other plagiarism-detection services. Sometimes this is true, but other times it's just a scam, or at least misleading. Some will sell a paper and say it's original when it isn't, or they'll write an original paper and sell it to a student, but then turn the paper over to a paper-mill so that other students can also buy copies of it, making it no longer unique. In either case it's not hard for a teacher to find the duplicates online if they have any experience at all finding plagiarized sources on the web.

I don't have much else to say about paper mill sites here. Handing in one of these papers and putting your name on it is plagiarism in its purest form. Students should know that penalties for this kind of plagiarism are often stiffer than for more subtle kinds of plagiarism, because there's just no way to plead ignorance, it's obvious that you're cheating, and that you intended to cheat.

Students should also know that it's often much easier to spot a plagiarized paper, and find the original paper on the web, than they might think. When I suspect a paper is plagiarized it usually takes me no more than five or ten minutes to find a duplicate somewhere on the web. So keep that in mind if you're considering this route.

3. Cutting and Pasting From Several Sources

Though it certainly happens enough, comparatively speaking, downloading a free paper or buying one from a paper mill is the rarest form of plagiarism. More common is the "cut and paste from several sources" paper.

Here's what they tend to look like. A student is assigned a topic and they get their hands on several useful sources. Wikipedia articles are usually at the top of the list, but the sources might include textbooks, blog entries, newspaper articles, and whatever else Google can scoop up on the topic. The student then browses the materials, identifies sections that he or she likes or thinks would work in the essay, and then copies and pastes them into a Word document, maybe does a little rearranging and editing, and voila, you've got an essay. It's also common for students to write their own introductory and closing paragraphs, I guess to make it read more like a student essay and maybe tie the copied and pasted bits together a bit better.

Is this plagiarism? Yes it is, and most students understand this, but you'd be surprised how many students think it's not. They think this is an acceptable research essay because they're doing their own research and organizing the bits and pieces into a coherent narrative. It's true, they're doing more work than plagiarizing an entire essay, but they're still taking other people's words and ideas and passing them off as their own, and that's plagiarism.

Students should know that cut and pasted essays are often very easy to spot, because of the dramatic changes in writing style and vocabulary that you often see, and the awkward transitions from one section to the next.

Like this example:

> Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in Florence, Italy. Though not a professional philosopher, he used poetry to teach philosophical and religious concepts to the general public.
>
> Dante's engagement with philosophy cannot be studied apart from his vocation as a writer -- as a poet whose theme, from the first to last is the significance of his love for Beatrice, but also as an intellectual strongly committed to raising the level of public discourse. After his banishment he addressed himself to Italians generally, and devoted much of his long exile to transmitting the riches of ancient thought and learning, as these informed contemporary scholastic culture, to an increasingly sophisticated lay readership in their own vernacular.

The second paragraph is not the student's, it's copied and pasted from the *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on Dante, by Winthrop Wetherbee. If this was a graduate student writing a thesis then I wouldn't have batted an eye, but this was a second-year university student in an introductory philosophy class who had a hard time putting together three or four sentences without a grammar or spelling error. *That* student would not have written

> After his banishment he addressed himself to Italians generally, and devoted much of his long exile to transmitting the riches of ancient thought and learning, as these informed contemporary scholastic culture, to an increasingly sophisticated lay readership in their own vernacular.

It took about 30 seconds to find the original source online.

4. Changing Some Words But Copying Whole Phrases

Cut and pasted essays are common enough, but even more common are essays that have a mixture of the student's own writing and writing borrowed from other sources, but the student changes up the wording so it's not an exact duplicate.

Here's an example:

Original Source (Richard Kraut, *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, entry on Aristotle's Ethics):

> Aristotle wrote two ethical treatises: the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. He does not himself use either of these titles, although in the *Politics* (1295a36) he refers back to one of them — probably the *Eudemian Ethics* — as "ta êthika" — his writings about character. The words "Eudemian" and "Nicomachian"were added later, perhaps because the former was edited by his friend Eudemus, and the latter by his son, Nicomachus. In any case, these two works cover more or less the same ground: they begin with a discussion of *eudaimonia* ("happiness", "flourishing"), and turn to an examination of the nature of *aretê* ("virtue", "excellence") and the character traits human beings need in order to live life at its best.

Student Version:

> Aristotle wrote two ethical treatises: the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. He does not himself use either of these titles, the words "Eudemian" and "Nicomachian"were added later by his friend Eudemus, and the latter by his son, Nicomachus. These two works cover similar ground: they begin with a discussion of *eudaimonia* ("happiness", "flourishing"), and turn to an examination of the nature of *aretê* ("virtue", "excellence").

The student version is clearly just a shortened and slightly modified version of the original source text. And they passed off this paragraph as their own writing, with no citation to the original source.

This kind of plagiarism is harder to spot, but in my experience it's very common. A lot of students aren't even aware that this qualifies as plagiarism, and for those who do, they tend to think of it as a fairly minor violation. But it still qualifies, and they can still get in trouble for it, so students need to learn how to avoid this kind of writing.

5. Paraphrasing Without Attribution

Moving down our list, we have **paraphrasing without attribution**. Students are usually taught that paraphrasing is good, it's better than relying heavily on direct quotations, but they sometimes aren't told that they still have to cite the original source.

Here's an example:

Original Source (Stewart Duncan, *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* entry on Thomas Hobbes):

> At an abstract level, *The Elements of Law*, the *Elements of Philosophy*, and *Leviathan* all share a structure. Hobbes begins with questions about mind and language, and works towards questions in political philosophy. How exactly the parts of the system are connected has long been debated. But Hobbes thinks at least that we will better understand how individuals interact in groups if we understand how individuals work.

Student Version:

> Though they deal with different issues, there are unifying themes in *The Elements of Law*, the *Elements of Philosophy*, and *Leviathan*. In each of these works, Hobbes begins by addressing questions about the nature of mind and language, and then moves on to questions of legal theory and politics. Hobbes believes that we first need to understand how individuals think and behave before we can understand how individuals interact in groups.

The student version is a paraphrase of the original source. To paraphrase is to restate the same content using your own words and sentence structure. The ability to paraphrase accurately is a good sign of understanding, it's a very useful skill. But if a student were to use this paraphrase in an essay, without citing the original source, they'd be guilty of plagiarism.

Why? Because plagiarism involves not just using someone else's *words* and passing them off as your own; it also involves using someone else's *ideas* and passing them off as your own. Here you're borrowing ideas, and if they're not your own, or not common knowledge, then you need to cite the source.

6. The Debate Over Patchwriting

Before moving on to talking about how to properly cite sources, I want to acknowledge that there's a debate going on in academic circles over just how wrong certain kinds of plagiarism are. In particular, there's a debate about what's called **patchwriting**, and whether patchwriting is an acceptable form of plagiarism.

Let's go back to our paraphrase example.

Original Source (Stewart Duncan, *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* entry on Thomas Hobbes):

> At an abstract level, *The Elements of Law*, the *Elements of Philosophy*, and *Leviathan* all share a structure. Hobbes begins with questions about mind and language, and works towards questions in political philosophy. How exactly the parts of the system are connected has long been debated. But Hobbes thinks at least that we will better understand how individuals interact in groups if we understand how individuals work.

Student Version:

> Though they deal with different issues, there are unifying themes in *The Elements of Law*, the *Elements of Philosophy*, and *Leviathan*. In each of these works, Hobbes begins by addressing questions about the nature of mind and language, and then moves on to questions of legal theory and politics. Hobbes believes that we first need to understand how individuals think and behave before we can understand how individuals interact in groups.

When a paragraph stays this close to the original text, and includes some of the original wording and sentence structure, this is sometimes called "patchwriting". Technically, it's a form of plagiarism, but there are people who study writing, and in particular the process of learning how to write within a specific academic genre, who want to argue that patchwriting should be viewed as a predictable stage that people pass

through on the way to acquiring mastery of the vocabulary and writing conventions of a particular genre.

A lot of attention has been paid specifically to how international students (students for whom English isn't their first language) use patchwriting, but the argument has been made about writing in general, that we learn the conventions of a genre by mixing our ideas and language with the ideas and language of those who we're trying to emulate.

So the question is whether we should teach students to avoid patchwriting because it's wrong, and punish it when it's detected, or whether we should accept that it's a natural part of the learning process and just educate students about the conventions and standards for academic writing.

I guess I'm sympathetic to the latter view. It seems obviously true that people learn to speak and write by copying the conventions and style and sometimes the language of others. But it also seems obvious to me that the ultimate goal should be to move beyond this stage, to fully internalize the conventions and the language of the genre so that the writer can truly claim ownership of their words and ideas.

At any rate, I just wanted to point out that there is an ongoing debate in academic circles over what forms of plagiarism are genuinely wrong and should count as "cheating", and what forms are a predictable part of the normal process of learning how to write. Either way, we still need to learn how to cite sources correctly, and that's a good segue into Part 2.

Part 2:
How and When to Cite Sources

In Part 1 we looked at some examples of plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism you need to cite your sources. In this next series of lectures we're going to look at when and how to cite sources, and talk about different citation style conventions. In this lecture we're going to start with the basic question, "when should I cite a source"?

Given the nature of the topic, it's important that I be transparent about my own sources! I'll be using some terminology and rules of thumb that I first picked up from a great book by Robert Harris, *The Plagiarism Handbook: Strategies for Preventing, Detecting, and Dealing With Plagiarism* (2001, Pyrczak Pub). The content is common knowledge, but the specific flowchart method of presentation and terms like "mark the boundaries" that I'll use are Harris's.

1. When Should I Cite a Source?

Okay, our first question is, **when should you cite a source**?

There are two questions you need to ask.

(1) "Did you think of it?" In other words, *is it your idea or your words?*

If the answer is "Yes", then you *don't* need to cite it.

If your answer is "no", if you didn't think of it, if it's not your words or your idea, then you need to ask one other question:

(2) "Is the fact or claim that you're referring to *common knowledge*?"

By "common knowledge" I mean, are you referring to an easily observed or commonly reported fact, or a common saying that most people would be familiar with? If so, then you *don't* need to cite it.

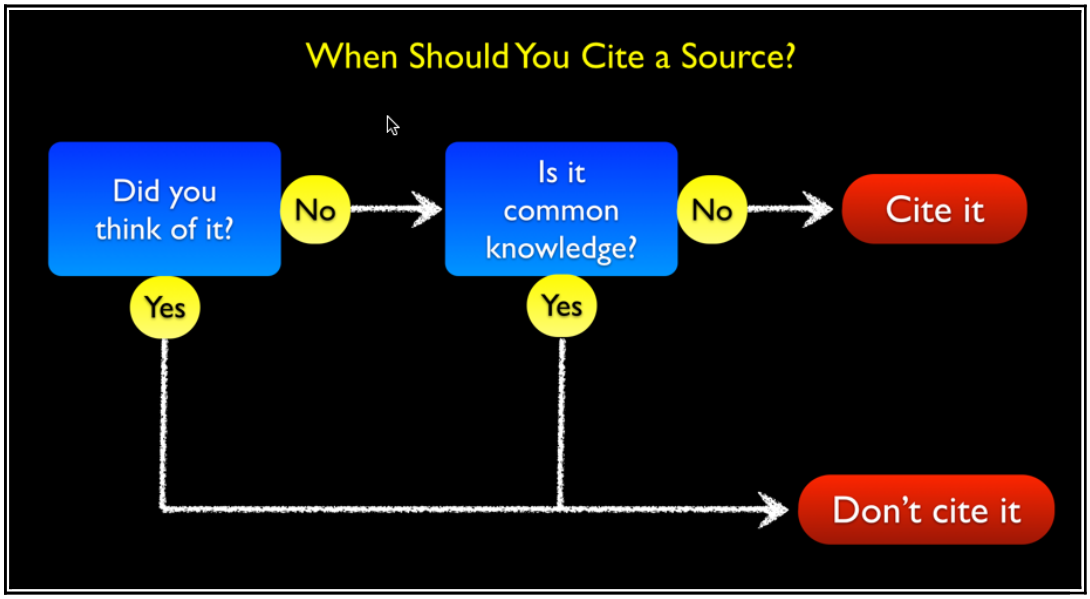
For example, you don't need to give a citation to support the statement that George Washington was the first President of the United States, or that Seinfeld was a popular American sitcom, or that biology is the study of living organisms.

But if your answer is "no", then you need to cite the source.

This is the basic idea. If the claim that you're making isn't your idea, and it's not common knowledge, then it had to come from somewhere, and you need to cite the source of the claim. But if you thought of it, or if it's common knowledge, then you don't have to cite it.

Now there are some subtleties about this notion of "common knowledge" that are worth looking at more closely, but I'm going to save a comment on this for a later lecture.

Here's a flowchart that outlines the points above:



2. What Needs To Be Cited?

Here I want to clarify a distinction that students sometimes forget to draw when they cite sources. It's the distinction between using someone else's *words* and using someone else's *ideas*. You need to cite both, and you cite them differently.

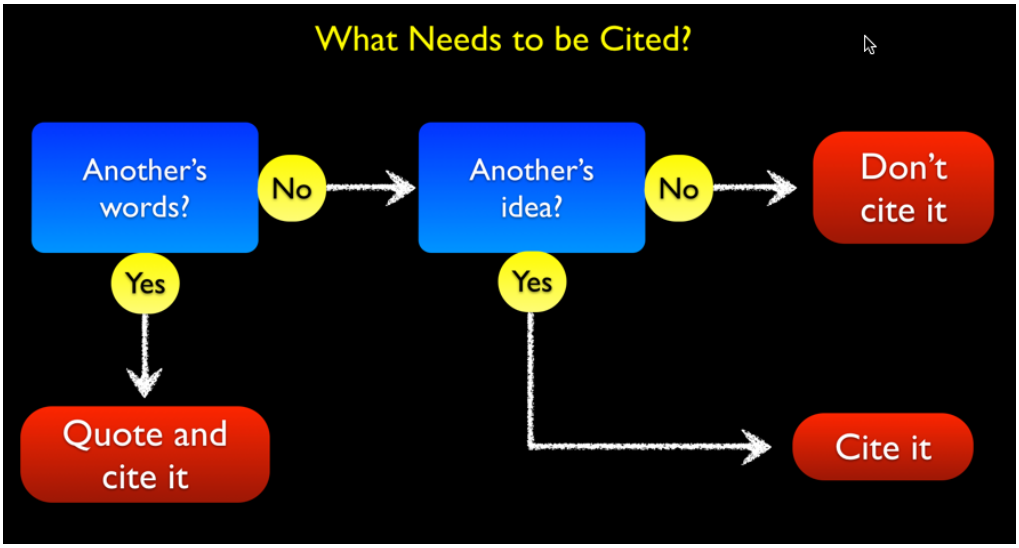
Our first question is, are you using someone else's actual words? If the answer is yes, then you need to quote and cite the source.

If the answer is "no", you still have to ask whether you're using someone else's IDEAS.

Sometimes students think that if you're not using a direct quotation then you don't have to cite the source, but you do.

Now, if the answer to this is "no" then you don't have to cite anything. But if it's "yes", then you cite the source.

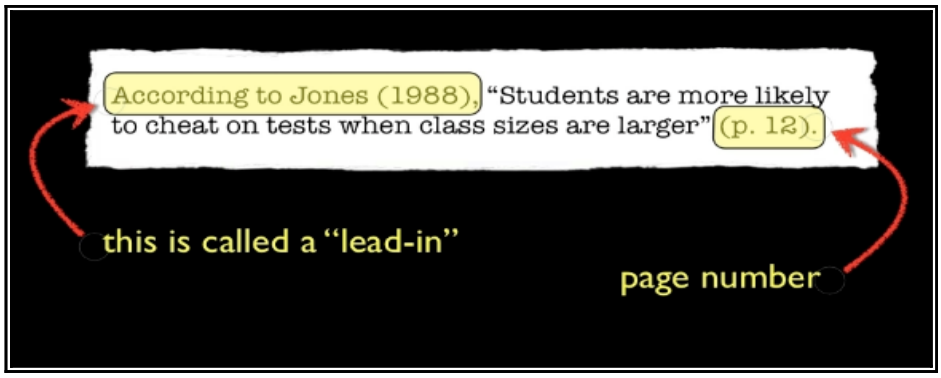
This might seem obvious, but I just want to reinforce the point that when you're citing sources you have to pay attention both to the language you've borrowed and the ideas that you've borrowed. If you're borrowing language, you need to quote the language and cite the source. If you're just borrowing an idea, you won't be quoting anything, but you still need to cite the source of that idea.



3. How to Cite: Mark the Boundaries

We've talked about when to cite a source and what needs to be cited, but we haven't talked about HOW to cite a source. Here's a simple rule that will help you remember how to cite sources. Robert Harris calls this rule **"marking the boundaries"**. This means that *the words or the ideas that you're borrowing must have a beginning and and ending that is marked in some way.* This is done differently depending on whether you're citing a short quotation, a long quotation, or just the source without a quotation.

For a short quotation, where you're citing exact words, the boundaries are marked by opening and closing quotation marks and a citation. Here's an example, using the APA citation style. APA stands for American Psychological Association, and it's one of several citation styles that are commonly used in academic writing. Here I just want to highlight the general idea of marking the beginning and ending of a citation.



In this example we've got more than just quotation marks serving to mark the boundaries of the quotation. This introductory bit that I've highlighted ("According to Jones (1988)") is commonly called a "lead-in". A lead-in is a bit of text that signals to the reader that you're about to quote a source. In this case the lead-in actually includes the source citation, which happens to be common in the APA citation style, but in other styles the source citation might come after the quotation.

Our closing marker in this example is a page number reference, to help identify where the quotation is located in the original source. Again, the particular formatting used here is characteristic of a particular citation style, the APA style, and there are other citation styles with different formatting conventions, but they all function in the same basic way, to mark the boundaries of the quotation or the idea that you're citing, so that it's clear to the reader which are your words and ideas and which are the words and ideas of someone else.

Next we'll look at different examples of marking the boundaries, for shorter quotations, longer quotations, and citing ideas without quotations.

4. Citing Exact Words

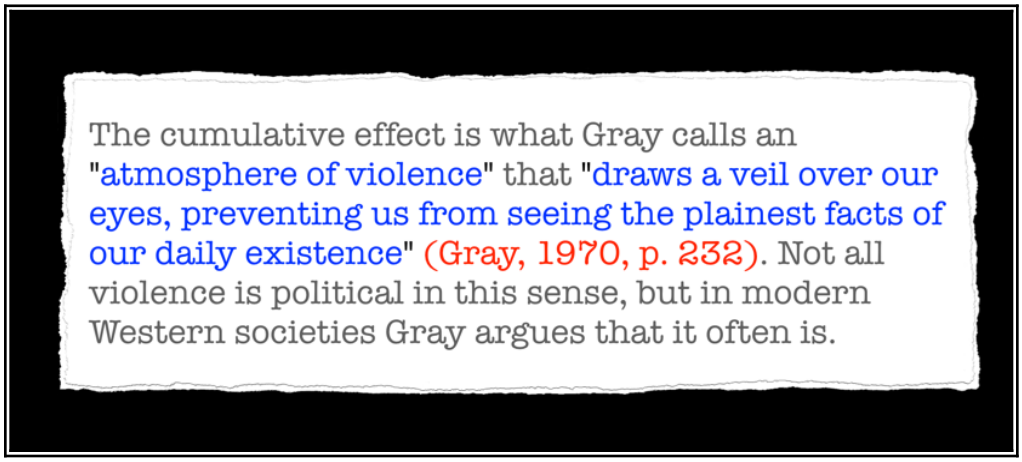
When you're citing the exact words of a source, and the quotation isn't too long, then you'll use what's called an "in-text" citation, which means you'll embed the quotations inside the paragraph you're working on, rather than give it a separate paragraph of its own.

You'll use this style of in-text citation when you're citing:

- a term that's distinct to the source, or a phrase
- a part of a sentence
- a single sentence
- two or three sentences (any more than this and you should be thinking about using a separate block quote)

The basic rule is that the boundaries the source are marked by opening and closing quotation marks and a citation, which may come before or after quotes. Let's look at a couple of examples.

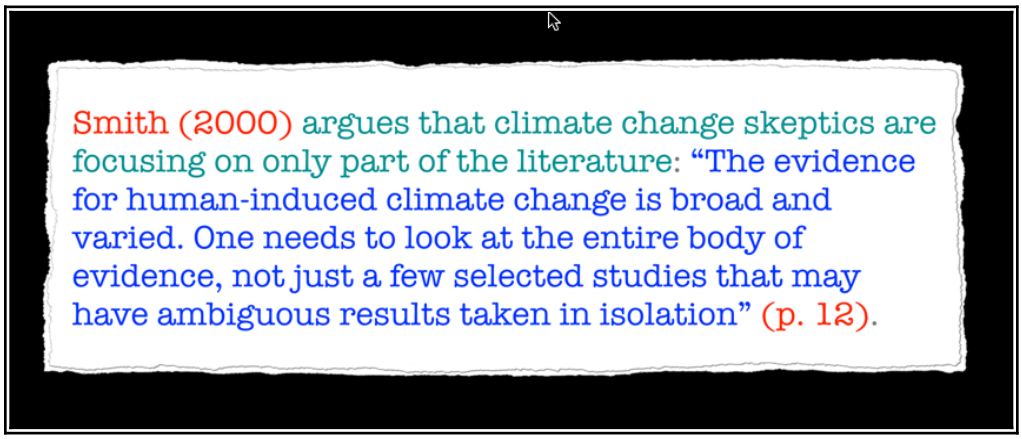
In this paragraph the author is citing a book by Glenn Gray published in 1970. It's an in-text citation:



The phrase "atmosphere of violence" is quoted, followed by part of a sentence, "draws a veil over our eyes, preventing us from seeing the plainest facts of our daily existence". The citation with the author's last name, date of publication of the source, and page number, comes after the closing quotes. And again, this is an APA style citation, which I'll

generally use in these examples, but the citation style can vary depending on what discipline you're in, where you're publishing and who your audience is. The important thing is that it be clear where the boundaries are between your words and the words of the source you're citing.

Here's an example with two complete sentences cited.



The quoted sentences are in blue, and the citation itself is in red. Notice that this time the citation is split, you've got the author and date embedded in the "lead-in" before the quotation, with the page number reference following the quotation. There's some flexibility in how you do this, but you'll need to refer to a style guide to see what variations are acceptable within a particular citation style.

Next we'll look at how to cite longer quotations.

5. Citing a Longer Quotation

You use an in-text citation for quotes that shorter, but once your quotation gets up around four sentences or longer, it makes more sense to give the quote it's own paragraph.

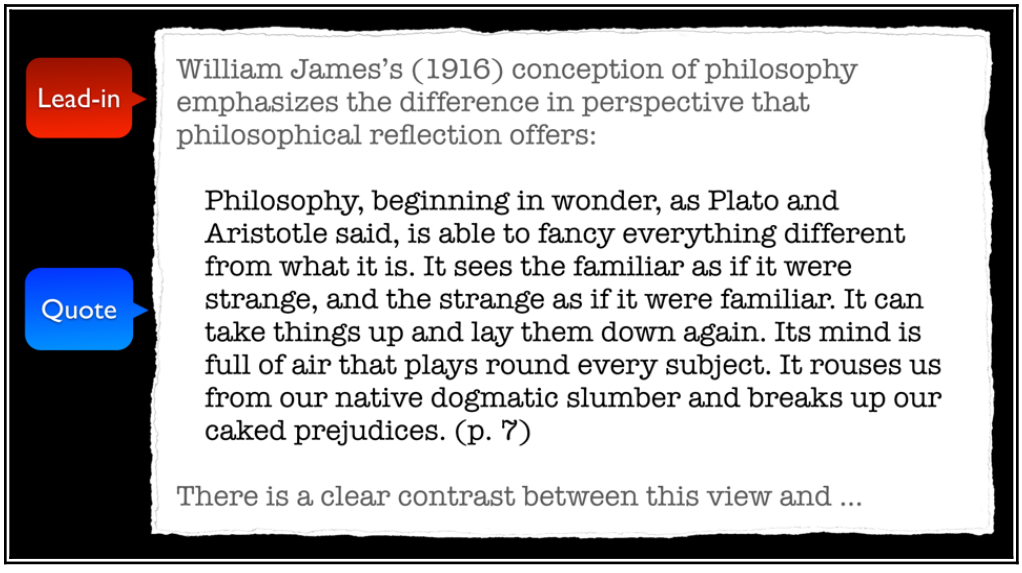
As a rule of thumb you should be using this "block quote" style when citing:

- a quotation that's more than four lines long (note that this is "lines", not "sentences")
- a whole paragraph
- multiple paragraphs

Sometimes a style guide will be more specific and give a word limit. The APA style guide says to use a block quote when your quotation is longer than 40 words, for example, but the four-line limit is a reasonable approximation.

So, what does a block quote look like?

It looks something like this. There's typically a lead-in sentence that sets up the quotation, then the quotation itself is inserted as a separate paragraph, and indented about five spaces from the margin.



Apart from the indent, the important difference between this and a standard in-line quotation is that you don't use quotation marks. The indenting by itself is enough to mark the quotation.

In this case the actual citation is split, with the name of the author and the date of publication in the lead-in, and the page number immediately following the block quote. Again, this is a convention that might vary between citation formats, and even within a citation format there's often some leeway in where the citation information is placed, but the basic idea, as always, is to clearly mark the boundaries between your words and ideas and the words and ideas of your source, the indented block quote makes this very easy to see.

6. Citing a Source But Not Quoting

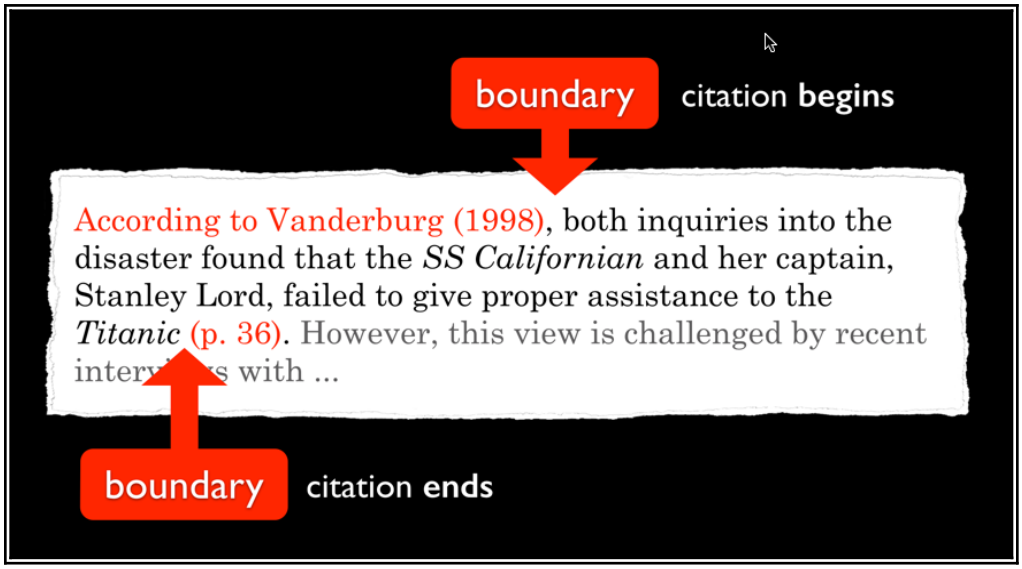
In academic writing we often refer to books or studies or ideas from other sources, but we don't always use direct quotations from the source. But the same principles apply: we need to mark the boundaries that distinguish your words and ideas from the words and ideas of someone else. In this case we're not citing the exact words, we're citing the ideas.

When do we use this kind of citation? We use this when we're

- summarizing the source
- paraphrasing the source
- mentioning the source briefly
- simply making use of an idea taken from the source.

Summaries, by the way, are generally shorter than paraphrases, so that's why I'm distinguishing them here. I can summarize the results of a study or the plot of a novel in a paragraph, but that's a very different thing than paraphrasing, which involves re-writing a bit of text in your own words, but in a way that is faithful to the original meaning of the text. A paraphrase will be much closer to the length of the original text than a summary will be (I can summarize a novel, but I can't paraphrase it).

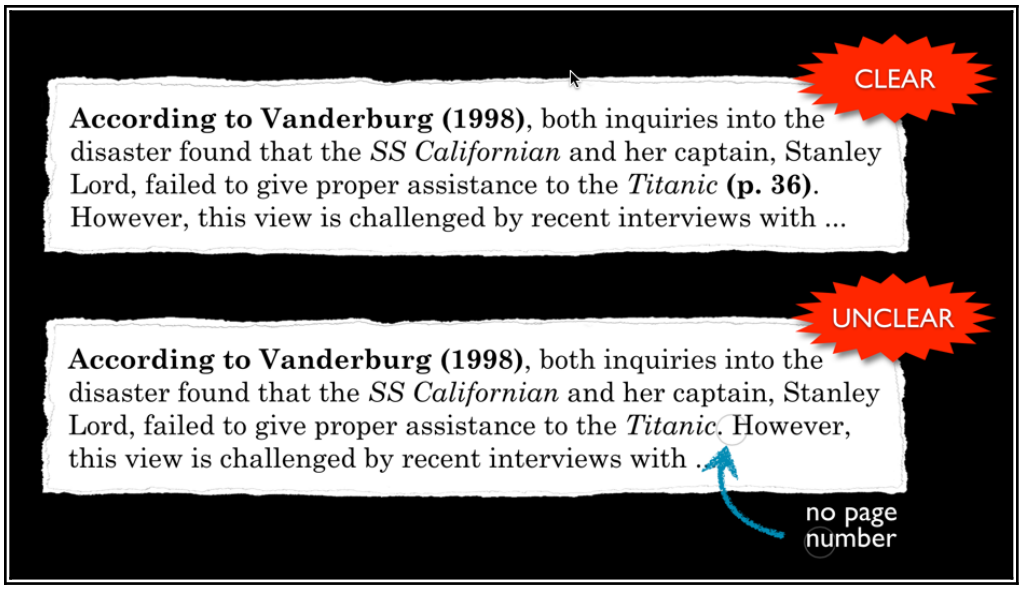
Okay, let's look at a couple of examples.



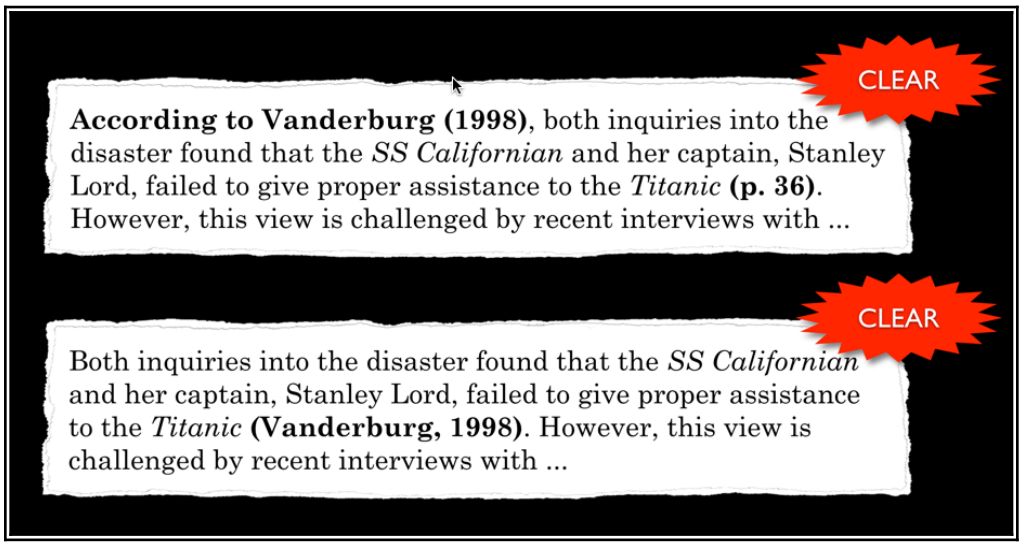
In this example there's a reference to an article by Vanderburg, using the name-date system and a page reference. We're not directly quoting the article, we're just referring to the claim, made in the article, that a couple of inquiries had concluded that the Captain and crew of the SS Californian failed to give proper assistance to the victims of the Titanic iceberg disaster.

A problem that can arise when you use citations without quotations is that it can sometimes be unclear where the ideas or the claims that you're citing end, and where your ideas begin. In other words, the boundaries are unclear. Here, the lead-in and the citation clearly mark the beginning of the citation and the page reference makes the end of the citation, so when the reader starts on the next sentence, starting with "However", they know that they're reading your words and ideas, but if you didn't have that page number there it would be harder to tell. So that's another reason to use some kind of device to clearly mark the end of the citation.

Just to highlight this point, look at this version on top in the image below, where I've bolded the lead-in and the page number. Here the boundaries are clear. The version on the bottom doesn't have the page number reference, so it's unclear exactly where the citation ends.



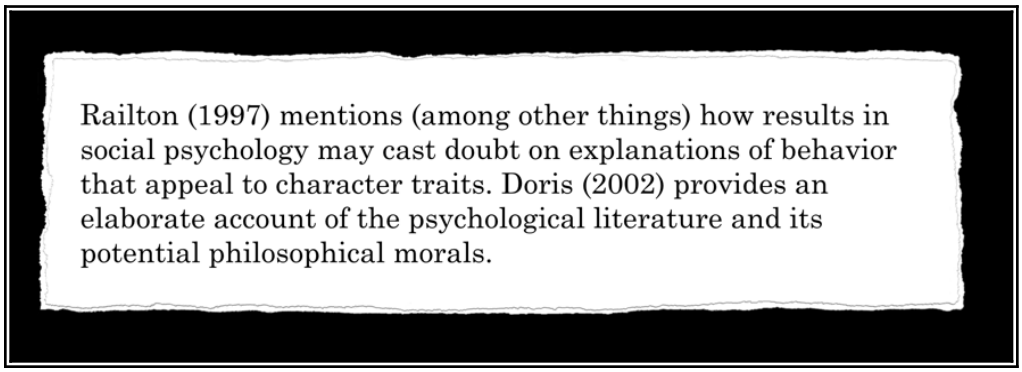
Here's another way to make the boundary clear:



I've changed the version on the bottom so the name and date citation come at the end of the citation, and this helps to clearly mark the boundary. (You could put the page number here as well, it but wouldn't make the boundary any clearer).

Now, in doing this we might be introducing some new ambiguity over where the citation begins, but it's pretty clear that at least the entire preceding sentence is being cited. Paragraph breaks and good lead-in sentences can help to mark boundaries too. But this ambiguity might be a reason to prefer some version of the method above, that splits the citation so that part of it marks the beginning and part of it marks the end of the text being cited.

There are lots of occasions where a page reference just doesn't make sense, of course, like when you're summarizing or describing or commenting on a whole book or article. Here some kind of author-date citation style is most commonly used, like in this example:



Okay, well, there's a lot more that could be said about style issues when it comes to citations, but that's not really our goal here. The goal was to focus on how citations function to mark the boundaries between your ideas and the ideas of someone else, and I think we've done that.

7. A Comment About Common Knowledge

I've received essays from students who'll say something like "Plato was a student of Socrates", and then give a citation for the statement, where they cite the textbook I've assigned for the course.

That's an example of a claim that doesn't need a citation, because in this context it would count as **common knowledge**, and as a general rule *you don't have to cite facts or claims that are common knowledge.*

But this can be confusing to students who may not have known this particular fact about Plato before taking the course or reading it in the textbook, so it wouldn't count as common knowledge to *them*. And this points to ambiguities in the concept of common knowledge that need to be cleared up.

So, what counts as common knowledge? Well, it turns out that there is no consensus view of what should count as common knowledge for citation purposes. It's one of those topics that writing experts will disagree about, and the criteria for common knowledge can vary among disciplines and among academic and professional cultures. But there are a few guidelines that most people would agree on.

You don't have to cite commonly reported facts. The statement that Plato was a student of Socrates is an example of a commonly reported fact. Now, this doesn't imply that you, the writer, knew this fact before sitting down to write your essay. Ideally, what we would like to see is two things:

- First, **the fact can be found in numerous, independent sources**. So if you can look it up in an encyclopedia or a textbook or a magazine article, and it's the same claim being made in all of these independent sources, then it's a commonly reported fact. You don't have to cite the melting point of lead, for instance, or who won the Academy Award for best picture in 2002, since anyone can look up this information.

- Second, there may be some facts that aren't easily found in reference works, but that are **widely regarded as true by a large group of people, or by people within a certain discipline**. If this is the case, then you can often treat these kinds of facts as common knowledge. But whether this is a good idea or not may depend on the discipline you're writing in, on the context in which you're writing, and on the specific audience you're writing for.

For example, if I was writing for an audience of physicists that was familiar with Albert Einstein's theories and achievements, I could get away with saying, without citing a source, that Einstein was unhappy with the standard interpretation of quantum theory, or that he was a better physicist than he was a mathematician, since both of these would be regarded as common knowledge by this particular audience. But if I was writing for a more general audience I would probably want to back up those claims with a source.

Now, let me add an additional caution when it comes to citing commonly reported facts.

You don't have to cite common knowledge, but you do have to site *specific expressions* of this common knowledge, when those expressions are not your own.

For example, if I look up "Charles Darwin" in the encyclopedia I can use common facts about Darwin that I learn from that article in my essay without citing the encyclopedia entry, but I can't summarize or paraphrase long passages from this entry without citing the source, since now I'm doing something else — now I'm borrowing the language and the specific expression of ideas from that source, rather than just the facts.

8. Citation Styles: MLA, APA, CSE, Chicago, Turabian, oh my!

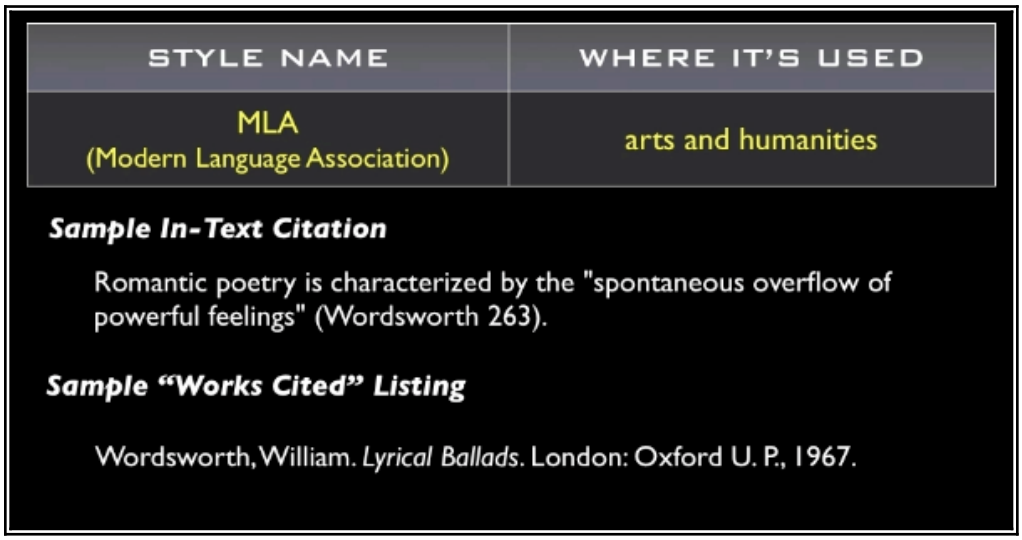
When I started writing essays I had no clue how to format bibliographies and citations, I had never heard of citation styles or style manuals. So what I did is just find a journal article or an essay or a book and copied the citation style from that source. Eventually I noticed that there were different citation styles but I still had no clue why one was used instead of another. In this lecture I want to give you a survey of the different citation styles that you might encounter in academic writing, and some tips on what styles to use and what style manuals you should have on your bookshelf.

i. MLA

Let's start with the MLA style. MLA stands for Modern Language Association. It's actually a pretty recent citation format, the MLA Style Manuel is only in its third edition as of this recording, with the first edition in 1985. The is the most commonly used style for academics working in the humanities, like english literature, literary criticism, media and cultural studies, and a hodgepodge of other arts disciplines.

In the examples I used in the plagiarism videos, I was using APA style for the most part. MLA style is like the APA style in that it uses in-text citations, but an important difference is that MLA uses the "author-page number" system rather than the "author-date" system.

In the example below the quote is from a book by William Wordsworth, and the citation is "Wordsworth 263", where 263 is the page number from that source.

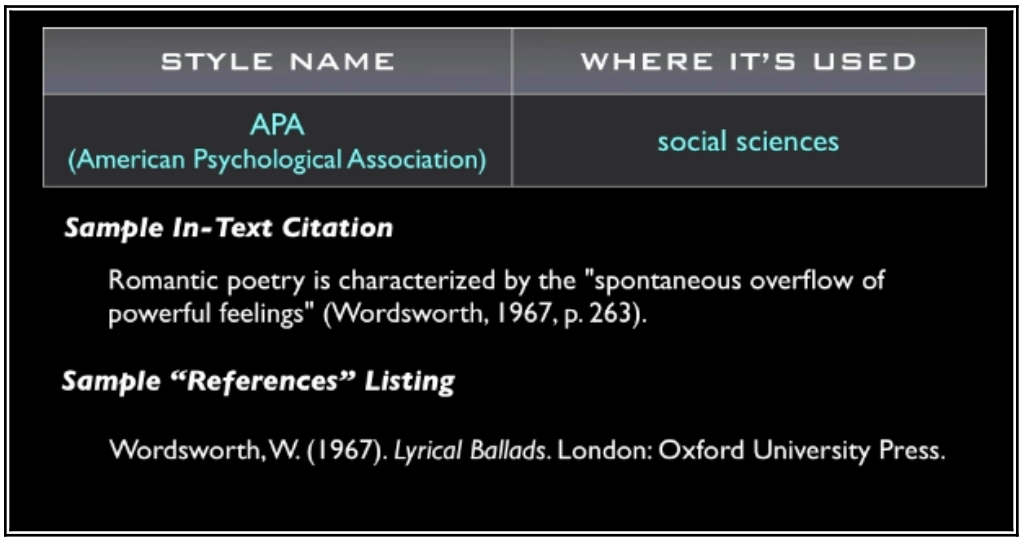


In this figure you also see what the source reference would look like in the bibliography, which in MLA style is titled "Works Cited". Every citation style requires similar information — author, title, publication date, where it was published, and so on, but the specific formatting will be different in each style. Here, for example, the date of publication comes at the end, but in the APA style, as we'll see, the date comes right after the author's name.

ii. APA

APA stands for American Psychological Association. The first APA style manual came out in 1927, and was designed to serve the writing needs of psychologists and anthropologists, but the APA style is now widely used across the social sciences, and there are branches of the humanities that use the style as well.

If you were to write the Wordsworth citation in APA style it would look like this.



APA style uses the author and the date of publication rather than the author and page number, though page number references are often included as well, like here. APA uses more commas to separate the elements of the citation than the MLA, and it uses that "p." preface to indicate page numbers, where MLA doesn't require this.

A student once asked me why APA uses the author-date system while MLA uses the author-page number system. I hadn't a clue, so I went and researched it.

The basic idea, as far as I can tell, is that there's a presumption about what kinds of information are most important for someone writing in the humanities versus someone writing in the social sciences. In the social sciences more often you're citing the conclusions of the most current sources that bear on your work, so the date of publication is emphasized, and details of where in the source the quote is located less so. In the humanities it's assumed that your work is engaging with the ideas of other writers that appear at specific places in their works, so the precise location of the ideas within a given work is emphasized more than the date of publication of the work.

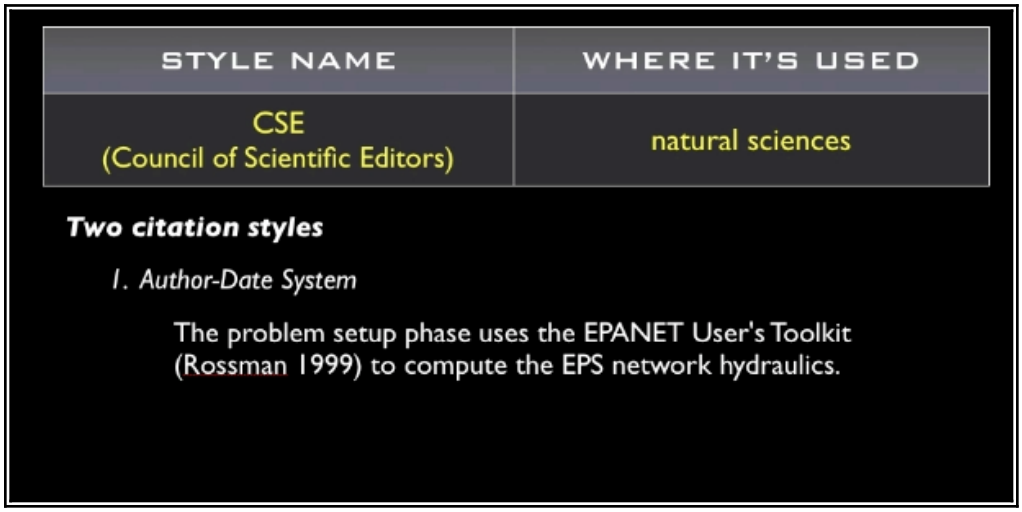
In the figure above you can also see what a bibliography entry would look like in an APA formatted paper. Here you would title the bibliography "References" rather than "Works Cited". Notice that you

only give the initial for the first name of an author, and the date follows in brackets.

iii. CSE

Okay, next on our list is the CSE style, which can be quite different from the MLA and APA styles. CSE stands for "Council of Scientific Editors", and this citation style is commonly found in the natural sciences. Originally the editors were mostly biologists and the format was focused on life sciences like microbiology, zoology, plant sciences, and so on, but now it's used across a wide array of physical and biological sciences.

CSE format actually supports two quite different citation styles. The first is just a variant of the author-date system that we've seen before. Here's an example. Nothing too unusual here.

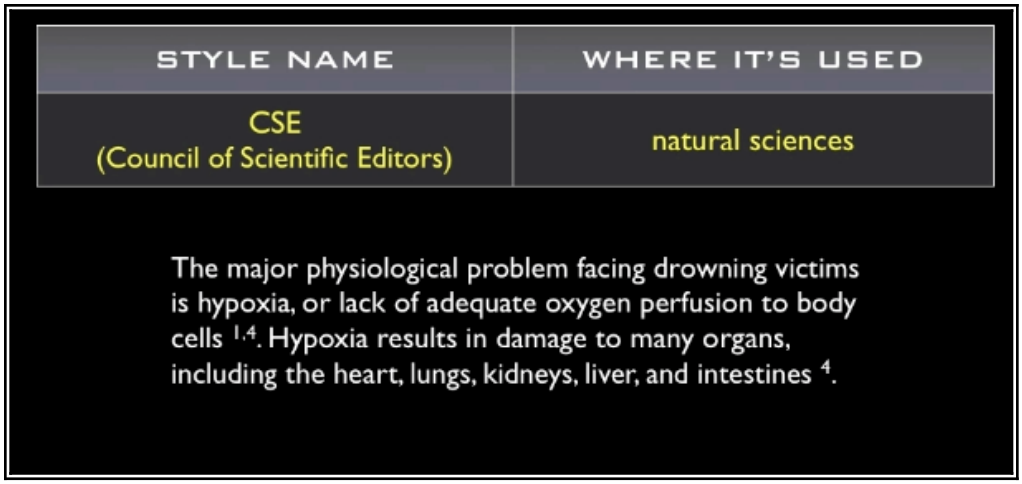


The second is the 'citation-sequence' system, and this is different. Here the citation is labeled with a superscripted number, it looks like a footnote reference. And each new citation is numbered sequentially, so the next would be "2", followed by "3" and so on. Sometimes the number won't be superscripted, it'll just be at regular size placed in brackets at the location of the citation.

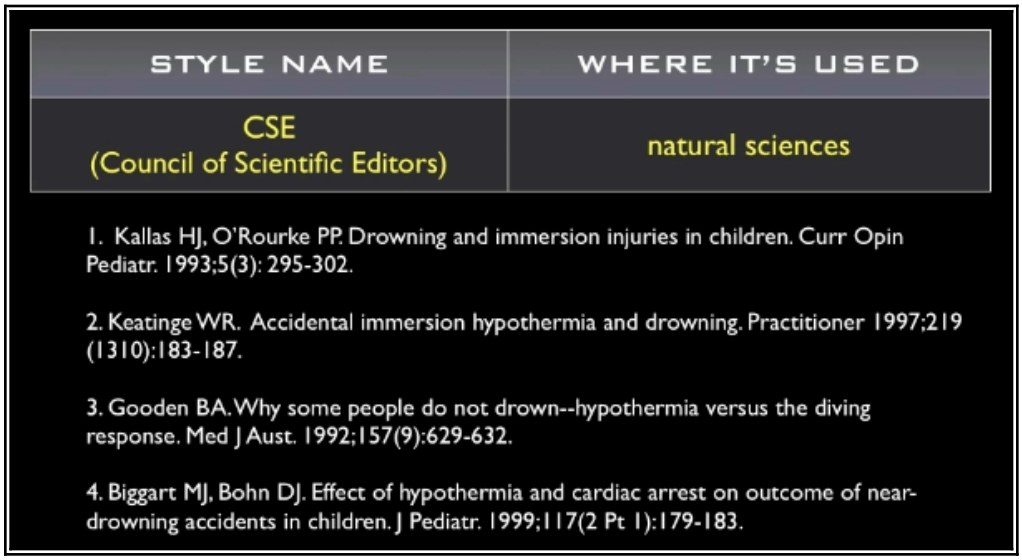
Obviously with a system like this, the bibliography has to reflect the citation sequence, so each bibliographic entry is labeled by the

corresponding citation number. But if you refer to the same reference more than once, you use the same number.

Here's an example. The citations are superscripted, the first sentence cites references 1 and 4, the second sentence cites reference 4 again.



A bibliography might look like this (see the figure below). Each reference is numbered, so the numbers 1 and 4 in the document would refer to references 1 and 4 in this reference list.



This list also illustrates the CSE citation format for bibliographic entries, which is quite different from, say, the APA format. Just to note a few, here you only give initials for the first names of the authors, you don't put

spaces between them, and you don't capitalize the names of journal articles or put them in quotes, you just capitalize the first letter of the title. And you also abbreviate the journal titles. This is the sort of thing you just have to consult a style manual to figure out, or (as most people do), just use a representative journal article or essay as a model when formatting your own essay.

iv. Chicago / Turabian

Okay, our last citation style we'll look at is the Chicago style, sometimes called "CMS" or "CMOS", after the initials for the *Chicago Manual of Style*. It's named after Chicago since it's been published by the University of Chicago Press since the first edition came out in 1906.

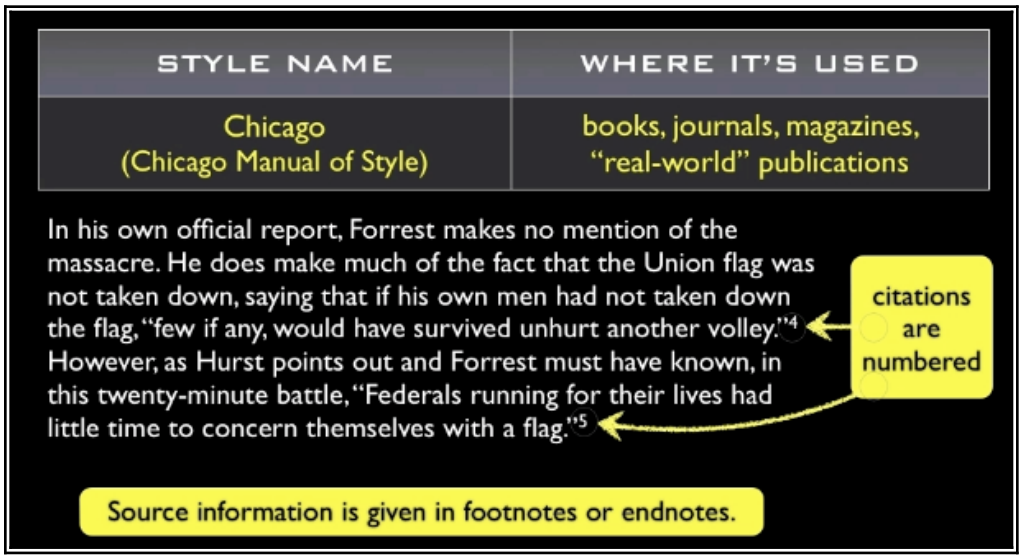
The *Chicago Manual of Style* is a beast, almost a thousand pages long. It's not just a style manual for essays, it also has sections on editorial practice and English grammar and usage, and it covers style and format issues for all kinds of publications, including books for non-academic audiences. The Chicago style manual is also used for some social science and humanities journals, so you might see this used in places where you'd otherwise see MLA or APA style used.

Luckily, for students who need help writing research papers, there's an excellent and much shorter style guide, written originally by Kate Turabian in 1937, that basically compiles all the relevant style rules that students would need to know. The book is called *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, and it's been periodically revised over the years by various teams. This is sometimes called "Turabian style", but it's really just the Chicago style edited and compiled for undergraduate and graduate students.

What's distinctive about the Chicago style is that it supports two different reference styles, and supports the mixing of those two styles in the same publication.

When most writers hear the term "Chicago style" they think of a sequential numbering, notes-based citation system, like the one illustrated

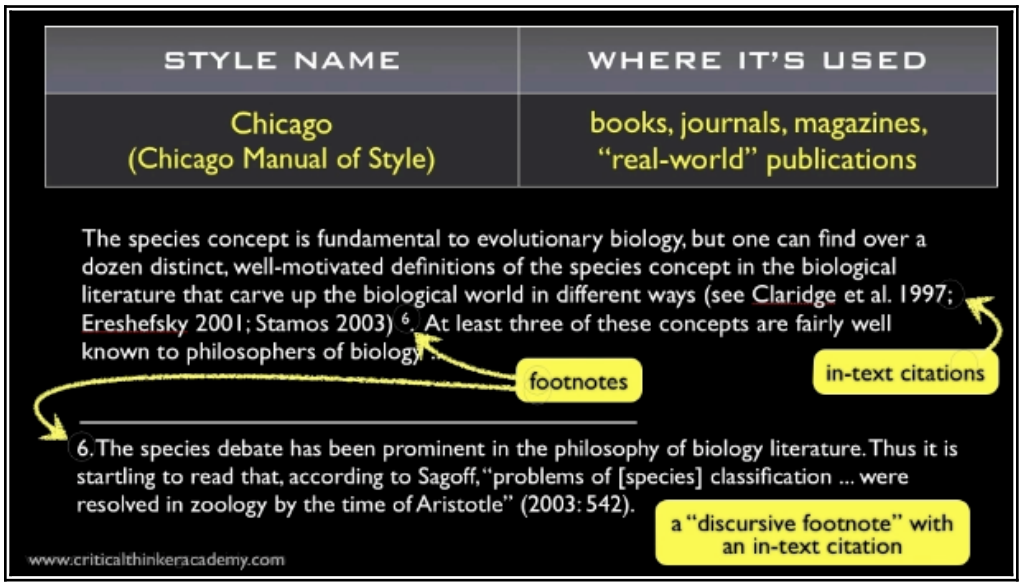
here. The citations are numbered, and then the source information is given either in a footnote at the bottom of the page, or in an endnote at the end of the document. With this system you can avoid having a separate bibliography section altogether.



One of the advantages of a system like this is that the page isn't cluttered with citation information and it can make for a more pleasant reading experience.

Now, although this is, in some respects, the stereotypical Chicago style system, the Chicago Style Manual also supports in-line citation styles, like the MLA and APA styles, so it gets complicated explaining what makes the citation style distinct.

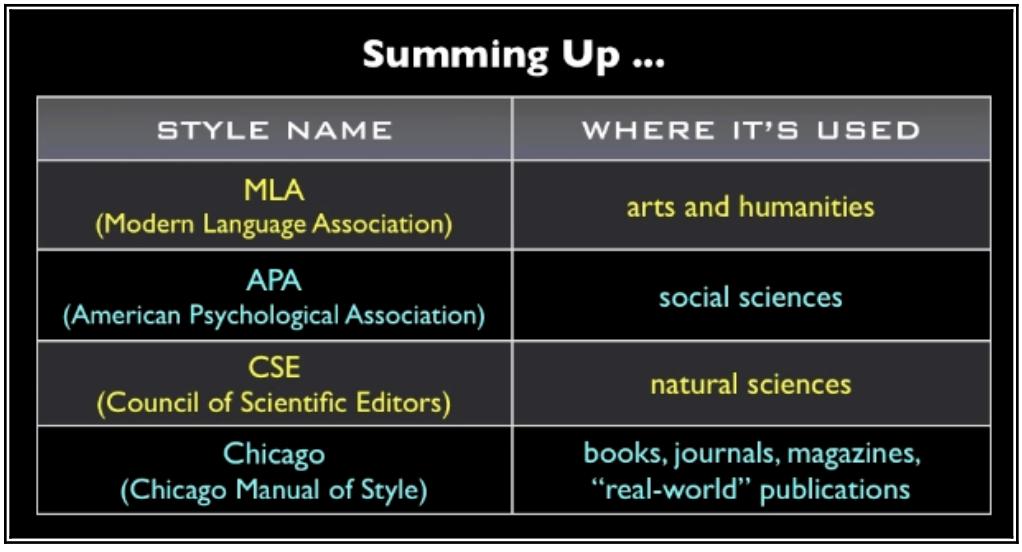
For example, here's a citation system that the Chicago style also supports. On top you've got a paragraph with some standard in-text citations. You've also got a reference to a footnote, footnote number 6.



At the bottom of the page is footnote number 6, and in it you've got some commentary -- these are sometimes called "discursive notes" to distinguish them from footnotes that just contain source information. And in the commentary there's another in-text citation.

And all of this is supported by the Chicago manual of style. So you can see that it encourages flexibility and mixing of citation styles, which can come in handy for different purposes.

v. Summary Table



What I would recommend, for any student, is to pick up a copy of a good style guide suitable to your discipline, because it'll make life easier for you in the end. Just google any of these style names and you'll get lots of online resources, and if you go to Amazon just search for these names and you'll get the style manuals themselves as well as a bunch of third-party style guides that are basically like "dummies guides" to a particular citation style, which can also be very helpful.