

Should I cite the software?

You are writing up your research and wonder if you should cite a particular software package that you used.

I don't know?

- Check for a file name CITATION or similar in the software folder.
- Check the README for the software, their website, and any output from running it.
- Search the web for citation instructions: "How to cite 'software name'?"
- Check download page.
- Email the authors, open an issue in their issue tracker, or ask on a user support forum. While waiting for a response continue to question 2.

Does the software ask you to cite it?

Yes

Cite!

If you use a piece of software in your research and the software/the authors request citation then you should cite it.

No

Did the software play a critical part in, or contributed something unique to, your research?

Yes

Cite!

Other researchers need to know how you arrived at your results. Knowing what tools you used is key.

No

Did the software manipulate or create your data, software or other outputs?

Yes

Cite!

Other researchers need to know how you handled data, developed or extended software and even generated figures.

No

Do the authors of the software rely on academic credit for funding?

Yes

Cite!

Many academics spend long hours developing software. If not credited they will struggle to show the impact of their work and obtain further funding for their research or improving the software you are using.

No

Don't cite!