



Incorporating References

Make the best use of your research efforts by incorporating reference information smoothly and systematically into the text and citing your sources accurately and in a consistent fashion.

Weave the research through the paper rather than patching a paper together with bits of research. Here are some suggestions to help you incorporate reference material effectively.

Putting the Information in Your Own Words

Paraphrasing or summarizing, citing your sources, is one possibility, unless the reference is best stated and most effective for your purposes as a quotation. Paraphrasing requires restatement of the material in your own syntax, while conveying the same ideas or conclusions as the original that you are citing. Remember, you need to cite the source for all material that you have paraphrased. Even if the words are your own, you must give the author credit for the specific idea.

Introducing and Commenting on Quotations

Weave quotations into your own writing by clarifying the quote's significance to the topic. Avoid stacking quotations on top of each other. Incorporate them into the writing instead of inserting writing into the quotations. Introduce the quotation, comment on content, explain its significance, disagree with it if necessary, but do not drop a lengthy quotation in the middle of the prose with no comment.

Citing Reference Sources

To avoid plagiarism, cite everything you borrow unless that information is common knowledge.

Determining What Constitutes Common Knowledge

Sometimes, however, common knowledge is difficult to determine. Consider information common knowledge if:

- reliable authors refer to it without citing its source,
- most people knowledgeable in the field accept it as a fact,
- few experts would dispute it,
- it is reported in most introductory textbooks or basic reference books on the subject.

In addition, keep in mind that the ultimate test is whether your audience can access your research by using the material you have provided. If in doubt, cite your source.

Citing Quoted Material

Quotation marks are used to indicate material that is borrowed verbatim. Standard uses of quotations are summarized below. Those examples also show conventions for citing the sources of information. Sources should be cited for all borrowed material, whether direct quotations or ideas. Citation conventions vary by discipline; these examples use MLA style, a popular form in the humanities.



In-Text Quotations

Direct quotations need to be surrounded by quotation marks.

Wilbur Zelinsky argues, “Over a dozen ethnic groups have had major influence on this county” (34).

Wilbur Zelinsky argues that “every ethnic group . . . possesses a distinctive cultural pattern” (39).

Comments:

- A comma does not precede a quotation that is introduced by the word “that.”
- The three periods with spaces between in the middle of the first quotation are called an ellipsis, indicating that there are several words from the text deleted from the quotation. Any omission in a quotation needs to be indicated.
- The period comes after the parenthetical citation.
- The in-text citation consists of only the page number when the author is incorporated into the text.

“The term ‘culture core’ perhaps states most succinctly what is desired” (Zelinsky 39).

Comments:

- Single quotation marks indicate a quotation within a quotation.
- In-text citation includes the author and page if the name is not incorporated into the text.

Blocked Quotations

All direct quotations longer than four typed lines of prose (or three lines of poetry) should be blocked. (MLA requires a 10-space indentation.) This example illustrates what the text might look like:

What we are after is that most critical set of cultural attributes, the small package that will most parsimoniously signal the complex totality. The term “culture core” perhaps states most succinctly what is desired. (Zelinsky 39)

Comments:

- Culture core is surrounded with double quotation marks, just as if it were in your own text.
- MLA style maintains double spacing with a blocked quotation. Other styles single space the block quotation.
- The final punctuation in a blocked quotation precedes the parenthetical citation so that the blocked quotation remains intact.

For additional examples, refer to a standard English handbook or an appropriate style manual.



Creating a Works Cited or Reference Page

Under the in-text citation system, a list of works cited in the document is attached on a separate sheet after the text of the document. In MLA form, that list is called a Works Cited Page. In some others it is known as a Reference Page. Many people know this list as the Bibliography. A Works Cited page, however, includes only those sources cited in the document whereas a bibliography may include additional resources. As with the in-text citations, the format of this list varies by discipline.

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