Why Cite?

The presentation of original thoughts, arguments, and ideas is the foundation of academic writing. The use of outside information can also help to greatly strengthen and add credibility to an argument or analysis. The source of that material, however, must be properly acknowledged to provide credit to its creator as well as distinguish the author's voice and original content. The three most common forms of citation are those from the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS).

MLA
- Used in the arts and humanities;
- Most familiar among collegiate writers due to its wide use in American high schools;
- Authorship is the most prominent element of a source;

MLA differs from CMS and APA styles in the absence of punctuation within in-text citations and the organization of the Works Cited page. Complete guide.

APA
- Used in the social sciences;
- Date of publication is the most prominent element of a source;

APA uses punctuation in in-text citations to separate the author's name, date, and page numbers when appropriate. Complete guide.

CMS
- Used in the arts and humanities;
- Authorship is the most prominent element of a source;

CMS does not utilize in-text citations. Sources are instead cited with a superscript denoting the reference number for the full citation within the notes section. This superscript is placed after the ending punctuation, whereas parenthetical citations are followed by ending punctuation. In addition to this notes section, the CMS also makes use of a bibliography to cite sources. Complete guide.

Between these formats there are stylistic and structural nuances that place priority on different aspects of a cited source. To demonstrate those distinctions, an article on the Renaissance from the online Encyclopedia Britannica is cited below.

Sentence: Humanism highlighted the limitless potential of humanity in developing new intellectual frameworks [citation].

MLA:
- “… new intellectual frameworks (Encyclopedia Britannica).”
- There is no punctuation in parenthetical in-text citations.

APA:
- “… new intellectual frameworks (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016).”
- Author and date are separated by punctuation.

CMS:
- “… new intellectual frameworks.”¹
- A superscript denoting the reference number serves in lieu of an in-text citation.

[Note: in-text citations are bolded for emphasis.]
Note: The superscripts used for CMS do not differentiate between sentences in which the source of the material is named or unnamed. (See page #3.)

Source of material is named in sentence

- **MLA**: include page number in parentheses, followed by ending punctuation.
- **APA**: include the year of publication directly after the name of the material and the page number if there is a direct quotation, followed by ending punctuation.

Source of material is not named in sentence

- **MLA**: include author and page number in parentheses without separation by punctuation, followed by ending punctuation.
- **APA**: include author’s name, year of publication, and page number if there is a direct quotation in parentheses, each separated by commas, followed by ending punctuation.

**WHEN & WHEN NOT TO CITE**

Though academic disciplines differ greatly in how sources should be cited, there is little debate over which sources should be cited. These guidelines generally apply to all pieces of academic writing. Speaking broadly,

- **If the material was not originally created by you or is not well known**, cite your sources.
- **If the material was originally created by you or is commonly known**, do not cite.
- When in doubt, **cite your sources**.

**WHEN TO CITE**

- **Direct quotation from a given material**. The verbatim replication of a quote or term needs to be appropriately cited.
- **Paraphrasing and summarizing**. As both actions are forms of restating another person’s ideas, proper citation is needed.
- **Scientific figures, data, and information**. Though certain scientific information can be considered common knowledge (the atomic number of hydrogen is one), less well known findings and materials should be attributed to their proper source.

**WHEN NOT TO CITE**

- **Familiar proverbs or axioms**. Though the use of such colloquial and cliché phrases is generally frowned upon in writing, if they are used, they do not need to be cited.
- **Commonly known or accepted facts**. Information that is expected to be known by a wide range of people, such as the signing of Declaration of Independence in 1776, does not require citation.
- **Common sense observations**. Stating a piece of general knowledge, like the presence of four wheels on a car, is expected to be known by the reader.

**Examples**

**MLA (source of material is named)**:
- Roth has called Wesleyan “an experiment in liberal arts education” (153).
- Fiske ranked Wesleyan in its top 20 liberal arts colleges (547).

**APA (source of material is named)**:
- Roth (2011) has called Wesleyan “an experiment in liberal arts education” (p. 153).
- Fiske (2016) ranked Wesleyan in its top 20 liberal arts colleges.

**MLA (source of material is not named)**:
- Wesleyan has been called “an experiment in liberal arts education” (Roth 153).
- Wesleyan is one of the top 20 liberal arts colleges in the U.S. (Fiske 547).

**APA (source of material is not named)**:
- Wesleyan has been called an “experiment in liberal arts education” (Roth, 2011, p. 153).
- Wesleyan is one of the top 20 liberal arts colleges in the U.S. (Fiske, 2016).

Also see Guide on the Art of Citation
In-Text Citations: Printed

- Chicago Manual and Style

  • Instead of formal in-text citations, CMS uses superscripts, which follow ending punctuation, to denote the corresponding citation in the notes section. These superscripts function independent of whether the sentence contains the name of the material.
    - The formatting of footnotes is covered in full on page #5.

Examples

CMS:

  • Roth has called Wesleyan “an experiment in liberal arts education.”¹
  • Wesleyan has been called an “experiment in liberal arts education.”¹


  • Fiske ranked Wesleyan in its top 20 liberal arts colleges.⁴
  • Wesleyan is one of the top 20 liberal arts colleges in the U.S.⁴


Printed vs. Electronic Materials

With the advent of the internet and online databases, content that could once only be accessed through printed materials, such as literary or scientific journal articles, can now be found electronically.

Provided that the electronic source is reputable and the content retrieved can be easily verified, there is no preference to using electronic materials as opposed to that are printed.

In-Text Citations: Electronic

Again, particular caution should be taken when citing information from websites that can be easily edited or cannot be verified.

- Source of material is named in sentence

  • MLA: if the source is explicitly stated in the sentence and is the first item in the Works Cited entry (see page #6), no parenthetical citation is required.
    - If the named source does NOT match the first item in the Works Cited entry, parenthetical citation naming the first item is required, followed by ending punctuation.

Did You Know?

Failing to acknowledge content that you have previously published or presented as original work is known as “self-plagiarism”?

In 2012, it was discovered that neuroscientist Jonah Lehrer reused portions of his published work in his online blog for The New Yorker without noting that this content was not original. Lehrer later resigned from his positions at The New Yorker and Wired.com over concerns he fabricated other work.

MLA (source of material is named):

    - The first item in the entry is bolded.

    - When named, there is no parenthetical citation: Kershner states that hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil.

    - When the named source does not match the first item, there is a parenthetical citation: HowStuffWorks states that hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil (Kershner).
In-Text Citations: Electronic

- **Source of material is named in sentence**
  - **APA**: include the year of publication directly after the name of the material. If no date is provided, include “n.d.” for “no date”. Omit page numbers.

- **Source of material is not named in sentence**
  - **MLA**: include the first item in the corresponding Works Cited entry in parentheses, followed by ending punctuation.
  - **APA**: include the name of the material followed by the year of publication in parentheses, each separated by commas, followed by ending punctuation. Omit page numbers.

- **Chicago Manual and Style**
  - Again, CMS uses superscripts, which follow ending punctuation, to denote the corresponding reference in the notes section. These superscripts function independent of whether the sentence contains the name of the material.

Examples

**APA (source of material is named):**
- Kershner (2012) states that hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil.
- Theater Dictionary (n.d.) defines the fourth wall as the “semi-transparent barrier between the audience and the performers”.

**MLA (source of material is not named):**
- Hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil (Kershner).
- The fourth wall is the “semi-transparent barrier between the audience and the performers” (Theater Dictionary).

**APA (source of material is not named):**
- Hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil (Kershner, 2012).
- The fourth wall is the “semi-transparent barrier between the audience and the performers” (Theater Dictionary, n.d.).

**CMS:**
- Kershner states that hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil.\(^2\)
- Hydraulic fracking has contributed significant amounts of chemical additives to surrounding sands and soil.\(^2\)


- Theater Dictionary defines the fourth wall as the “semi-transparent barrier between the audience and the performers.”\(^4\)
- The fourth wall is the “semi-transparent barrier between the audience and the performers.”\(^4\)

The Chicago Manual of Style makes use of a notes section (in the form of either footnotes or endnotes) that lists citations in addition to the bibliography section at the end of a piece of writing (see pages #6-7).

When using the same source consecutively, “Ibid” can be written instead of reproducing the citation. Note that if the page numbers are different, the citation should be listed as, “Ibid., [page number].” See example on page #6.

Additionally, each time a direct quotation is made, even within the same sentence, a reference to the notes section is necessary. If the source is the same for both quotes, “ibid” can be used. Again, see example on page #6.

The following templates show the correct citation style for some of the most used sources. A complete list of formats for the notes section can be found on the Chicago Manual of Style Online.

### Printed materials

**Printed book, single author**

[reference number]. [First name] [Last name], *[Title]* ([City of publication]: [Publisher], [Year of publication]), [page number].

**Printed book, multiple authors**

[reference number]. [First name] [Last name] and [First name] [Last name], *[Title]* ([City of publication]: [Publisher], [Year of publication]), [page number].

### Electronic materials

If the date of last modification is not provided, the date of accessed can be used instead, such as in the citation for “Fourth Wall” on the right.

**Online book**

[Last name], [First name]. *[Title]*. [City of publication]: [Year of publication]. [url].

**Website**

[Author or editor name]. “[Title],” [Name of website], last modified [date], [url].

**Webpage**

[First name] [Last name], “[Title],” *[Title of website]*, last modified [date], [url].

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#### Did You Know?

The most cited work in history is a paper from 1951 outlining the use of an assay in determining the protein content of a solution. To date, “Protein measurement with the folin phenol reagent” has been cited over 305,000 times in scientific literature.


Pop quiz: which citation style is used above?

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**Printed book, single author:**


**Printed book, multiple authors:**


**Online book:**


**Website:**


**Webpage:**


Works

What’s the Difference?

Each style of citation has a different name for the list of sources that concludes a piece of writing:

MLA: Works Cited
APA: References
CMS: Bibliography

For each in-text citation, there must be a corresponding entry in the ending list of citations. Each style has specific rules for which aspects of a source is given priority. Again, MLA and CMS place an emphasis on authorship, while APA focuses on the date of publication.

Ending Citation: Printed Materials

Book, single author:

MLA: [Last name], [First name]. [Title]. [City of publication]: [publisher], [year of publication]. [Publication type: Print/Electronic].

APA: [Last name], [First and middle initials]. (Year of publication). [Title]. [City, State] or [City, Country]: [Publisher].

CMS: [Last name], [First name]. [Title]. [City of publication]: [Publisher], [Year of publication].

Book, multiple authors:

MLA: [Last name], [First name], and [First name] [Last name]. [Title]. [City of publication]: [publisher], [year of publication]. [Publication type].

APA: [Last name], [First and middle initials] & [Last name], [First and middle initials]. (Year of publication). [Title]. [City, State] or [City, Country]: [Publisher].

CMS: [Last name], [First name] and [First name] [Last name]. [Title]. [City of publication]: [Publisher], [Year of publication].

Examples

MLA (book, single author):

APA (book, single author):

CMS (book, single author):
- Roth, Michael S. Beyond the University. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

MLA (book, multiple authors):

APA (book, multiple authors):

CMS (book, multiple authors):
Ending Citation: Electronic Materials

Examples

MLA (online book):

APA (online book):

CMS (online book):

MLA (website):

APA (website):

CMS (website):

MLA (webpage):

APA (webpage):

CMS (webpage):
**Content Quiz**

1) Which sentence contains the correct ending punctuation?
   - a) Whaley said, “Free ice cream for all!” (520).
   - b) Williams has terrible academics. (Roth 314)
   - c) In 2014, Roth was secretly chosen to Wesleyan’s eternal president1.
   - d) Olin has been called an “intellectual haven” (Scot, 2010, pp. 314-316).

2) Which citation style requires punctuation in parenthetical in-text citations?
   - a) APA
   - b) CMS
   - c) MLA

3) Which sentence contains the correct APA formatting?
   - a) Farmer found that Wesleyan students are the happiest in the United States. (Farmer, 2012).
   - b) Some (Fauver, 2009) have deemed Amherst’s athletic program atrocious.
   - c) Past studies show Wesleyan’s prowess in the arts and in the sciences (Lee 2000, Thompson 2004).

4) Which sentence contains the correct MLA formatting?
   - a) Most Wesleyan students self-identify as hippies. (Backer, p. 23)
   - b) Campbell prematurely claimed, “I have rid Wesleyan of the hippies!” (59).
   - c) With the advent of veganism, hippies at Wesleyan morphed into “hipsters”. (Smith 17)

5) Which sentence contains the correct CMS formatting?
   - a) Mother Nature ensures it rains every Spring Fling2.
   - b) Spring Fling often features hip hop performers and indie artists3, who together form a musical genre known as “hopdie”.
   - c) Every year Roth offers to headline Spring Fling6.