

EBSCO Publishing Student Success Tools How to Cite Information

The act of putting pen to paper encourages pause for thought, this in turn makes us think more deeply about life, which helps us regain our equilibrium.
~ Norbet Platt

When writing a paper, especially a research paper, you must cite any information or quotes that did not come from you. Even if you paraphrase information but do not use the exact quote, you must cite it. The citations are also known as footnotes, because they are often placed at the foot of a written page, below the main text. If you do not cite, you are stealing ideas, and this can be construed as a form of plagiarism. For more information about plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the article on plagiarism.

For this guide, all citation examples are in Modern Language Association (MLA) Format. Links on how to cite in American Psychological Association (APA) and Chicago (Chicago Style or *Chicago Manual of Style*) are located at the end of the guide. There are several ways to cite a work in a paper. The most common is an In-Cite Quotation, which works the quote into the sentence, then notes who wrote it or came up with the idea and the page number you found it on. Set it up like this (Doe, 12).

When citing, it is not necessary to add p. after the page number. The reader will assume that any numbers are page numbers. Therefore, if you are citing other information, such as acts, scenes, chapters, articles, or line numbers, you must differentiate those with numbers.

Unless you are using multiple sources from the same author, the author's last name is enough to distinguish where this information came from. If you are using multiple sources from one author, use the title of the work as well to clarify sources. This will occur if you need to write an essay comparing works by the same author. Also, if you specifically mention the author or work in a sentence, it is only necessary to cite the page number of reference, because you have already established who you are crediting for the information.

If you are using an anonymous work, do not cite with the word "Anonymous". Cite the title of the work instead. This may come up if you are using a pamphlet, religious work, or certain poems.

If you are using two works by different authors of the same last name, such as Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, use the initial of the first name, followed by the last name, R. Browning and E. Browning.

Sometimes, you may want the information at the beginning of a quote and the very end, but not necessarily the information in between. Here, you have two options. You can pick out the words and facts you want, and join them with your own words, or you can use the quote and omit the middle parts, replacing them with "..." in place of the omitted words. Editing a quote in this way will cut down on the length of your paper, and will help you focus your point without the distraction of a complete quote. Cite this partial quote, too.

Literary Works, Poetry, and Plays

Literary works, poetry, and plays are treated slightly differently. Classic novels are often republished after first publication, or bound together in one book. Therefore, cite references to page number, and also include the book title and chapter. A reader with a different edition of the same work can then find the information you reference. Citing a classic quote would resemble the following example: (Fitzgerald, 187-188. Ch. 9).

When you cite poems, omit page number references. A poem could appear on a number of pages in many different collections. Knowing the page number is not helpful. Instead, cite line numbers, using the word "line" or "lines". Most poems have marked line numbers; in those cases where none is provided, count the lines yourself. Cite the author's name in the bibliography, as well as the edition in which you found the poem and its editor.

When quoting more than one line of poetry, you must also include line breaks (/). You can quote up to three lines of poetry within the text. Do not modernize any spellings or grammar you see in the poem. The author's style is sacred. Furthermore, poems such as Shakespeare's sonnets rely on specific syllabic rhythm, and must not be modified in any way.

If you quote more than three lines of poetry, you must "set off the quote," meaning have the text one inch left indented and single-spaced. As with in-text quotes, you cannot change any spelling or grammar of the text, even if there is a deep or odd indent in the line. This is also the case if you cite the middle of a line of a work. When you set off a quote, you do not have to put quotation marks around the lines as you do when quoting within the text. Setting off the quote indicates that it is someone else's work enough. The same goes for quoting a long passage in prose: if you have more than three lines of prose, set it off in the exact same way.

Plays are hybrids of both literary works and poetry, depending on their style (prose or verse). If a drama is written in verse, treat it as a poem. If applicable, also note the act and scene. A citation for Act II, scene 2, lines 26-27 would look something like this: (Shakespeare, II.ii.26-27).

Plays can be very tricky. Some have both verse and prose at different times in the work. In these cases, use the style that best corresponds with the text.

When quoting dialogue in a play, you have options. The first is to incorporate the dialogue into your sentence; the second is to set it off. If you are incorporating the dialogue into your sentences, then you do not need to credit who said what as they did in the play. Just note who says what. If you set off the quote, and two or more people are talking, then you do need to credit who says what as they did in the play. This helps cut down on confusion. The choice of how to quote it is up to you as the writer. If you are quoting a portion of a soliloquy or monologue and setting it off, and have already established who is speaking, you do not need to credit the speaker.

For more examples on how to cite different sources using MLA format, and also how to cite in Chicago and APA:

The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing, "Documentation Styles: MLA"
<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/mla.html>

Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue, "Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Format"
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html

The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing, "Effective Quoting"
<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/quoting.html>