How to Use Citations

In any essay or paper that uses information from outside sources, you will have to cite your sources. Correct citations allow your readers to see the sources of your information, evaluate their credibility, and locate and read the original texts if desired. Failing to give credit when you use someone else’s words or ideas is plagiarism, a serious offense that can result in a failing grade for the class or even expulsion from your school. Always cite any quotes, facts, ideas, or other content you get from an outside source.

Generally, there are two components to a citation: the in-text citation and the end-of-paper Works Cited page or bibliography.

- **In-text citations** typically appear in parentheses after whatever quote or information is cited. Depending on the style guide (MLA, APA, etc.) your teacher requires, in-text citations may include author names, page numbers, and publication dates. In-text citations are brief and help your reader find your source in your Works Cited page or bibliography.
- **Works Cited** or bibliographical citations at the end of a paper give information a reader will need to locate your original sources. Works Cited pages and bibliographies are typically organized in alphabetical order according to the authors’ last names and include titles, publishers, publication dates, and other essential information.

**How to Cite Your Sources**

- Get familiar with the style guide your teacher requires. If you’re unsure how to use the assigned style guide, ask an English Center tutor to help you. The following examples are in MLA style.
- Compile your Works Cited page or bibliography as you do your research, listing each of your resources in the correct format according to your style guide.
- As you draft your essay, use in-text citations whenever you quote, summarize, paraphrase, or otherwise use information from your research texts.
  - The first time you cite an author, state the author’s full name. If possible, establish credibility by also giving the publication title and the author’s credentials. In MLA format, the in-text citation would look something like this: *In his Harvard Law Review essay “Defending Murderers,” Harvard law professor Stanley McSmartypants argues that “People’s fear of being murdered makes them hostile towards accused murderers”* (67).
  - For subsequent quotes, either mention the author by last name only in a signal phrase, or put the author’s last name in the parenthetical citation if required by your style guide: *According to McSmartypants, “Murder is one of the great social taboos”* (93) or simply *“Murder is one of the great social taboos”* (McSmartypants 93).