

Student Resource Series:

Citing Your Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism



London Campus of Higher Studies

"Empowering learners through independent inquiry, critical thinking, and academic excellence – at the heart of future-focused education."

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Citing Your Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism

Citing your sources and avoiding plagiarism are fundamental aspects of academic integrity. Whether you are writing an essay, report, thesis, or research paper, acknowledging the work of others is crucial to maintaining credibility, respecting intellectual property, and contributing honestly to scholarly conversations.

1. 1. What Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work, ideas, or words as your own without proper attribution (Prewal and Lawrence, 2024). It includes:

- Copying and pasting from a source without citation
- Paraphrasing too closely to the original text
- Using someone's ideas, data, or visuals without credit
- Submitting another person's work (fully or partly) as your own

Plagiarism can be **intentional or unintentional**, but in academic settings, both are treated as serious offenses.

1.2. Why You Must Cite Sources

- **To give credit** to original authors for their ideas and research
- **To support your arguments** with credible evidence
- **To show the depth** of your research and engagement with scholarly work
- **To allow readers** to verify or further explore your sources
- **To avoid plagiarism**, which can lead to academic penalties, failed assignments, or damaged reputation

1.3. When to Cite

You must cite a source whenever you:

- Use a **direct quotation** (even short phrases)
- **Paraphrase** or rephrase someone else's ideas
- **Summarize** someone else's argument or findings
- Use **statistics, figures, or data** that are not common knowledge
- Refer to **theories, models, or frameworks** developed by others

Note: Common knowledge (widely known facts) does not need citation.

Example: "Water boils at 100°C at sea level." — No citation needed.

1.4. How to Cite: Common Citation Styles

Different disciplines use different citation styles. Always check your institution's preferred format.

A. APA Style (American Psychological Association)

- Used in: Psychology, Education, Social Sciences
- **In-text:** (Author, Year) → e.g., (Smith, 2021)
- **Reference list:** Smith, J. (2021). **Understanding human behavior**. Routledge.

B. MLA Style (Modern Language Association)

- Used in: Humanities, Literature, Arts
- **In-text:** (Author Page Number) → e.g., (Smith 45)
- **Works Cited:** Smith, John. **Understanding Human Behavior**. Routledge, 2021.

C. Harvard Style

- Used in: Business, Law, and various fields in the UK and other countries
- **In-text:** (Author, Year) → e.g., (Smith, 2021)
- **References:** Smith, J. (2021). *Understanding human behavior*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

D. Chicago Style

- Used in: History, Fine Arts, and some Social Sciences
- Can use either **footnotes/endnotes** or **author-date** format

1.5. Direct Quotes vs. Paraphrasing

Direct Quotes

Use exact words from a source, in quotation marks, followed by a citation.

Example:

“Academic honesty is fundamental to scholarly work” (Brown, 2020, p. 15).

Paraphrasing

Rewriting the idea in your own words, followed by a citation.

Avoid just replacing a few words—understand and rephrase fully.

Example:

Brown (2020) argues that being truthful in academic writing is essential for maintaining integrity in education.

1.6. Tools to Help with Citation and Plagiarism Prevention

- **Citation Generators:** EasyBib, CiteThisForMe, ZoteroBib
- **Reference Managers:** Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote (for storing and organizing references)
- **Plagiarism Checkers:** Grammarly, Turnitin (often used by universities), Quetext

1.7. Tips to Avoid Plagiarism

- Start your research early rushing leads to sloppy citations.
- Take careful notes and clearly mark your sources.
- Always write in your own words unless quoting directly.
- Keep track of all materials used in a reference list.
- Use citation tools but double-check for formatting errors.
- Understand your institution's policies on academic integrity.

1.8. Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- **Self-plagiarism:** Reusing your own previous work without permission or citation.
- **Over-paraphrasing:** Overusing other people's ideas—even if paraphrased—without adding your original analysis.
- **Citing incorrectly:** Missing page numbers, wrong formatting, or citing wrong sources.
- **No citation for images or tables:** Visual data must be credited unless created by you.

2. How to write References

The **References** section is where you list all the sources you cited in your work. It provides complete publication details to help readers locate the original material. Below, you'll find detailed formatting guidance for two widely used citation styles: **Harvard (author-date)** and **Oxford (footnote-based)**.

2.1 Harvard-Style Reference List

The **Harvard style** organizes references **alphabetically by author surname** at the end of the paper. In-text citations are brief (Author, Year), while full details appear in the reference list (Ajjbola, Issa and Akinboro, 2019)

A. Key Features:

- Author's surname and initials
- Year of publication (in brackets)
- Title (in italics)
- Publisher (for books) or journal details
- Place of publication (for books)

B. Examples:

Book:

Smith, J. (2020). *Global Politics and Governance*. Cambridge University Press.

Journal Article:

Khan, M. A. and Lee, S. (2022). 'Urban migration and climate policy in South Asia', *Environmental Policy Review*, 18(2), pp. 102–118.

Website:

World Health Organization (2023). *Climate change and health*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health> (Accessed: 15 March 2025).

Edited Book:

Johnson, L. (ed.) (2019). *Rethinking Development Economics*. Oxford University Press.

Chapter in Edited Book:

Davis, P. (2021). 'Renewable energy transitions in Africa', in Green, M. and Patel, A. (eds.) *Global Energy Policy*. Routledge, pp. 89–105.

References

Ajibola, T.S., Issa, A.O. and Akinboro, E.O. (2019). *In-Text Citations and Referencing Styles Adopted in Academic Writings: A Review of the Literature*. International Journal of Information Studies & Libraries, 4(2).

Perwal, U. and Lawrence, S. (2024). *Plagiarism*. International Journal of Nursing Education and Research, 12(1), pp.75-77.