

Questions and Answers about Citing Sources

What does citing a source mean?

When conducting research, you collect information, ideas and quotations from a variety of sources. You must acknowledge each source with a citation.

Citing means that:

- Your sources can be verified for their authority and currency
- Your research steps can be re-traced, so that your audience can consult specific sources and assess your conclusions about the topic
- You are honest about acknowledging other people's words and ideas
- You are able to back up your own ideas with the words and ideas of the experts

When do I need to cite a source, and when is it not necessary?

You must acknowledge:	You don't need to acknowledge:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Direct quotes➤ Paraphrased information or ideas➤ Specialized information➤ Statistics➤ Images, Charts, Graphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Well-known dates (e.g., Confederation took place in 1867)➤ Simple definitions➤ Commonly known facts (e.g., Canada's capital city is Ottawa)

What is included in a citation, and why?

A citation must make it easier for the audience to find the resource:

Providing the author's name, the title, publication date and publisher makes the resource easier to find. In the case of an online resource, specifying the URL and the date viewed is also very important, especially since the site may change over time.

A citation demonstrates the quality of the resource:

Information written by an acknowledge authority and published by a reputable institution or publisher has the most credibility.

A citation demonstrates the currency of the resource:

Human knowledge changes over time, and our perspective also changes. A source that is current (published very recently), is more likely to be accurate and complete.

A citation gives credit where credit is due:

Whoever wrote the book or article you are using put a lot of thinking and effort into it, and has developed expertise in their area. They deserve to be acknowledged.

What if I don't acknowledge my sources?

Not acknowledging your sources means that you are representing others' ideas as your own. This is dishonest: there is even a name for it – plagiarism. Visit your school library website for more information on plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

What is the correct way to cite sources?

There are several different methods of citing sources (ALA, MLA, etc.), depending on the topic and style of your research, and your teachers' requirements. All methods require you to record basic information as you research, like author, title, publisher, date and place of publication, etc. Visit your school library website for more detailed information on citation methods and links that will help you.