

How do I cite sources?

This depends on what type of work you are writing, how you are using the borrowed material, and the expectations of your instructor.

First, you have to think about how you want to identify your sources. If your sources are very important to your ideas, you should mention the author and work in a sentence that introduces your citation. If, however, you are only citing the source to make a minor point, you may consider using parenthetical references, footnotes, or endnotes.

There are also different forms of citation for different disciplines. For example, when you cite sources in a psychology paper you would probably use a different form of citation than you might in a paper for an English class.

Finally, you should always consult your instructor to determine the form of citation appropriate for your paper. You can save a lot of time and energy simply by asking “How should I cite my sources,” or “What style of citation should I use?” before you begin writing.

Identifying Sources in the Body of Your Paper

The first time you cite a source, it is almost always a good idea to mention its author(s), title, and genre (book, article, or web page, etc.). If the source is central to your work, you may want to introduce it in a separate sentence or two, summarizing its importance and main ideas. But often you can just tag this information onto the beginning or end of a sentence. For example, the following sentence puts information about the author and work before the quotation:

Milan Kundera, in his book The Art of the Novel, suggests that “if the novel should really disappear, it will do so not because it has exhausted its powers but because it exists in a world grown alien to it.”

You may also want to describe the authors if they are not famous, or if you have reason to believe your reader does not know them. You should say whether they are economic analysts, artists, physicists, etc. If you do not know anything about the authors, and cannot find any information, it is best to say where you found the source and why you believe it is credible and worth citing. For example,

In an essay presented at an Asian Studies conference held at Duke University, Sheldon Garon analyzes the relation of state, labor-unions, and small businesses in Japan between the 1950s and 1980s.

If you have already introduced the author and work from which you are citing, and you are obviously referring to the same work, you probably don’t need to mention them again. However, if you have cited other sources and then go back to one you had

cited earlier, it is a good idea to mention at least the author's name again (and the work if you have referred to more than one by this author) to avoid confusion.

Quoting Material

What is quoting?

Taking the exact words from an original source is called **quoting**. You should quote material when you believe the way the original author expresses an idea is the most effective means of communicating the point you want to make. If you want to borrow an idea from an author, but do not need his or her exact words, you should try paraphrasing instead of quoting.

How often should I quote?

Quote as infrequently as possible. You never want your essay to become a series of connected quotations, because that leaves little room for your own ideas. Most of the time, paraphrasing and summarizing your sources is sufficient (but remember that you still have to cite them!). If you think it's important to quote something, an excellent rule of thumb is that for every line you quote, you should have at least two lines analyzing it.

How do I incorporate quotations in my paper?

Most of the time, you can just identify a source and quote from it, as in the first example above. Sometimes, however, you will need to modify the words or format of the quotation in order to fit in your paper. Whenever you change the original words of your source, you must indicate that you have done so. Otherwise, you would be claiming the original author used words that he or she did not use. But be careful not to change too many words! You could accidentally change the meaning of the quotation, and falsely claim the author said something they did not.

For example, let's say you want to quote from the following passage in an essay called "United Shareholders of America," by Jacob Weisberg:

"The citizen-investor serves his fellow citizens badly by his inclination to withdraw from the community. He tends to serve himself badly as well. He does so by focusing his pursuit of happiness on something that very seldom makes people happy in the way they expect it to."

When you quote, you generally want to be as concise as possible. Keep only the material that is strictly relevant to your own ideas. So here you would not want to quote the middle sentence, since it is repeated again in the more informative last sentence. However, just skipping it would not work – the final sentence would not make sense without it. So, you have to change the wording a little bit. In order to do so, you will need to use some **editing symbols**. Your quotation might end up looking like this:

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In his essay, “United Shareholders of America,” Jacob Weisberg insists that “The citizen-investor serves his fellow citizens badly by his inclination to withdraw from the community. He tends to serve himself badly. . . by focusing his pursuit of happiness on something that very seldom makes people happy in the way they expect it to.”

The ellipses (. . .) indicate that you have skipped over some words in order to condense the passage. But even this version is still a bit lengthy – there is something else you can do to make it even more concise. Try changing the last sentence from

“He tends to serve himself badly. . . by focusing his pursuit of happiness on something that very seldom makes people happy in the way they expect it to.”

to

“He tends to serve himself badly. . . by focusing his pursuit of happiness on [money].”

The brackets around the word [money] indicate that you have substituted that word for other words the author used. To make a substitution this important, however, you had better be sure that “money” is what the final phrase meant – if the author intentionally left it ambiguous, you would be significantly altering his meaning. That would make you guilty of fraudulent attribution. In this case, however, the paragraph following the one quoted explains that the author is referring to money, so it is okay.

As a general rule, it is okay to make minor grammatical and stylistic changes to make the quoted material fit in your paper, but it is not okay to significantly alter the structure of the material or its content.

Quoting within Quotes

When you have “embedded quotes,” or quotations within quotations, you should switch from the normal quotation marks (“”) to *single* quotation marks (‘’) to show the difference. For example, if an original passage by John Archer reads:

The Mountain Coyote has been described as a “wily” and “single-minded” predator by zoologist Ima Warner.

your quotation might look like this:

As John Archer explains, “The Mountain Coyote has been described as a ‘wily’ and ‘single-minded’ predator by zoologist Ima Warner.”

Note the double quotes surrounding the entire quotation, and the single quotes around the words quoted in the original.

How do I include long quotes in my paper?

The exact formatting requirements for long quotations differ depending on the citation style. In general, however, if you are quoting more than 3 lines of material, you should do the following:

- Change the font to one noticeably smaller (in a document that is mostly 12 point font, you should use a 10 point font, for example)
- Double indent the quotation – that means adjusting the left and right margins so that they are about one inch smaller than the main body of your paper.
- If you have this option in your word-processor, “left-justify” the text. That means make it so that each line begins in the same place, creating a straight line on the left side of the quotation, while the right side is jagged.
- Do NOT use quotation marks for the entire quotation – the graphic changes you have made already (changing the font, double indenting, etc.) are enough to indicate that the material is quoted. For quotations within that quotation, use normal quotation marks, not single ones.
- You might want to skip 1.5 times the line-spacing you are using in the document before you begin the quotation and after it. This is optional and depends on the style preferred by your instructor.