

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH

To write an excellent research paper you need to find excellent source material, learn how to integrate it into your paper and properly cite the sources.

Seeking Good Information

There are many places you can find good information—encyclopedias, reference and other library books, interviews and the multitude of sources on the Internet. Be aware that the Internet cannot always be counted on for factual and reliable information. Always analyze the source and the data you read.

Identifying Sources

When it's possible, use primary sources. A **primary source** is the original source, such as a historical document, interview, novel or musical composition. A **secondary source** is something that discusses a primary source. It might be a critique, review or description of information that relates to a primary source. If you use a secondary source, recognize that it is likely to be an opinion or interpretation about primary sources.

Primary Sources

- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Constitution
- Speech by President Bush
- Autobiography
- Interview
- News report

Secondary Sources

- Textbooks
- Biography
- Analysis
- Commentary
- Criticism

Citing Your Sources Properly

As you research, especially on the Internet, it might be tempting to cut and paste information directly to your work. Be careful. Without documentation this practice is likely to be **plagiarism**. Using someone else's information, ideas and words without proper credit is theft. Even copying text or pictures from Web pages without identifying your source is plagiarism.

The purpose of research is to use what you already know and learn more from other sources, which then you use to form your own opinions. If you are sharing an opinion or if you knew information prior to researching, or if it is a date or other well known fact you do not need to cite your source. Other information that comes from an outside source should always be cited in your paper.

An acceptable practice is to use **direct quotes** from a story or piece. If you directly quote a few sentences or even up to a short paragraph or two, you must use quotations and document the source.

If you need to take more than a few sentences from a source, you should **paraphrase** it, which is to say, put it in your own words. **Do not copy it word for word.** You may also summarize information from a source. In either case you also must tell the reader your source.

Guidelines for Citing Internet Sources

One of the reasons you cite sources is so that you give credit to the person who did the writing and the research in the first place. Another is so that your reader can find the material you used. You can document your sources using a **parenthetical citation**.

Parenthetical or in-text references to print publications usually include the author's last name and the page number of the reference. When using Internet or electronic sources, you may find that not all the citation information is available. Therefore, your citation may include only an author's last name or the file name, the date of publication or the date you found the site, and the Internet address.

A commonly acceptable style for Internet citations comes from the Modern Language Association (MLA), which was founded in 1883 by teachers and scholars to promote the study and teaching of language and literature. The MLA publishes *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (2003) by Joseph Gibaldi, which offers these guidelines for citing Internet sources.

MLA-style Citation Format

1. Name of author, last name first
2. Title of the document, image or audio clip in quotation marks
3. Name of publication or Web site, usually italicized
4. Date of Internet publication
5. Date the document was accessed on the Internet
6. URL (the Internet address for the document) inside angle brackets

Example

Smith, Stephen and Sasha Aslanian. "The Armed Forces Integrate." *Korea: The Unfinished War*. American RadioWorks. July 2003. October 14, 2003.
<<http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/korea/index.html>>