

To Cite or Not to Cite

Academic research papers are collaborations with the scholars and writers who have made contributions to the body of knowledge concerning the papers' topics. As such, citation guidelines help students document the sources from which they obtained the evidence they are using to support their arguments. In-text citations are a key component of this documentation. The following guidelines describe in-text citations and explain when it is appropriate to use them:

1. *What are in-text citations?* **In-text citations** show the authorship and location of source materials. They serve as pointers to the sources' listings on the Works Cited page so that readers can look up the corresponding sources for themselves. They also help readers to distinguish between the student's writing and that of the sources used in the paper.
2. *Why does a student need them?* In-text citations ensure that a student is not **plagiarizing** her or his sources. According to *A Writer's Reference*, "Borrowing another writer's language, sentence structures, or ideas without proper acknowledgment is a form of dishonesty known as *plagiarism*" (144). By using in-text citations, a student is giving credit where credit is due and not claiming another person's work as her or his own.
3. *Which types of material must be cited?* **All direct quotes and paraphrases must be cited** with in-text citations that point to the corresponding listings on the Works Cited page.
4. *What's a quote?* A **quote** is an exact, word-for-word transcription of material from a source, no matter how brief. When a student uses a phrase or one or more sentences from a source in her or his paper, she or he must copy it exactly, surround it with quotation marks, and use the correct in-text citation.
5. *How does a paraphrase differ from a quote?* A **paraphrase** "uses roughly the same number of words as the original source to convey the information" (*A Writer's Reference* pp. 149-51). It conveys the same information but uses significantly different phrasing. An in-text citation is required for a paraphrase, but quotation marks are not.
6. *How do in-text citations differ from the Works Cited listings?* The in-text citations give the specific location of the information the student is quoting or paraphrasing, while the Works Cited listings reveal the print publications, online databases, or websites in which the information appears. **The writer of a research paper will need to complete them both accurately to have a properly documented paper.** As an analogy, imagine that the in-text citation is the street address of a house, while the reference listed in the Works Cited section is the town in which the house is located.

Example—In-text citation and corresponding Work Cited listing:

Muriel Harris describes collaborative learning as an opportunity for students to "shake off their passive classroom stance and assume some responsibility for getting involved with their own learning" (32).

Harris, Muriel. "What's Up and What's In: Trends and Traditions in Writing Centers."

Landmark Essays on Writing Centers, edited by Christina Murphy and Joe Law, Hermagoras, 1995, pp. 27-36.