



Citation Conventions

Overview

Each year, Student Learning Support gets a huge number of questions related to citation conventions – “How do I use APA?” “What does an MLA bibliography look like?” “How do I cite a u-tube video?” These are good questions but there’s a more important question that rarely gets asked: “Why are citation conventions important?” When you better understand the purpose and principles behind citation conventions, the specific rules of a given citation style will become more relevant and easier to grasp.

In an academic paper, a citation refers to the combination of an in-text citation inserted in the body of your paper and a full bibliographic reference at the end.

These citations have several purposes, including:

- To attribute words and ideas to their original source – simply giving credit where credit is due.
- To provide your readers with a kind of “map” of what you have been reading – to help your readers understand what has influenced your thinking.
- To add weight and credibility to your paper by demonstrating that you are engaged in the relevant research material
- To provide an easy way for your readers to get access to the source material.
- To situate yourself in an academic community with shared conventions.
- To avoid plagiarism

How We Can Help

It is one of our goals here at Writing Support to help you become better acquainted with academic writing in your discipline. So, we are happy to discuss this with you at length and over time. We can help you to further understand the principles that underlie these conventions and then guide you in the rules specified by the style you are using. Because these rules are regularly being updated as new forms of source material become commonplace, we may not always have a ready answer to your specific question. However, we can work with you to find the most up-to-

date information and find the answers together. The final word on specific requirements of your writing assignment rests, of course, with your professor, so be sure to consult with them regularly.

Resources

Each academic discipline adheres to a chosen citation style – APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. And each style sets out specific rules to be followed. Here are some links to some of the more common ones:

Official APA Style Guide

apastyle.org

Official Chicago Style Guide

chicagomanualofstyle.org

Citation Resource Guide for APA, MLA, and Chicago

owl.english.purdue.edu

Ryerson Student Learning Support

This website has a repository of Online Resources and Handouts, to help you become a better writer:

ryerson.ca/sls

Online workshop: APA: Using References Effectively

connect.ryerson.ca/p5t4y9nyc9d

Ryerson's Office of Academic Integrity

This website is full of useful resources related to our code of academic conduct (Policy 60), videos, links to educational workshops, and more:

ryerson.ca/academicintegrity