

Sources and Citation at Dartmouth College

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PREFACE

This document provides a broad overview of the practice of citing sources. It discusses why learning to cite sources is an essential part of your education, as well as why failing to cite your sources properly can have serious consequences. This document covers a wide range of scenarios relating to citing sources, plagiarism, and Dartmouth's Academic Honor Principle (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~deancoll/documents/handbook/conduct/standards/honor.html>).

Unlike its predecessor, *Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement*, this document does not give specific examples of how to cite in common formats, such as the MLA, APA, and *Science* styles. Although many disciplines represented at Dartmouth use these styles, citation styles vary among disciplines and even among professors within the same discipline. Develop the habit, in each of your classes and with each of your professors, of learning the conventions of when and how to cite. Here is the best single piece of advice that we can offer:

Whenever you have any question about whether to cite or how to cite, ask your professor.

At the Reference Desk at Baker-Berry Library you can find copies of commonly used style manuals such as *The MLA Handbook*, *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. You can take advantage of the Library's subscription to the online edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/ch16/ch16_toc.html). The MLA and APA style manuals are not available online, but you can access many reliable, non-affiliated guides (see, most prominently, Diana Hacker's *Research and Documentation Online*, <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>). At the Reference Desk, librarians can also assist you with formatting your citations and bibliography.

1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Proper citation lies at the heart of intellectual exchange. By citing sources correctly, you acknowledge your debts to other scholars, signal your desire to belong to a community of ideas, and highlight—precisely—your contribution to the ongoing academic conversation. When you demonstrate that you have done the research required to qualify you to join the conversation, you not only show respect for others' work, you also confer authority upon yourself and highlight the novelty of your particular contribution to the set of ideas under discussion. In these ways, citing sources represents a fundamental step in developing a scholarly voice.

Furthermore, by citing sources you extend a courtesy to other scholars. Citations provide a trail by which others who are interested in your topic can track an idea.

1.A What Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is intellectual theft. It occurs when you use the words or ideas of others without acknowledging that you have done so. If you are aware of a source, use an idea or quotation from this source, and fail to cite it, then you have plagiarized—regardless of your intent.

- If you quote from a source, you must specifically mark the quoted material and immediately cite the source. Place the quoted text in quotation marks or format it as a block quotation. Your citation should appear at the point of quotation, either in parentheses or in a footnote or endnote. Listing the source in a bibliography does not, by itself, constitute proper citation; you must cite at the point of use.
- If you quote a distinctive phrase, or even a single distinctive word, place it in quotation marks and cite the source.
- If you paraphrase an idea or special information from a source—that is, if you restate the idea, but alter the exact wording—you must cite that source.
- If you use images, maps, charts, tables, data sets, musical compositions, movies, new-media compositions, computer source code, song lyrics, and the like, you must cite the source.
- If you find a solution to a problem on a website and use that solution—even if you use it just to teach yourself how to solve the problem—you must cite the source.
- If you want to submit the same work, in whole or in part, for more than one course, then, according to Dartmouth's Academic Honor Principle, you must get the approval, in advance, of all professors involved.

Citation styles and formats matter, but style and formatting errors do not constitute plagiarism. As long as you properly cite your source at the place where you use another's words or ideas, you are not plagiarizing. Once style and formatting errors are brought to your attention, you should correct them for the benefit of readers who might wish to trace your sources.

Just as there are consequences for theft of property, there are consequences for plagiarism. Because academic integrity is so fundamental to the Dartmouth community, students who violate this standard usually are suspended from the College—even upon a first offense and even if they did not intend to plagiarize.

1.B What Is Common Knowledge?

The rule seems simple: Whenever you quote from or use another person's work, that author must be cited. But what should you do when you are writing about an idea that did not originate with you, that seems to be part of "common knowledge," and that you may or may not have taken from a specific source? While you do not need to cite common knowledge, it may prove difficult for you to recognize what knowledge is "common."

Try to determine how scholars treat similar information. Do they cite it? If not, it is probably common knowledge, at least within this particular discipline. Do some cite while others do not? Play it safe, and cite. Is the information in question brand new information for you? Are you unable to find that information in multiple sources? Again, play it safe, and cite. If you need further confirmation, ask your professor.

1.C What About Collaboration?

In some courses, you might be permitted to collaborate with other students on work that you submit for grades. Policies regarding collaboration vary from course to course, and often from assignment to assignment within the same course. If you are considering working with someone else on an assignment, make sure that you understand the policy on collaboration for that particular assignment. Students have been found responsible for violating the Academic Honor Principle for collaborating outside the expressed bounds of an assignment.

For further discussion of working ethically in collaboration, see section 2.B, "Collaborating with Your Peers."

2 PROCESSES AND PRACTICES OF A SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY

In coming to Dartmouth, you join a scholarly community, a group engaged in various intellectual conversations. Some of these conversations have continued for several terms, some for decades, and others for centuries. Your professors want *you* to join in. Every Dartmouth student has the capacity to contribute new perspectives to the ongoing conversation of scholarship. The faculty and librarians will help you.

Imagine the following.¹ You enter a dining hall, get your meal, and sit down at a table where people are engaged in a lively conversation. You listen for a few minutes and then decide to join in by picking up on one of the conversational threads. Following the etiquette of good conversation, you would not repeat someone else's idea, passing it off as your own. Instead, you would credit the original speaker, building on this idea by giving it a new twist, or using it to launch your own perspective.

The conventions of a dinner conversation resemble those of a scholarly conversation. When you compose a paper, a lab report, a presentation, or a film, you add your voice—your ideas, your point of view—to a conversation that is in progress. When you acknowledge and cite your sources, you act as a responsible member of the scholarly community. Those reading or viewing your work know that you have done your research; they can tell which ideas in the work are yours. If you fail to cite your sources, you will be thought of as a poser or a fraud. At best, you will leave your readers or viewers confused about which ideas are yours. At worst, they will know that you have taken credit for the work of others and will regard you as an intellectual thief.

Alas, the practice of citing sources is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Below, we examine some of the issues that arise as you work with and cite sources, that is, as you participate in those conversations we call scholarly. Some of these issues relate directly to plagiarism; others deal more broadly with careful, responsible academic work.

1 This example is adapted from Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1941) 110–11.

2.A Citing While You Write²

Many students envision citing sources as the final step in the writing process. They collect their materials, make notes, and draft their arguments. If they find themselves “on a roll,” they may not want to stop to check or to cite their sources, figuring that they can add the citations later on as finishing touches. But this practice is neither efficient nor safe. It is far better practice to cite your sources as you find them and use them.

When you decide to use a source, fully record all the information required to craft a citation. When you make note of a particular passage, be careful to include the page number. If you make careful notes, you will not need to search the source to identify missing details later.

Also, be careful when you cut and paste your sources from your notes to your paper. It is all too easy, while composing, to cut and paste a quotation from your notes without also pulling along the citation. Sloppy note-taking does not excuse plagiarism.

In sum, do not wait until the final draft to insert citations. The take-home message: *cite while you write*.

Collaborating with Your Peers

Being part of a scholarly community often requires that you collaborate with others on your work. Collaborating can pose special problems. We offer here some typical examples of collaboration and the citation challenges that they raise.

Collaboration on Problem Sets

When assigning problem sets, professors expect you to turn in your own work. If your professor allows you to talk to others in the class or use the course textbook or web resources, you should be careful to abide by the professor’s guidelines for using these resources. When in doubt about how to collaborate and cite appropriately, ask your professor.

Collaboration on Laboratory Assignments

In many laboratory science courses, you are expected to work in teams to complete experiments. You share the equipment, resources, and data with other students during your time in the lab. Following the experiment, you are often expected to write up your results independently of other students. Be sure that the written work you submit is your own. If you have talked with or worked with other classmates, cite them in your lab reports. It is important to consult the professor or teaching assistant about the expectations for independent work. You should not assume that the lab rules used in one course apply to another course. Some professors do not allow any exchange of data or tables. Consult the syllabus before deciding whether and how to share results.

Collaboration on Computer Programming Assignments

Most courses that assign computer programs allow you to discuss problems with other students in the class, but you should not copy code from others in order to correct errors in your own code. When you submit a computer program as coursework, unless you have a partner, you should have created it, typed it in, documented it, and generated output by yourself. In most courses, you may consult with the professor, teaching assistants, and classmates while designing your solution. Finally, you should attribute any source that helped you design, write, or debug your code.

Collaboration on Group Papers

When you are asked to write collaboratively, be sure that you understand the terms of the collaboration and that you follow them carefully. Consider recording who does what, in terms of writing and research, and make the record available to all collaborators, so that no one will dispute what it contains, should some aspect of the collaboration come into question. If particular students have completed specific tasks (one has done the research, another the drafting, another the editing and citation checking), you might want to make a note of this distribution of labor at the paper’s end. Because you are responsible for the content of any work that bears your name, you should read over any such work before it is submitted.

² Cite While You Write™ is a feature of EndNote, a software package that facilitates proper citation.

Assistance in Foreign Language Courses

In courses on non-English languages and literatures, instructors generally evaluate your writing not only on the content of your arguments but also on correct usage of the foreign language. In such courses, you should always ask your professor for instructions on whether, or how, you can seek stylistic or grammatical help while writing in the foreign language.

For example, some language professors encourage students to consult a dictionary first, and only then to ask for help about a specific case—from the professor, a friend whose knowledge of the foreign language is more advanced, or a host family if you are studying abroad. You should not ask these parties to revise, edit, or correct a draft of your paper, however.

If you consult grammar books, seeking to write at a level significantly exceeding the instruction currently offered in your course, you should cite those reference works.

If your language course provides a teaching or writing assistant, always ask your professor exactly how you may use such assistance as you compose and revise written work in the foreign language. Your work should always represent your effort and knowledge both in content as well as in usage of language.

2.B Your Great Idea Is Already Published?

Suppose you come up with an idea and then discover that someone else has already published it. You might feel discouraged, but you could also regard this experience as proof that you, too, are capable of coming up with publishable ideas. Scholarship is a conversation, much of it in print, and becoming a scholar involves joining in. You can enter the conversation in any number of ways, always citing the sources of these ideas.

- You can agree with other scholars but push their ideas a step or two further, or in another direction entirely.
- You can agree with their analyses and then put those same observations and analyses to work on another text, event, or problem.
- You can recast the problem in entirely new terms and point out other scholars' unacknowledged assumptions.
- You may, after further reading and thought, decide that you disagree with the prevailing critical opinions and proceed from there.

One thing you certainly should not do is proceed as if you had never discovered that someone else already published your idea. Finally, if you are worried about having something original to contribute to the scholarly discussion, make an appointment to see your professor. Do it early in the process. Professors have been facing this predicament for years and know how to help you.

2.C Using and Citing Images, Video, and Audio

As you write essays and develop presentations, you may want to include images, audio, or video clips to make your argument. You may legally use these images, without permission, for academic purposes. You may not, without permission, post your work online or display it in any for-profit setting. To do so would be in violation of U. S. copyright laws.³

When using an illustration in your essay, be sure to cite its source according to your professor's guidelines or to the guidelines of the department or program in which the course is offered. When creating a film, be sure to cite sources and give credit at the film's end. If you use images, video, or audio in a presentation, determine a strategy for citation, providing the source on the slide where the borrowed material appears. If this citation practice is not appropriate for the discipline, provide citations at the presentation's end.

2.D Acknowledging Sources in Presentations

The style of attribution in oral or multimedia presentations varies considerably, but the guiding principle is acknowledgment. Always let your audience know when you are using someone else's idea or material in your presentation. Say "quote" and "end quote" if you use a passage verbatim. You might also mention when and where a source first appeared because the time and appearance of the idea may provide useful context for the presentation. Saying where the source was published can also add an element of authority. But these details are not necessary as long as you indicate to whom the idea or work belongs. Your audience can see you afterward if they want more details on your sources.

³ According to the fair use exemption of U. S. Copyright Law, "Students may: Use digital images in an academic course assignment such as a term paper or thesis, or in fulfillment of degree requirements. ... [p]ublicly display their academic work incorporating digital images in courses for which they are registered and during formal critiques at a nonprofit educational institution. ... [r]etain their academic work in their personal portfolios for later uses such as graduate school and employment applications."

Acknowledging Help

In addition to citing your sources and your collaborators, scholarly practice calls for you to acknowledge those who have helped you develop your work. You may wish to acknowledge comments made in class by other students, consultations with your professors, or other informal conversations. Scholarship has always been a social activity and we get important—even mind-changing—ideas from personal communication all the time. In the absence of guidance from your professor, your conscience and judgment should guide your decisions about acknowledging this help.

3 QUALITY OF SOURCES

The quality of sources varies greatly, and a source that is appropriate for one type of work might be inappropriate for another. This section provides tips to help you find and assess the quality of sources.

3.A Evaluating Credibility of Sources

In any conversation, the speakers may have different levels of credibility. Some seem widely read, knowledgeable and able to defend their views confidently and persuasively. Others may exaggerate, oversimplify, or make leaps of logic that render their claims less believable. As you join such conversations, you invariably listen to assess the credibility of the various participants.

In a scholarly conversation, the analog of listening is research. Like speakers, individual sources may vary in their degree of credibility. The better you understand the perspectives and contexts reflected in a source, the richer your analysis of that material will be.

Primary sources, produced by the actors whom you want to study, usually reflect a range of interests and credibilities. Indeed, it is precisely their unique and time-dependent content that makes primary sources—novels, memoirs, advertisements, political speeches, census data, even earlier texts of history or science—so rich for analysis.

Secondary sources, produced by scholars seeking to analyze, arrange, and understand the worlds of primary sources, also exhibit varying degrees of credibility and interests. You might read a literary critic differently if you know he is reviewing a colleague's book, or a sociologist differently if she is employed by the tobacco industry, or an economist differently if her work is published by a Washington think tank rather than a university press.

The question, therefore, is not simply whether or not your sources are credible. Rather, you should ask to what extent they are credible and to whom. Being critically aware of the perspectives and interests behind your sources will help enhance the sophistication and credibility of your own analyses and conclusions.

Here is a list of tips developed by Dartmouth librarians that will help you gauge a source's credibility:

- *Who wrote it? What are the author's background and credentials? Does the author have the expertise to write on this topic?* Look for information on the author's academic affiliation or a brief biography in the front or back of a book, or with the abstract of a journal. You might also look up the author in the Library Catalog or through Search360 to see what else he or she has written. You can also Google the author to find his or her homepage or affiliation. The Web of Science Citation Databases, a scholarly database available through the Library, will allow you to see how many times an article has been cited in other articles—a measure of its influence.
- *Where was it published? Is it in a scholarly journal?* Look for a statement indicating that the journal is peer reviewed (that is, that the articles are independently evaluated by experts in the field). Many scholarly journals are published by university presses (such as Harvard University Press), professional societies (such as the American Medical Association), or scientific publishers (such as Elsevier).
- *Who is the intended audience? Is it written for other scholars and researchers?* Look at the language of the article to determine whom the author is writing for. Note whether the writer uses professional jargon or specialized terminology. Consider whether the writer assumes that readers have some background in the field in order to understand the article's basic terms and premises. Also consider the organization of the article. In some disciplines, professional articles will have a predictable structure, perhaps including an abstract, methodology, results, analysis, and conclusion.
- *Is it timely? Is its currency appropriate for its field?* The accuracy of a source may depend on the field. In the sciences, an article from just a year or two ago may be outdated, whereas in the humanities, there may be a wider window of timeliness. For some very recent topics, newspapers, magazines, and other popular periodicals may be your best resources.
- *What are the article's sources? Does the author draw upon a context of research?* Look at the footnotes and bibliography to see if the author cites other published research in the same field. Skim the article to see if it offers a "literature review" or summary of the research on the topic. Determine whether or not the author uses a range of sources—articles, books, reports, etc.

3.B Using Free Online Sources: Google, Wikipedia, and the Like

The world of information is like a house, full of rooms containing knowledge. Google will get you onto the front porch of that house, and maybe it will get you in through the front door. But it will allow you only a peek down the hall and up the stairs. The scholarly conversation—the network of research, discussion, and publication in which your professors participate—typically happens in scholarly journals that are available through the Dartmouth Library.

Many students begin their research using Wikipedia. Although Wikipedia may be useful in providing a general overview of a topic—helping you to get your bearings, be certain of facts, or define some basic terms—it is not scholarly. You will need to find academic sources for your research, since the scholarly conversation is not taking place on Wikipedia.

That said, you certainly will find scholarly information available on the free internet. Here is a list of tips developed by Dartmouth librarians that will help you assess online sources:

- *Who wrote it?* Look at the site's URL. Is the site a personal website, hosted by an internet service provider? Is it a .org, a nonprofit organization? Or is it a .edu, coming from an academic institution? Clearly a .edu site is more likely to be scholarly than a personal website. But use caution: .edu sites may contain postings by students and others who have no particular authority on the topic. Try to find out as much as you can about the writer of the source you are using.
- *Why and for whom was it written?* Ask yourself what the purpose of the site might be. Many websites will have a section that says "About ..." or "FAQ." These often tell you a good deal about the site's credibility.
- *Is it current?* Consider the timeliness of the site. Is the site being maintained and updated? Note that, unlike published print, the online medium allows updates at any time. Be sure to make note of the exact date on which you consulted the website and to include the access date in your citation.
- *What sources does it use?* Understand that the content of many websites is taken (if not plagiarized outright) from other sources. Check the website against several sources in order to determine whether or not the web writers have used their sources responsibly.
- *Why are you using it?* Finally, ask yourself whether you have a compelling reason to use a website in the first place. Is a website an appropriate resource for your topic? Should you look for the information somewhere else?

3.C Finding Scholarly Sources

The Library has many resources to help you with your research. The Library Catalog contains information about everything owned or licensed by the Library—over two million books, over 20,000 print and online journals, and over 12,000 videos and other media items. If you are looking for articles in scholarly journals, the Search360 tool will allow you to search many of the Library's databases simultaneously. After starting there, you might see which databases Search360 uses for your search, and perhaps explore more specific searches. For example, if you were interested in how memories of the Holocaust have been represented in graphic novels, you might start with a Search360 search using keywords such as "Holocaust" and "graphic novels"—checking the box for "Literature and Theater" under "Arts and Humanities." Looking at the search results, you might see that there are 11 interesting articles in a database called [Academic Search Premier](#). You might then decide to do more searching there, using additional search terms.

Or, you could browse the [Resources by Subject](#) portal on the Library's website, looking at the guides to research in specific subjects to find resources that are relevant to your topic. Of course, you can always [ask a librarian](#) for help getting started.

The best resources within the Library are librarians themselves. The librarians are here to help you navigate scholarly databases and the network of academic resources. Many of your professors will invite a librarian to class to discuss finding and evaluating resources for your papers. Be sure to take advantage of the help you are offered. When in doubt, do not hesitate to [ask a librarian](#) or, of course, your professor.