What is a citation?

A citation is an indication in the main body of your work, that you have used someone else's work to inform it. It partners an end reference, in a list or bibliography, which gives the full details of that source. A guide to full referencing is on page 2 of this sheet.

When are they used?

They are used whenever you have referred to the work of another person, group or company, for example:

- After a quote, paraphrase or summary.

- If you have incorporated an image or diagram from elsewhere.

- To refer the reader to another piece of work.

What form do they take?

You do not put the full details of the source you have used, into the main body of your work. This is reserved for the end list or bibliography. Citations usually take the form of brief details in brackets (Harvard, APA, MLA) or a footnote (MHRA, OSCOLA).

When brackets are used, with the Harvard, APA and MLA systems, they refer the reader, via a short form of the source details, to the full details of the work in an end reference list/bibliography. This means that the details you use need to match up with the equivalent details in the end reference. For example, Harvard and APA usually use the author(s) and year of publication of the source in the citation, so these need to match the author(s) and year in the full details in the end reference list.

Example of a sentence with a bracketed citation (Harvard)

Research findings may not support opinions you held prior to beginning your research (Greetham, 2014).

With footnotes, for example, the MHRA and OSCOLA systems, further details about the source are put in the footnote of that page, along with full details in an end reference list/bibliography.

Example of a sentence with a footnote citation (MHRA)

Research findings may not support opinions you held prior to beginning your research[1].

Further examples for all referencing styles

For further advice on citing and referencing in Harvard, APA, MLA, MHRA and OSCOLA, with examples, see the library quick guides, or go to Cite Them Right Online.

There is a Study Development helpsheet on Finding and Using Evidence.

What is a full reference?

A full reference is an entry at the end of a body of work, usually part of a list or bibliography, which gives the reader all of the details they need to locate the source you have used. Any citation in the body of your work (see citation guide on page 1 of this sheet) should have a corresponding full reference at the end.

What does a full reference contain?

It can vary by referencing style, but the full reference will always give the details of who created the source, when it was produced, its title, and where it was published. It will also give those familiar with the style an indication of the type of source it is (for example, book, web page) via the template it follows and the information it includes.

Who created the source?

This is usually an individual, or list of individuals. However, it can also be a company, charity, or Governmental department. This information should match the creator details you give in the citation in the body of the work.

When was it created?

Generally, there is a year evident somewhere on the source. In books, it's on a page at the beginning, or you can find the details on the library catalogue. With web pages, be sure to check the bottom of the page, as the last updated or copyright date can be used for the publication year.

Title of the work

Books and articles have clear titles at the beginning. Web page titles should also be given, even if it is just headed 'Introduction', for example.

Where was it published?

Books have details of the publishing company, and where they are based, printed in them. The publisher for articles is the newspaper or journal in which the article was found. With web pages, the publisher details are the URL (web address) at which you can find it, and the date you did so.

Further information

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