

Plagiarism and Citing Sources

One of the “hot” topics today is plagiarism. College students have failed courses and even gotten expelled for plagiarizing work. Many high school students don’t even realize that what they are doing is plagiarism. “I would never just copy someone’s writing ‘word-for-word,’ so I don’t have to think about plagiarism,” many students remark. However, plagiarism is MUCH more than just submitting an entire document that has been copied. Reading about a topic on the Internet and using that information (even if it has been paraphrased) without giving credit for the source of that information is plagiarism.

“I would never copy someone’s work.”

What is plagiarism then?

- Anything that isn’t “common knowledge” must be credited to the source.
- If it is paraphrased (information used in the author’s own words), it must be “cited,” the buzzword used today.
- If it is copied directly, it must be quoted AND cited.

Exactly what is common knowledge?

This is the reason for the controversy! There is no definition for what makes something common knowledge, other than “what the average adult knows.” If the exact same information can be found on numerous websites and is generally well accepted, it can be considered common knowledge. However, one fact almost all English (and other) teachers agree on is this: “It’s never wrong to over cite.” So if in doubt, cite it. A student isn’t likely to lose points for citing something that doesn’t need to be cited, but will without a doubt lose points (or worse) for not citing something that needed to be. I teach my upper elementary and middle school students to cite all information they get from another source - anything that doesn’t “come from their head.” It might be common knowledge to an adult, but it wasn’t for them, so I believe it’s best to cite it to be safe.

What’s different today?

-Remember this?

³Ibid

People of my generation may remember creating footnotes or endnotes to give credit to their sources and preparing a bibliography to include with the paper. The idea is the same, but terms have changed and the most accepted way to give credit is even easier than what we had to do when we were in school. Today, students learn to use parenthetical notation or in-line citations, and they prepare a Works Cited page for the composition.

Parenthetical Notation

- The author's last name is put in parentheses behind the sentence, along with the page number where it was found.

Example: paraphrase

Beginning in 1492, Europeans had a powerful and destructive effect on the inhabitants of the New World. (Johnston 14)

Example: quote

"It was Christopher Columbus who set in motion the most dramatic and devastating assaults on Native American life and culture." (Johnston 14)

In-line citation

- The writer states the author and title of the book in the sentence itself.

Example: paraphrase

According to Robert Johnston, author of *The Making of America*, Europeans had a powerful and destructive effect on the inhabitants of the New World beginning in 1492.

Example: quote (page number still required)

Robert Johnston stated on page 14 of *The Making of America*: "It was Christopher Columbus who set in motion the most dramatic and devastating assaults on Native American life and culture."

(OR - I could still give the author's name in the in-line citation, but also use parenthetical notation for the page number. His name isn't needed since it's in the sentence.)

Robert Johnston stated: "It was Christopher Columbus who set in motion the most dramatic and devastating assaults on Native American life and culture." (14)

Works Cited page - Books

Having parenthetical notation is just the **first** step in the process. If I'm reading a paper and see (Johnston 14) - I know that information was found on page 14 of a source that Johnston wrote - but that is all I know at that point. I should then be able to look at the Works Cited page to get the rest of the information about the source. The word in the parentheses should be the **FIRST** word of the entry on the Works Cited page. The author's last name is used because that is the **FIRST** word of the entry on the Works Cited page.

The Works Cited page entry for the book I used above could be:

Johnston, Robert. *The Making of America*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2010. Print.

After seeing the parenthetical notation or in-line citation of Johnston 14, I would look on the Works Cited page to see what book Johnston wrote. I would know that the information came from page 14 of that book. In the rare case that a writer has used two sources by authors with the same last name, he or she would use the initial of the first name, for example, R. Johnston.

Works Cited page - Internet sites

If an author can be found for the article on a website, one should still begin with that; however, most often an author cannot be found, so you skip that and go to the name of the article. Next is the name of the website, and then the sponsor of the website. If a date could be found for when the article was posted, that comes next - if you can't find it, use n.d. (no date). ALWAYS include the date you accessed the website. Dates should be written the date first, then the month, and then the year. Some formats tell you to include the web address - others do not.

- Sample Works Cited entry for a website

"Indians." *Interactives. United States History Map*. Annenberg Foundations, n.d. Web. 12 Sept. 2016.
<www.learner.org/interactives/historymap/indians.html>

- If I had cited from this website in the body of an essay, I would put the word "Indians" in the parentheses (with quotes around it), since it is the first word of the entry. If the title of the article was extremely long, it is usually acceptable to shorten it to a few words, as long as it is clear which Works Cited entry matches the parenthetical notation.
- Fortunately, many websites now have a link "how to cite this website" giving the student the information he/she needs.

Styles or Formats

Remember having to buy the *MLA Handbook*?

- There are several different "systems" to follow for how to prepare a Works Cited page. They typically are called "styles." A teacher should tell the students which style he or she is expected to follow. (Unless it doesn't matter to the teacher, so the student can use any accepted style.)
- Popular styles
 - Modern Language Association: MLA 7 OR MLA 8 (new in 2016)
 - American Psychological Association: APA
 - Chicago Manual of Style: CM
 - American Medical Association: AMA

Sample Entries for Different Styles

MLA 7

Johnston, Robert. *The Making of America*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2010. Print.

MLA 8

Johnston, Robert. *The Making of America*. National Geographic Society, 2010.

- Differences: the city of publication as well as type of source isn't necessary.

APA

Johnston, Robert. (2010). *The making of America*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

- Differences: only the first word is capitalized; the year of publication is sooner; the Works Cited page is called "References"

Layout of Works Cited page

On the Works Cited page, only the first line of each entry should be at the margin; each additional line should be indented. (Think of it as being totally opposite what one does when you writing a paragraph.) It is typically double-spaced, just like the essay. The entries should be put in alphabetical order according to the FIRST word of the entry.

*Sample Works Cited page, following MLA 7

Works Cited

"Indians." *Interactives* . United States History Map. Annenberg Foundations, n.d.

Web. Accessed 12 Sept. 2016.

www.learner.org/interactives/historymap/indians.html

Johnston, Robert. *The Making of America*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2010. Print.

The website comes first because the first word is "Indians" - and I comes before J.

The Works Cited page should ALWAYS be on a separate page from the rest of the paper, even if there is room on the last page of the composition or if there is only one entry on the Works Cited page. I didn't do that here, just to save space! Unless a teacher tells a student that they also can "save space," always keep it separate.

Helpful Resources:

Middle-High School

Purdue OWL

- Purdue UniversityL Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab). This is a tremendous free resource, covering both the MLA and APA styles (plus lots more!). One can easily search for Purdue OWL to find it, but here is a link that goes directly to the research and citation page.
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

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EasyBib is a website that can help students create the Works Cited entries in various formats. (easybib.com) Please note, though, that only some of it is free, and it also has a TON of ads (some of which may not be appropriate for children). So, use it with caution, but it can be helpful, especially when in a hurry! In addition to preparing the entry for a user if he or she types in the required information, it also has citation guides that explain various styles.

A website that explains plagiarism in more detail is plagiarism.org. It has short videos for students; one that explains different types of plagiarism is posted on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF5eFeJMplA>

Elementary School Trying to explain this idea to younger children?

Kid's Health

- Check out:
<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/plagiarism.html>
- It's interesting to me how even a website devoted to staying healthy included a lesson on plagiarism!
- Another great source for elementary children is:
<http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/jenniferharris2/502/scavenger.html>
- This features a worksheet you can download with questions for the students to answer using the links provided to teach about plagiarism.

Information in this document has been prepared by Beverly Graybill, Middle School English teacher for Aim Academy, an on-line school offering classes for homeschoilers. Visit debrabell.com for more information. Parents are free to print and share this information with their student. Although I haven't copyrighted this, please do not post this document or share it on-line. I hope this information helps as you and your student navigate this challenging issue!