

What Is a Citation?

A citation is a reference that allows you to acknowledge the sources you use in a formal academic paper, and enables a reader to locate those sources through the key information it provides. Citations are placed both in the text and in an organized list at the end of the text. The format of the citations can vary depending on the citation style that is used.

Citations enable you as a researcher to

- verify the facts and opinions set forth in a piece of writing
- identify additional sources that may delve more deeply into a subject
- distinguish the ideas of various experts regarding a specific topic
- measure the influence of one thinker upon another
- trace the evolution of an idea as it passes from scholar to scholar, culture to culture, and era to era.

When Do I Have to Cite?

If you quote an author, even if you are only borrowing a single key word, you must tell your reader where you found the information.

You also must cite a source--

- if you restate an idea, thesis, or opinion given by an author,
- if you restate an expert's theory or opinion,
- if you use facts that are not common knowledge, or
- if you need to provide an informational or explanatory note.

How do I Cite?

Citation styles vary from discipline to discipline. If you're not sure what style you should use, ask your instructor. Common citation styles include:

- **American Psychological Association (APA)**
- **Modern Language Association (MLA)**
- **Chicago Manual of Style (or CMOS)**
- **Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Turabian)**
- **Council of Science Editors (CSE)**

When Is It Okay Not to Cite?

- Facts that are common knowledge do not have to be cited.
- Statistics and information that can easily be found in several sources and are not likely to vary from source to source do not have to be cited. For example, the population of the United States is 281 million.
- Dictionary definitions that are common knowledge and vary little from source to source do not have to be cited.

Why Cite?

It is important to cite when borrowing the ideas and thoughts of others for several reasons. Citing sources

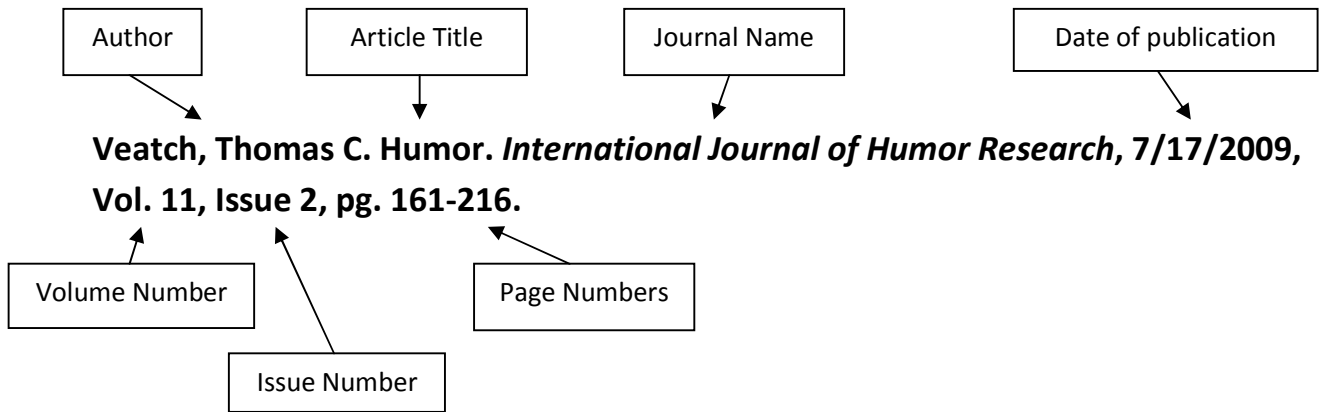
- builds credibility in your work by showing you are not alone in your opinions
- gives you a chance to show that you have thought about and investigated your topic
- gives your reader the information he or she needs to verify your source or to find more information on the subject
- allows you to give credit where credit is due.

Not citing your sources is academically dishonest and may lead to charges of plagiarism.

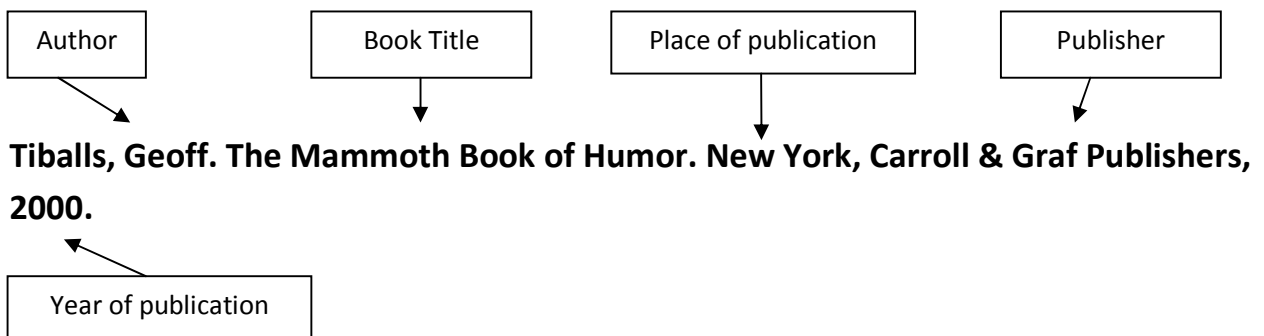
Basic Elements of a Citation

These elements are the basic pieces of most citations and can be found in many of the citation styles such as MLA, Chicago and APA. Consult the specific style guide for the correct format.

Journal Citation



Book Citation



Web Citation

