

Citation Checklist for Research Papers

BEFORE YOU START WRITING

Planning & Organization

- ☐ I have identified which citation style to use (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)
- ☐ I have access to the appropriate style guide or quick reference
- ☐ I have set up a system to track sources as I research (Zotero, EndNote, spreadsheet, etc.)
- ☐ I understand my assignment's specific citation requirements
- ☐ I know whether my instructor has any special preferences or exceptions

Source Documentation

- ☐ I am recording full bibliographic information for every source immediately
 - ☐ I am noting page numbers or locations for specific information
 - ☐ I am distinguishing between direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries in my notes
 - ☐ I am saving PDF copies or links to all sources
 - ☐ I am noting access dates for websites and online sources
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WHILE WRITING

Citation Habits

- ☐ I cite every time I use someone else's ideas, even if paraphrased
- ☐ I cite all direct quotations
- ☐ I cite specific facts, statistics, and data that are not common knowledge
- ☐ I cite all visuals, tables, figures, and multimedia from other sources
- ☐ I am keeping track of which sources I've already cited

Quotation Practices

- ☐ I use quotation marks around all direct quotes
- ☐ I introduce quotes with signal phrases (e.g., "Smith argues that...")
- ☐ I provide context for every quotation
- ☐ I cite the page number or location for every quote
- ☐ I format block quotes correctly for my citation style

Paraphrasing Practices

- ☐ I rewrite ideas completely in my own words
- ☐ I do not just replace a few words from the original
- ☐ I cite all paraphrased material
- ☐ I do not over-rely on paraphrasing from a single source

IN-TEXT CITATION CHECKLIST

General Requirements (All Styles)

- ☐ Every in-text citation corresponds to an entry in my Works Cited/References/Bibliography
- ☐ Every entry in my Works Cited/References/Bibliography is cited in the text
- ☐ Citations appear at the appropriate location in each sentence
- ☐ I have not over-cited (multiple citations for the same fact from the same source)
- ☐ I have not under-cited (missing citations for borrowed ideas)

Citation Format

- ☐ Author names are formatted correctly for my style
- ☐ Multiple authors are handled correctly (& vs. “and”, et al. usage)
- ☐ Page numbers or locations are included when required
- ☐ Punctuation around citations is correct
- ☐ Corporate/organization authors are formatted correctly
- ☐ Sources with no author are handled correctly
- ☐ Multiple sources by the same author are distinguished
- ☐ Multiple works in one citation are formatted correctly

Special Cases

- ☐ Secondary sources (citing something quoted in another source) are handled correctly
- ☐ Classic works or sacred texts are cited appropriately
- ☐ Personal communications (emails, interviews) are cited properly
- ☐ Figures, tables, and images are cited in captions or text
- ☐ Long quotes (block quotes) are formatted and cited correctly

WORKS CITED / REFERENCES / BIBLIOGRAPHY CHECKLIST

Page Setup

- ☐ Starts on a new page
- ☐ Has the correct heading (Works Cited, References, or Bibliography)
- ☐ Heading is formatted correctly (centered or flush left, depending on style)
- ☐ Entries are in alphabetical order by author’s last name
- ☐ Uses hanging indent (0.5 inches) for each entry
- ☐ Is double-spaced throughout (or formatted according to style requirements)

- ☐ Has correct page numbering

Entry Format

- ☐ All entries follow the correct format for my citation style
- ☐ Author names are formatted correctly (Last, First or First Last, depending on style)
- ☐ Titles are capitalized correctly (title case or sentence case)
- ☐ Titles are italicized or in quotation marks appropriately
- ☐ Publication information is complete (place, publisher, date)
- ☐ Page ranges are included for articles and chapters
- ☐ URLs or DOIs are included when required
- ☐ URLs are formatted correctly (no angle brackets, working links)
- ☐ DOIs are formatted correctly (<https://doi.org/xxxxx>)

Entry Completeness

- ☐ Every source cited in text appears in the list
- ☐ No sources appear in the list that aren't cited in text
- ☐ All required elements are present for each source type
- ☐ Missing information is handled correctly (n.d., n.p., etc.)

Multiple Works by Same Author

- ☐ Multiple works are ordered correctly (chronologically or alphabetically by title)
- ☐ Subsequent entries use appropriate formatting (3-em dash in Chicago, repeated name in APA/MLA)
- ☐ Works from the same year are distinguished (2020a, 2020b in APA)

Source Types

- ☐ Books are formatted correctly
 - ☐ Journal articles are formatted correctly
 - ☐ Magazine and newspaper articles are formatted correctly
 - ☐ Websites are formatted correctly
 - ☐ Electronic sources include access information when needed
 - ☐ Multimedia sources (videos, podcasts) are formatted correctly
 - ☐ Social media posts are formatted correctly
 - ☐ All unusual or special sources are formatted according to guidelines
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STYLE-SPECIFIC CHECKLIST

APA 7th Edition

- ☐ Title page includes all required elements (title, name, affiliation, course, instructor, date)
- ☐ Abstract is on separate page (if required) and properly formatted
- ☐ In-text citations use (Author, Year, p. #) format
- ☐ Reference list uses sentence case for article/chapter titles
- ☐ Reference list uses hanging indent
- ☐ “et al.” used correctly (3+ authors, all citations)
- ☐ DOIs included for all sources that have them
- ☐ No “Retrieved from” before URLs (unless date-sensitive)
- ☐ Page header includes page number only (no running head for students)
- ☐ Headings follow APA level format (centered bold, flush left bold, etc.)

MLA 9th Edition

- ☐ First page header includes name, instructor, course, date (day-month-year)
- ☐ Last name and page number in top right corner of every page
- ☐ Title is centered but not bolded, underlined, or italicized
- ☐ In-text citations use (Author Page) format with no comma
- ☐ Works Cited entries use hanging indent
- ☐ Works Cited entries use title case for all titles
- ☐ Container concept applied correctly (journal name, website name, etc.)
- ☐ URLs include https:// or http://
- ☐ Access dates only for sources without publication dates
- ☐ Block quotes indented 0.5 inches, no quotation marks

Chicago 17th Edition (Notes-Bibliography)

- ☐ Title page formatted correctly with title, “by,” name, course info, date
- ☐ Footnotes or endnotes used (not in-text citations)
- ☐ First note for each source uses full citation format
- ☐ Subsequent notes use shortened format (Author, Shortened Title, page)
- ☐ Ibid. used correctly (only for immediately preceding note)
- ☐ Bibliography entries use inverted author name format
- ☐ Bibliography entries use headline-style capitalization
- ☐ Bibliography entries do not include page numbers for books
- ☐ Superscript note numbers placed after punctuation
- ☐ No space between text and superscript number

Chicago 17th Edition (Author-Date)

- ☐ In-text citations use (Author Year, Page) format
- ☐ Reference list (not Bibliography) used

- ☐ Reference list entries have year immediately after author
 - ☐ Multiple works by same author in same year use letters (2020a, 2020b)
 - ☐ Reference list alphabetized and formatted correctly
 - ☐ No footnotes used for citations (only for explanatory notes)
-

PLAGIARISM AVOIDANCE CHECKLIST

Understanding Plagiarism

- ☐ I understand what constitutes plagiarism in my institution
- ☐ I know the difference between common knowledge and information that needs citation
- ☐ I understand that paraphrasing without citation is plagiarism
- ☐ I know that self-plagiarism (reusing my own work) may also be prohibited

Citation Integrity

- ☐ All direct quotations are in quotation marks or block format
- ☐ All paraphrased ideas are cited
- ☐ All facts, statistics, and specific data are cited
- ☐ All images, tables, figures, and multimedia are credited
- ☐ I have not patchwritten (changing a few words from the source)
- ☐ I have not cited sources I haven't actually read (no fake citations)

Original Work

- ☐ The majority of my paper is my own original analysis and ideas
 - ☐ I am not over-relying on quotes (no more than 10-15% quoted material)
 - ☐ I provide my own interpretation and analysis, not just summary
 - ☐ My voice is clear and dominant throughout the paper
-

QUOTATION & PARAPHRASE CHECKLIST

Direct Quotations

- ☐ All quotes have opening and closing quotation marks (or are formatted as block quotes)
- ☐ Quotes are integrated into my sentences, not dropped in
- ☐ I use signal phrases to introduce quotes
- ☐ All quotes are followed by citations with page numbers
- ☐ Short quotes (under 40 words APA, under 4 lines MLA) are in quotation marks
- ☐ Long quotes are formatted as block quotes
- ☐ Block quotes are indented correctly and have no quotation marks

- ☐ Block quote citations appear after final punctuation
- ☐ I explain or analyze quotes after presenting them

Quotation Accuracy

- ☐ All quotes are word-for-word accurate
- ☐ Any changes to quotes are indicated with brackets []
- ☐ Any omissions from quotes are indicated with ellipses (...)
- ☐ I have not altered quotes in ways that change their meaning
- ☐ Emphasis added to quotes is noted (emphasis mine or emphasis added)

Paraphrases & Summaries

- ☐ All paraphrases are in my own words and sentence structure
- ☐ I have not just replaced synonyms from the original
- ☐ All paraphrases are cited
- ☐ Paraphrases accurately represent the source's ideas
- ☐ I use paraphrases more than direct quotes when appropriate

FORMATTING CHECKLIST

Document Format

- ☐ Margins are 1 inch on all sides
- ☐ Font is appropriate and consistent (Times New Roman 12pt or equivalent)
- ☐ Line spacing is correct for my style (usually double-spaced)
- ☐ Paragraphs are indented correctly (0.5 inches)
- ☐ Page numbers are in correct location
- ☐ Pages are in correct order

Titles & Headings

- ☐ Paper title is formatted correctly
- ☐ Section headings follow correct format for my style
- ☐ Heading levels are consistent and logical
- ☐ Titles of works are formatted correctly (italics vs. quotation marks)
- ☐ Capitalization in titles follows correct style (title case vs. sentence case)

Tables & Figures

- ☐ All tables and figures are numbered consecutively
- ☐ All tables and figures have titles or captions
- ☐ Tables and figures are cited in the text
- ☐ Source information is provided for borrowed tables/figures
- ☐ Tables and figures are formatted according to style guide
- ☐ Tables and figures appear after first mention or in appendix

FINAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Before Submission

- ☐ I have read through my entire paper to check for missing citations
- ☐ Every fact that could be questioned has a citation
- ☐ I have checked that all in-text citations match Works Cited/References entries
- ☐ I have checked that all Works Cited/References entries are cited in text
- ☐ I have verified that all URLs and DOIs work
- ☐ I have run a plagiarism checker if available
- ☐ I have spell-checked and proofread my citations

Citation Accuracy

- ☐ All author names are spelled correctly
- ☐ All titles are accurate and complete
- ☐ All dates are correct
- ☐ All page numbers are accurate
- ☐ All publication information is complete and correct
- ☐ All URLs lead to the correct sources

Style Consistency

- ☐ I have used only ONE citation style throughout
- ☐ All citations follow the same format
- ☐ Punctuation is consistent in all citations
- ☐ Capitalization is consistent in all citations
- ☐ Abbreviations are used consistently

Common Errors Check

- ☐ I have not used Wikipedia as a cited source (unless permitted)
 - ☐ I have not cited sources I haven't actually read
 - ☐ I have not confused author names with publication names
 - ☐ I have not mixed citation styles
 - ☐ I have not forgotten to cite paraphrased material
 - ☐ I have not over-quoted or under-analyzed
 - ☐ I have not used outdated or unreliable sources
-

PEER REVIEW / INSTRUCTOR CHECKLIST

Asking for Help

- ☐ I have identified specific questions about my citations
- ☐ I have checked unusual sources against style guide examples
- ☐ I know where to get help if needed (writing center, library, instructor)
- ☐ I have allowed time for revision based on feedback

Documentation

- ☐ I can explain why I cited each source
 - ☐ I can provide original sources if questioned
 - ☐ I have kept notes or drafts showing my research process
 - ☐ I have saved copies of all sources used
-

SOURCE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Source Quality

- ☐ All sources are credible and appropriate for academic work
- ☐ Sources are current (within last 5-10 years for most fields)
- ☐ Sources are peer-reviewed or from reputable publishers (when required)
- ☐ I have used a variety of source types (not all websites)
- ☐ I have prioritized primary sources over secondary when appropriate
- ☐ I have avoided over-reliance on a single source

Source Diversity

- ☐ I have consulted multiple perspectives on my topic
 - ☐ I have used sources that support and challenge my thesis
 - ☐ I have included recent scholarship in my field
 - ☐ I have avoided bias in source selection
-

TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS CHECKLIST

Citation Management

- ☐ I have used citation management software if available (Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote)
- ☐ I have double-checked auto-generated citations for accuracy
- ☐ I have saved backup copies of my reference database
- ☐ I understand that citation generators can make errors

Digital Tools

- ☐ I have used plagiarism detection tools if available
 - ☐ I have used my word processor's citation tools correctly
 - ☐ I have backed up my work regularly
 - ☐ I have checked that my document displays correctly on different devices
-

SPECIAL SITUATIONS CHECKLIST

Group Projects

- ☐ We have agreed on a single citation style
- ☐ We have divided responsibility for citation checking
- ☐ We have merged our Works Cited/References without duplicates
- ☐ We have ensured consistent formatting throughout

Multimedia Papers

- ☐ Audio/video sources are cited in text
- ☐ Multimedia sources are included in Works Cited/References
- ☐ Timestamps are provided for audio/video quotes
- ☐ Images and graphics are properly credited

Interdisciplinary Work

- ☐ I have confirmed which citation style to use
 - ☐ I have checked if multiple styles are permitted
 - ☐ I understand field-specific citation conventions
-

QUICK REFERENCE: COMMON CITATION QUESTIONS

Do I need to cite this? - [] Direct quotes? **YES** - [] Paraphrased ideas? **YES** - [] Facts that are not common knowledge? **YES** - [] Statistics and data? **YES** - [] Images, charts, graphs? **YES** - [] Common knowledge (the sky is blue)? **NO** - [] Your own original ideas? **NO** - [] Your own experiences or observations? **NO** (usually)

How many sources do I need? - [] I meet the minimum number required (if specified) - [] I have enough sources to support all claims - [] I have not padded my bibliography with uncited sources

What if I can't find information? - [] I cite what information is available - [] I use appropriate indicators (n.d., n.p., n.pag.) - [] I don't make up information - [] I consult the style guide for guidance on missing elements

FINAL CONFIDENCE CHECK

Before submitting your paper, ask yourself:

- ☐ If someone questioned my citations, could I provide the original sources?
 - ☐ Have I given credit where credit is due for all borrowed material?
 - ☐ Would I be comfortable if this paper was checked by plagiarism software?
 - ☐ Have I followed my instructor's requirements exactly?
 - ☐ Am I confident that my citations are accurate and complete?
 - ☐ Does my paper demonstrate integrity in its use of sources?
-

RESOURCES FOR HELP

When you need assistance: - [] Check the official style manual for your citation style - [] Visit your institution's writing center - [] Consult with your librarian for source-finding and citation help - [] Ask your instructor for clarification on specific requirements - [] Use reputable online resources (Purdue OWL, style guide websites)

Remember: When in doubt, cite! It's better to over-cite than to under-cite.

This checklist is designed to help you create properly cited research papers. Print this out and use it every time you write a paper to ensure citation accuracy and academic integrity.

Pro Tip: Work through this checklist at least twice—once during your writing process and once during your final review before submission.