

Basic Citation Exercise

By Dr. Jennifer Mitchell, January 2021
SUNY Potsdam Writers' Block

This Basic Citation Exercise shows you how to cite and paraphrase within your own writing. This assignment should take you two hours to complete. *To save time, follow all details in the instructions for each step, especially the reading assignments.*

Each Task requires you to read some short webpages and write short responses. Then you'll do some practice. The writing tasks are simple, but the reading will take a little time.

Combine all of your answers to the four tasks in one Word document.

Save this document as a helpful guide for the future. Contact the SUNY Potsdam Writers' Block (wblock@potdam.edu) if you want help with your citing in this exercise.

About citation machines:

This exercise focuses on "in-text citation" or "parenthetical citation" in your paragraphs. Of course, the bibliography is also crucial. Your bib must have every source you've used, and it must apply the style your teacher assigns. "Citation machines" (like EasyBib) can help you build your bib.

However, keep in mind that:

- "Citation machines" like EasyBib help you draft your bibliography, but they DO NOT HELP with paraphrasing or citing in your sentences.
- It is your responsibility to correct the format of any bibliography you hand in by checking it against a credible citation guide (see our Resources page).
- Read more about citation machines at [the Purdue OWL](#).

Scroll down to get started.

Task 1: "Wake-Up Call"

FIRST, READ only the assigned sections:

- **READ:** [Potsdam Academic Honor Code](#), all of Parts A and B, AND Part C, sections 1 & 2.
- **READ:** [What is Plagiarism?](#), Section 1, first four paragraphs AND Section 3, all paragraphs.

THEN, WRITE:

- Using what you learned from those two readings, write a short "wake-up call" addressed to your peers.
- Share a few key points about citing sources in college classes. What are the challenges your peers should keep in mind?
- Write 100-150 words or 10-15 sentences.

In your writing, CITE:

- Each time you use something from one of the readings, name the **author** either in your sentence or in parentheses. Do this for both paraphrases and citations.
- The author is either the Georgetown University Honor Council OR the SUNY Potsdam College Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards.
- No page numbers are necessary. Follow the formats we use in Task 3, below.

REMINDER: MOST IMPORTANT RULES OF CITING:

- Give credit every time. Be sure to cite author and page in parentheses after each quotation or paraphrase.
- Authors' names must be mentioned, either in sentence or in parentheses. (If no author, use the title. In your parentheses, include just the first three words of the title.)
 - If it's extremely clear *in your sentence* which authors you are citing, you don't need to include their name *in parentheses for that specific citation*.

Task 2: Essential Guidelines

FIRST, READ only the assigned sections on these web pages:

- **READ:** Read "[Paraphrasing](#)," pages 3-5.
- **READ:** In the *Purdue OWL*, read the first two sections [on this page](#). Those two sections are "Basic in-text citation rules" and "In-text citations: Author-page style."
- (In Task 3, you'll have to apply what you learn here.)

THEN, WRITE:

- Summarize two **new or helpful points** you picked up from "Paraphrasing."
- Then summarize **one new or helpful point** from the *Purdue OWL* page.
- Write a total of about 100 words or 10 sentences.

In your writing, CITE:

- When you quote or paraphrase one of the web pages, mention the author -- either SUNY Potsdam College Writing Center OR *Purdue OWL*. Mention it either in the sentence itself or in parentheses.
- If the source has page numbers, include the page number in your parentheses.
- Follow the formats we use in Task 3, below.

Task 3: Evaluate Good and Bad Paraphrases

FIRST, READ this passage carefully.

“Writing instructors distinguish between process and product . . . Although you should keep in mind what your product will look like, writing is more involved with how you get to that goal. ‘Process’ concerns how you work to actually write a paper. What do you actually do to get started? How do you organize your ideas? Why do you make changes along the way as you write? Thinking of writing as a process is important because writing is actually a complex activity. Even professional writers . . . stop along the way to revise portions they have drafted, to move ideas around, or to revise their opening and thesis. Professionals and students alike often say they only realized what they wanted to say after they started to write. This is why many instructors see writing as a way to learn.” (College Success 285)

THEN, WRITE: Evaluate the six paraphrases on the next page, *applying what you just learned in Task 2*. Write a sentence or two about each paraphrase, addressing three points:

- Is the paraphrase accurate?
- Is it in our own original wording, or too close to the authors’ wording?
- Is the source given credit correctly, in either the sentence or in parentheses?
- (Note: The authors of this source are not named, so we just give the title. *College Success* is a very helpful, free, online textbook, by the way.)

Task 3, continued

Examples of Good Paraphrases: What did we do right? See instructions above.

1. The “product” is the final piece of writing that you submit to your professor, while the “process” pertains to how a writer creates their work (*College Success* 285).
2. According to *College Success*, we should consider some key things when writing a paper. They mention how you begin a paper, the organization of concepts and how you make changes in your writing. These steps are all a part of one’s writing “process” (285).
3. For many people, writing is not a simple straightforward process. Even pros typically reorganize and edit their work before they submit it (*College Success* 285).
4. *College Success* explains that writers are usually a bit unsure of what they want to convey when they start. Once they write, they know better what they want to say. In other words, “they only realized what they wanted to say after they started to write.” That’s because writing requires us to clarify our understanding of new ideas, thus helping us to learn (*College Success* 285).

Notice all the ways we gave credit: Sometimes, we mentioned the title in sentence, since no authors are available, with page number in parentheses. Or we mentioned title and page number in parentheses. We gave the source name at the start of several sentences.

Examples of Bad Paraphrases: What did we do wrong here?

5. Professional writers and college students both often say they only realized what they wanted to say after they started writing.
6. Thinking of writing as a process is important. That’s because writing is actually a complex activity. Even professional writers rarely sit down at a key board and write out an article beginning to end. They stop along the way to revise portions they have drafted, to move ideas around, or to revise their opening and thesis (*College Success* 285).

Task 4: Practice

Paraphrase: Go to one of your assigned readings for class. Copy one sentence, then present your excellent paraphrase of that sentence in your own words. Give the author's name in parentheses.

Paraphrase with short quote: Copy a different sentence. Then create an excellent paraphrase that *includes one short, exact quotation* from the original in quotation marks as part of your paraphrase. Cite in parentheses. Always put quotation marks around exact words from the original source, if you take three or more words in order into your paraphrase.

You're done! See our [Sample Bib and Resources below](#).

Remember, you are responsible for learning how to cite and doing it thoroughly. Teachers won't always spell out requirements in the same way, so you must take initiative to learn and check the formats they require.

SAMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Always be absolutely sure that every source you used in writing a paper is listed on the bib page. If you do not include a source, then, in the eyes of your professors, you are hiding your use of a source and claiming the work as your own. And that's plagiarism.

Works Cited

College Success. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Edition, 2015, Minneapolis, MN, DOI:

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https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html.

SUNY Potsdam College Writing Center. "Plagiarism and Citation Basics." *SUNY Potsdam*. SUNY Potsdam, n.d.,

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<https://www.potsdam.edu/sites/default/files/documents/support/tutoring/cwc/paraphrasing.pdf>.

SUNY Potsdam Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. "SUNY Potsdam Academic Honor Code."

SUNY Potsdam, 2017, www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode.

Resources: Help when you need it

Help on campus:

- [Potsdam College Writers' Block](#) peer tutors can help you with any aspect of your writing, including citation. Just contact us for a free appointment.
- SUNY Potsdam librarians can also help with citing, and libraries.potsdam.edu includes good links. They really want to help you learn, so bring your questions, big and small, to the reference desk at the base of the stairs. See their [research desk hours here](#). They're definitely available for virtual chat, too!
- Group tutoring is also available from [Academic Support Lab](#) and individual tutoring is available for students in the TRiO and EOP programs. Sign up early in the semester and stick with it, or the resource won't be available.

Links:

The best online guides to citation styles are [Purdue OWL](#) and [CiteSource](#). The OWL includes sample papers with correct citation and information on all aspects of writing. CiteSource shows how to cite various kinds of web sources.

Different fields of study use different styles, including MLA, APA, ASA, CSE, and Chicago footnotes. Your teacher will tell you what style to use. In most 100- and 200-level courses, MLA style will be fine.

Citation makers (like EasyBib or BibMe) help you to create a works cited page, but they don't show you when to cite in your sentences and paragraphs. And the quality of the works cited page is still your responsibility: check to be sure that it really is correctly formatted by comparing the format to those at [Purdue OWL](#) or [CiteSource](#).