

***DukeWrites* Enrichment Suite**

Citation practices, part one

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We've already discussed why academic writers engage with the work of others. They do it to learn what others have written, to advance knowledge, to situate their work within a particular ongoing conversation.

Another question that arises with engaging with the work of others, of course, is how you cite. And that's what's known as a school of citation. There are a number of schools of citation. I'm going to give an overview of them in this video. And then our disciplinary consultants, who come from the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences, will give you more specifics about where you can find resources for those schools of citation.

One of the most important things to know about schools of citation is that they are disciplinary dependent. The rules and guidelines for how you cite the work of others contribute to how knowledge is created in that particular discipline.

For example, the MLA, which stands for the Modern Language Association, the MLA is one school of citation. And in the MLA school of citation, readers expect to see parenthetical citations to note where certain quotes are taken from. And that's because in the Modern Language disciplines, such as English, for instance, we really work with language. It's really important not just to summarize what writers have said, but sometimes to take a really deep look at the exact language, and terms, and phrasings, and words, that are being used by other people. So, we need to offer the page number so that other scholars who are reading our work in English literature, for example, can go to page 132 or 156 or wherever it is and look at that language for themselves.

In other disciplines, the language of certain writers in scholarship is not as important as, for example, the year when a study was conducted. So for the CSE, for the Council of Science Editors, when you cite work in that discipline, you probably put the year of study, because that's much more important, right? Because readers want to know if this was a study conducted in 1938 or 2012.

APA is another primary school of citation. There are actually like 12 schools of citation that operate, but I named just a few just to give you examples. So this one is the American Psychological Association.

These are some of the most important things to consider with your school of citation. Think about that schools of citation are there to help readers focus on ideas and make

use of your contributions. Readers within particular disciplines are used to reading scholarship that looks a certain way and when they are looking to advance a conversation, they use the citation system in order to quickly identify the information that they need to move on to do the research for their own work.

Like other people are going to be looking at your works cited or bibliography or references, whatever the section is called, in order to find resources for their own work. So it's important that you're kind of assisting in this ongoing project. And that's what a school of citation accomplishes.

Schools of citation are also living and changing. The rules governing the MLA citation system are different today than they were twenty years ago. Groups of people who are in charges of these schools of citation revisit the guidelines, think about the guidelines, and then make adjustments to them over the years. So just because you thought you knew what MLA looked like perhaps ten years ago doesn't mean you still shouldn't be examining the most recent edition or material for MLA. So that means you don't, you shouldn't expect yourself to memorize what a school of citation looks like.

What's really important is just to know where the resource is, to know where you go to consult. And finally, the advent of digital resources has added challenges, because most of these schools of citation were created before digital scholarship existed and before we had access to online materials of all kinds. So they've been trying to catch up, and yet the vast range of the way material is presented in online formats...there are often, there's a disconnect between what a school of citation will suggest for how you treat those texts and what the texts actually look like. So that can sometimes be frustrating. So I guess what I want to say is just do your best ~ and try with digital sources.

But if you don't have certain information, like if you don't have a year of publication for that or if you don't have a page number for that, just leave it blank when you don't have it. That doesn't mean you don't have to cite it. You still need to cite it but you just might have to work harder to figure out how you can cite it if you don't have the information that the resource on the school of citation is telling you [that] you need. Please do look at the videos that the disciplinary consultants have created, because they'll talk about this question of how knowledge is created in their discipline based on the school of citation and that's really important.

And then you can visit the Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab) site, which I think is wonderful, to look at the specifics for how you cite certain things.