



To cite or not to cite? Yes, that is the question! *But how?*

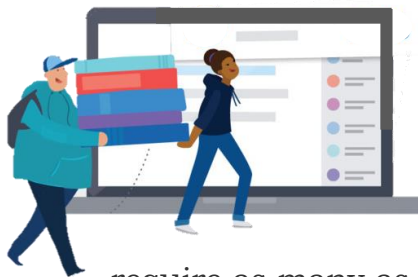
As a rule, "cite only works that you have read and ideas that you have incorporated in your writing" (ALA, 2020, p. 235). You do not need to cite information that most people know or established facts.

You must cite your references both in your reference list **and** in the text of your paper where that source is used. Citing a reference within the text of your paper is called an "in-text citation."

When to use an in-text citation? Whenever you do any of the following:

- Paraphrase (i.e., state in your own words) the ideas of others
- Directly quote the words of others
- Refer to data or data sets facts or figures that are not common knowledge
- Incorporate tables and images, even if they are open source
- Reference an interview, email, or text message

Things to keep in mind regarding in-text citations: **Overcitation** and **Undercitation**. Avoid both of them!



OVERCITATION

Overcitation can be distracting and is unnecessary. Usually one or two sources are enough for each piece of evidence except for literature reviews, which require as many as necessary.

You do not need to re-cite the same source over and over in sequential sentences. Cite a source after the first sentence in which it is used and again after a different source is used unless it is unclear.

It is considered overcitation to repeat the same citation in every sentence when the source and topic have not changed. Instead, when paraphrasing a key point in more than one sentence within a paragraph, cite the source in the first sentence in which it is relevant and do not repeat the citation in subsequent sentences as long as the source remains clear and unchanged.

Here is an example of **Overcitation**:

According to the American Psychological Association (2017), an important goal of psychological research is to evaluate techniques that promote stress reduction and relaxation. Stress is a common experience among Americans on a daily basis (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017). An important goal of psychological research is to evaluate techniques that promote stress reduction and relaxation (APA, 2017). Guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation are both cognitive behavioral techniques in which individuals focus on the relationship among thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (APA, 2017). *Guided imagery* aids individuals in connecting their internal and external experiences (Trakhtenberg, 2008).



UNDERCITATION

Not properly citing a source is considered plagiarism. All sources and ideas, except for common knowledge, that you have read and incorporated in your writing must be cited. A source must be credited even when it is not published (for example, an interview, email, or text message).

Here is an example of **Undercitation**:

A majority of Americans experience stress in their daily lives. Thus, an important goal of psychological research is to evaluate techniques that promote stress reduction and to improve physical and psychological health of individuals, especially students. Two techniques that have been associated with reduced stress and increased relaxation in psychotherapy contexts are guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation. Guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation are both cognitive behavioral techniques in which individuals focus on the relationship among thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Oops! Where are the citations? Just putting them in the Reference page is not enough. They need to be placed within your document, too!

APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF CITATION

According to the American Psychological Association (2017), an important goal of psychological research is to evaluate cognitive behavioral techniques that promote stress reduction and relaxation. Further, an important goal of psychological research is to evaluate techniques that promote stress reduction and relaxation. These cognitive behavioral techniques consist of guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation in which individuals focus on the relationship among thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Guided imagery aids individuals in connecting their internal and external experiences (Trakhtenberg, 2008).

Everything up to Trakhtenberg is taken from the American Psychological Association, so it is not necessary to repeat the source within/after every sentence.

The paragraphs above were adapted from H.K. Greenbaum's student sample paper.

The entire APA student sample paper can be found here:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/sample-papers>

