

Citing Your Sources Properly – How to Avoid Plagiarism

I. Introduction

In academic writing, whenever you use facts, ideas, or opinions from other writers, **you must acknowledge your sources**. Do these two things to give proper credit to your sources:

1. Whenever you incorporate information into your essay from an outside source, **use a parenthetical or in-text citation** to show the reader where you found that information.

Provide a citation whenever you incorporate any of these types of information:

- Direct quotations
- Paraphrases and summaries
- Borrowed ideas (including the organization or logic of an author’s argument; or the data, statistics, or visuals found in an author’s work)
- Any facts that are not common knowledge

2. **Provide a Works Cited page** at the end of your essay that lists all the sources you used.

II. In-Text Citations & Parenthetical Citations

- 1) An **in-text citation** identifies the author and/or title of a source within the text of the sentence (without using parentheses).

The following EXAMPLE sentence uses an in-text citation to identify information taken from an online magazine article:

According to Harvard literary Critic Vladimir Von Algorithm, English-teacher rap is marked by “ingenious language, verbal style, and poetic posturing,” as well as “radical grammatical rhymes.”

- 2) In contrast, a **parenthetical citation** identifies the source of your information in parentheses. Usually the **author’s last name** goes in parentheses—and if the source is a **print** resource (i.e., a book, magazine, or newspaper), the **page number** is also included in parentheses.

The following EXAMPLE uses only a parenthetical citation:

Some important characteristics of English-teacher rap are “ingenious language, verbal style, and poetic posturing,” as well as “radical grammatical rhymes” **(Von Algorithm)**.

Note: For both citations listed above, the complete source information should be listed alphabetically on the Works Cited page, in the entry that begins with the author’s last name: Von Algorithm.

3) How do you cite a source that has **NO author**?

When a source has no author, use the title of the work in parentheses (and use a shortened title if the full title is lengthy) instead of an author's name.

EXAMPLE: To format the title, either **place the title “in quotation marks” if it's a short work** (e.g. an article), or **italicize the title if it's a longer work** (e.g. a book, encyclopedia, movie, television show, etc.). Also provide a page number if appropriate.

We see so many English teachers trying to transform themselves into rappers because “they have witnessed the humble yet phenomenally creative genius of Robe-Dawg, and they wish to emulate his awesomeness” (“Impact of English Teacher Rap”).

III. Your Works Cited page

The last page of your essay will be your **Works Cited** page. Notice the example below.

There are six sources listed below in alphabetical order in the proper MLA format. Notice (1) how five of the sources are alphabetized according to the author's last name, and (2) how the one source that has no author is alphabetized according to the first key word of the title.

Works Cited

Haggerty, Ben. E-mail interview. 10 January 2015.

“The Impact of English-Teacher Rap in Alternative Music.” *Literary Rapper Online*, Grammar

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Orcutt, K.C. “Robe-Dawg: The Original G.” *The Source*. The Northstar Group, 25 December 2012,

www.thesource.com/robe-dawg-original-g. Accessed 18 January 2015.

Robe-Dawg. “Punctuate THIS!” *Gramma 4 Life*, RCA, 1990.

Thompson, Hunter S. *Generation of Swine*. Summit Books, 1988.

Von Algorithm, Vladimir. “Why English Teachers Rock.” *Rolling Stone*, 28 March 2014,

www.rollingstone.com/articles/why-english-teachers-rock. Accessed 15 January 2015.