

Documentation and Plagiarism

MLA, APA, etc. formatting dictates virtually everything about how your paper looks - its margins, spacing, etc. - as well as how you document the various sources you use from your research. If you use any information aside from what is common knowledge, you will need to use documentation to tell your reader where you got the information. Everyone knows that passing off someone else's ideas or writing, as one's own is not allowed, whether on purpose or through carelessness; it is plagiarism. Many people do not realize, so always consult a handbook for precise instructions.

Documentation will generally take two forms in your paper:

1. **In-text parenthetical citations:** This means that the citation is in your sentence, and not given as a footnote or endnote. In many cases, a parenthetical citation contains the last name of the author and the page number where a quotation or idea can be found. For example, MLA format is "a huge part of an English major's existence" (Smith 34). In APA, however, the year of publication is used in lieu of the page number. For example, APA format is "a huge part of a Psychology major's existence" (Smith 2002). These textual citations allow the reader to refer to your Works Cited page(s) for further information.
2. **The Works Cited page:** This page comes at the end of your paper and it lists all the sources you have cited, so that the reader can easily find what the book or article that you referred to or quoted. The sources you have used should be listed alphabetically.