

PGR Tips on citation

Academic writing requires the careful presentation of evidence in support of an argument. Some of that evidence will be uncovered through your own research. However, much of it will be drawn from the other people's work. It is important that you represent it accurately and enable future scholars to verify the conclusions that you have drawn. This is where citation comes in. Citation is an academic skill which impacts on your research, your writing and your credibility as a scholar. More broadly it will help enhance your organisational skills.

Take advice/attend training

Talk to your supervisor and to a subject librarian about your [citation practice](#). They may be able to make suggestions or introduce you to useful software or other shortcuts. Your institution will have a dedicated information librarian who works in your discipline. These people can be valuable allies for you so they are worth seeking out.

Record citations accurately

Make sure that you have a system to record all of the information you will need to include in citations. As citations systems require you to include slightly different information it is best to record all the available bibliographic information.

Use citation software

Citation software such as [Endnote](#), [RefWorks](#) or [Connotea](#) will help you to accurately record, store and retrieve citations to use in your thesis and publications. (Word 2007 also has a [bibliography feature](#).) It can save you time through uploading directly from citation databases and change the format of your references at the click of a button.

Recalling and retrieving references

As a doctorate takes place over several years it is easy to end up reading the same thing several times. Your system for storing and recalling references should enable you to find things that you cannot remember all of the details of. You may achieve this by adding key words, cross referencing notes or by regularly reviewing what you have read.

What to cite?

Think about why you are citing. Are you citing to support your argument by providing background, key facts or referring to a method, or engaging in a debate where you cite someone to disprove or disagree with them. Citation should show how your work fits into a broader academic debate so be careful to avoid bias and not to only cite people you agree with.

Don't rely on 'referral' citations from other sources; go back to the originals where possible. You don't always need to refer to the very earliest mention of the subject at hand although it is often thought good manners to do so. If the same information was established independently by different researchers ideally all should be cited.

How?

Before you start writing check which [citation style](#) you need to work in. There are variations between subjects, departments and different journals so make sure you know. There are also conventions for online [citation](#).

Check citations very carefully as part of your proof reading.