

A well-known journalist was fired from her newspaper today after several of her articles were found to have been copied directly from other sources without attribution. AAA

Publishers will recall and destroy 100,000 copies of the popular book *The History of Everything On Earth* now that the author has admitted copying several passages verbatim from reference websites.

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# Who Said What?

## A Writer's Guide to Finding, Evaluating, Quoting, and Documenting Sources (And Avoiding Plagiarism)

<sup>1</sup> by Kayla Meyers  
<sup>2</sup> Foreword by Susan Wise Bauer

unexplained lights in the sky over San Diego. He was bored and looking for a few minutes of distraction. When that video ended, the site's algorithm suggested another, and then another. Today, thanks to the intellectual journey that those videos sparked and fueled, Mr. Smith is convinced that the CIA and Mossad carried out the 9/11 attacks to cover up a secret plot that

also involved extraterrestrial beings, the Freemasons, and a hidden military base deep within an Antarctic glacier.

## Which Sources Can Students

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By JUDY GARRISON, THOMPSON, JOHN

SAN DIEGO, Ca — Jo Springfield, clicked on explained lights in the sky was bored and looking of distraction. When th

## Newspaper Fires Journalis

By KEN RICHARDSO

DENVER, Co. — A well-known journalist was fired from her newspaper today after several of her articles were found to have been copied directly from other sources without attribution. The editor-in-chief of the paper said, "The accuracy and integrity of our work is our highest priority, and we have failed the public in not catching this sooner. Articles that are plagiarized will be removed from our archives and our website."

AAA Publishers will recall and destroy 100,000 copies of the popular book *The History of Everything On Earth* now that the author has admitted copying several passages verbatim from

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A Writer's Guide to  
Finding, Evaluating,  
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Kayla Meyers

Foreword by Susan Wise Bauer



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# FOREWORD

I've been a writing teacher for decades, and I can testify: Writing is an incredibly hard skill to teach, because *writing is thinking*. When you're putting your words down on paper, you're putting your *mind* down on paper—and that's not a simple task.

When you're learning to write nonfiction essays and research papers, writing gets even more complicated. When you're writing well, you're not just setting down *your* thoughts—you're reading, thinking, and synthesizing the ideas that other people have had, combining them with your own, and repeating their ideas but then building on them to come up with new ones.

And while you're doing all of *that*, you also have to worry about giving credit where credit is due. In today's wired world, it is simply too easy for writers (even experienced professionals, as Kayla Meyers deftly highlights in Part 4, "How To Avoid Stealing") to accidentally plagiarize. Kayla recognizes this problem, and addresses it head-on with a set of practical suggestions, easily applied.

I've watched hundreds of young writers struggle with the complicated, overlapping rules about documentation—and often come to a dead stop because they simply can't get their heads wrapped around the problem. *Who Said What?* cuts right through the tangle, offering a clear, easy-to-follow set of principles. Not sure whether you need to footnote a statement or not? Kayla clears up the confusion. Not certain even *how* to footnote or endnote? Kayla's succinct directions will point you towards the answer. She walks students, step by step, through a process that is too often presented as overly complex: finding sources, taking notes, using those notes to construct a composition, and acknowledging where the ideas came from.

I first met Kayla when she began to teach writing for us at the Well-Trained Mind Academy, our classical online school. It was instantly clear that she had both rapport with her students, and a gift for straightforward, effective communication with them. She also grasped, very quickly, that they needed a simpler guide to the process of finding, using, and citing other authorities.

Kayla's experience as a young writer and teacher also highlighted something I'd underestimated: students need to know what a *reliable* (authoritative, mediated, genuine, non-fake) source *is*. When I was a beginning writer, I could look to books and magazines for information. Now, students can glean information from thousands of websites, from audiovisual archives, from social media sites, and from other resources that simply didn't exist twenty—or even five—years ago. Many of these sources are crowdsourced, “semi-mediated,” unmediated, or just plain deceptive. Kayla offers clear, simple advice about how to distinguish the reliable from the faulty, inaccurate, outdated, or even maliciously twisted. And she also gives invaluable guidance for incorporating insights from social media (ever present!) into legitimate research.

Working with the principles and rules set out in my full-year curricula *Writing With Skill* and *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind*, while drawing on her own experience and expertise, Kayla has put together this invaluable handbook for the writer-in-training. It's more than a reference—it's a quick-start guide for researchers, designed to get them reading and writing without delay.

Susan Wise Bauer

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You can, of course, read this book straight through, for a full explanation of how and why these skills of finding the right sources, researching, note-taking, citation, and direct/indirect quoting all fit together. But if you are in a hurry, you can jump to the section that is most relevant to what you need (or what part of the research process you are stuck on).

At the end of each section, you'll see a list of bullet-points summing up what you've just learned. At the end of each Part, there is a Quick Reference that lists all of the bullet-points from each section within. This Quick Reference provides a full summary of the Part.

Use these bullet-points to check your understanding after reading each section or Part—or as a resource anytime you need a quick refresher on the material!

The Index at the end of the book is also a great resource to help you locate and review specific terms.



# Part 1

# What Sources Are, and Where to Find Them

## What are sources?

A research paper just wouldn't be a research paper without a hearty band of **sources** to back it up. Sources are simply the books, articles, websites, images, videos, etc. that you find, read (or view), and then take notes from as you prepare to write. Sources provide the information that you will ultimately use to formulate your ideas and support your claims in your original writing. The types of sources you find and use will be determined by your teacher's preferences and your paper requirements. But once you've decided on a clear, specific topic for your paper, finding sources is your next step.

Faced with a library of books, or even worse, the entire internet, you might find it difficult to know where to begin—and what a reliable source even looks like. But don't panic! This guide will walk you through the process of finding reliable sources—in a library or online—and give you guidelines on how to sniff out any suspect information.

- Sources provide reliable information that you will use to formulate your ideas and support your claims in a paper.
- Sources can be books, articles, videos, website content, and any other medium that provides information related to your paper topic.

## How do I know if this source is reliable?

It would be great if you could perform a background check on every source and author you come across in your research! But that would be incredibly impractical, especially if you're on a tight paper deadline.

Instead, think of the information in your sources as fitting into two categories: **mediated content** and **unmediated content**.

### Mediated vs. unmediated content

Mediated content has been edited and fact-checked for general accuracy by a third party, generally one who has a financial or academic stake in the work. Essentially, mediated content is any work that has had more than one person review and edit the information. This increases the chance that the source is reliable.

Keep your critical glasses on: Mediated content can still be biased, inflammatory, or just plain wrong. But because it is mediated, it is appropriate to cite as a source in your paper.

Unmediated content travels directly from the originator to the reader, without any other person filtering or checking the information. Personal websites, for example, are unmediated. Only the author has looked over the content! When you're writing a paper, unmediated content is not appropriate to cite as a reliable source.

It was once easier to determine what sources fit into which category. Books, for example, were traditionally mediated by editors and publishers. However, it has become so easy to self-publish that you can no longer assume a book is mediated, simply because it has covers and bound pages. And while websites were once primarily unmediated, now many reputable academic journals publish their content solely online.

Instead, you'll need to take on the responsibility of checking your sources closely to ensure that they contain mediated content.

Here are some questions to ask:

- Does the source have a clear publisher other than the author?
  - ▶ For websites, this could mean an institution that hosts the article and maintains the webpage (for example, the Smithsonian, or the Journal of Ancient History).
  - ▶ For books, this would be the name of the publishing house—but it's very easy to give your own self-publishing project an important name like Paramount Books, and some publishing companies, such as CreateSpace and Cafe Press, are actually platforms for self-publishing. Google the name of the publisher to make sure that it's an actual company with editors!
- Is the publisher or institution hosting the information well known? Do they have contact information available? Is there a corporate or institutional structure that you can look up—a president, CEO, board, etc.?
- Is the name of the author clear and easy to find? Is the author's contact information, or a biographical note for the author, provided? If you Google the author, what do you find out?
- Is the name of an editor (other than the author) available? If it is a website, is there a date for when it was last edited or updated? How recent is that date?

You don't need to have an answer for every question to prove that the source contains mediated content, but these questions serve as guidelines for you to test out the reliability of the source.

Finding mediated content begins at the research stage, and following good research procedures can help point you toward reliable sources. If you do encounter unmediated sources during your research, you can use the questions above to help weed them out.

Imagine that you're doing online research about the poem "The Tyger" by William Blake (we'll talk in the next section about how to do online research properly!). You come across two websites. One is mediated and the other is not. Can you tell the difference?

The first is hosted by Edublogs, and at the head of the page it simply says "English." The title of the essay is "Poetry Analysis: 'The Tyger' by: William

Blake.” There’s no author. The illustration is a stock photo of a bunch of brightly colored books, and the other menu options given are “Home,” “College essay,” “Mash-Up,” “World Montage,” and “Zen Podcast.”

The second is hosted by the British Library. The title of the essay is “An introduction to ‘The Tyger,’” the author is George Norton (you can click on his name to see the other essays he’s written), and it was published on May 15, 2015. The illustration is of William Blake’s original manuscript of “The Tyger.” The main heading on the page says, “Discovering Literature: Romantics & Victorians,” and your menu options are “Authors,” “Themes,” “Articles,” “Videos,” and “Teaching resources.”

If you said that the first is unmediated and the second is mediated, you are correct! But how did you come to that conclusion?

You should have initially noticed that the first source has much less information available, making it impossible to answer many of the questions. There is no name given for the author of the piece, nor is there any information about when it was published. By contrast, the second source identifies the author and date of publication very clearly. Already you should have started growing suspicious of the first source.

What the two sources do share is a clear host institution: the first source is hosted by Edublogs and the second by the British Library. This may have answered the first question (Does the source have a clear publisher, other than the author?) but it’s the second question that is more revealing. Edublogs is not a well-known institution, and if you were to explore the webpage more, you’d have a hard time finding any reliable contact information. That is because Edublogs is a host platform for blog posts, but the company does not function as a fact-checking or editing institution. The British Library, however, is a well-known and reputable institution, with contact information easily accessible on the webpage.

Finally, the Edublogs website is clearly not set up to host serious and reliable academic work! Mistakes in punctuation such as “by: William” and random links to unrelated subjects suggest that this is either a personal website that hasn’t been edited by an expert, or that the owner is trying to attract students

in order to sell them papers (the “College essay” link leads to a place where you can buy essays online, which is dishonest and a violation of honor codes!).

Putting all of this information together, you should conclude that the post by the British Library is mediated, while the post on Edublogs is unmediated. As you can see, this decision is not made based on the content of the source necessarily, but on the available publishing and editing information.

Even if a website appears on the first page of your search return, always go through the process of checking whether a source is mediated or unmediated.

In the next section, I will explain more on how online search engines “think.” But keep this in mind: Search engines do not give you, first and foremost, the sources that have the most factual information. They simply list first the returns that have received the most clicks in the past. So you have to do some detective work to determine if the source you have found contains reliable, factual information.

Let’s return to my example search of “The Tyger.” If I simply type “The Tyger William Blake” in the search bar, both the Edublogs and British Library pages appear on the first page. But so do many other sources of varying reliability and suitability, including pages from Shmoop, Sparknotes, and ThoughtCo.

These sites often fool students because they contain the type of analysis that would seem useful for a research paper. They also include a great deal of text. You might think: “If someone took the time to write so much on a subject, don’t they know what they are talking about?” But never mistake wordiness for expertise! These sites, upon closer inspection, do not meet our requirements for mediated sources.

Like Edublogs, Shmoop and Sparknotes do not list a clear author or publisher. That is because these sites are **crowdsourced**. Crowdsourcing is when a large group of people, who may or may not have expertise on the subject, contributes information on a topic over the internet. Websites like Shmoop, Sparknotes, and Wikipedia rely on their readers to fill in and edit the site’s content. Therefore, there is no formal publication process, and no knowledgeable editor who can mediate the information.

Sites like Yahoo Answers and Quora are also platforms where people can ask questions to the community of readers. The readers then vote on which

answer is the “most helpful.” These sites also frequently appear on the first page of a standard search engine. This voting process is much different than a formal fact-check that a reputable editor and publisher would do. Crowdsourced websites can simply be an accumulation of responses from people who really have no idea what they’re talking about. (In fact, most of the people voting probably know even less than you do about the topic—they just thought the information would help them write a paper quickly!)

These crowdsourced websites also do not present their information in a reliable, trustworthy way. If I click on the Sparknotes and Shmoop links, my screen fills with advertisements. That’s a clue! If you click on a website link and the information is partially obscured by many advertisements, that is a sign that the site is not purely informational, but intended to attract student clicks (for which the website earns money).

This brings us to ThoughtCo. ThoughtCo, unlike Shmoop and Sparknotes, has a clean website design and the names of the authors are clearly visible at the top. However, this is still not a reputable source. Like Edublogs, ThoughtCo is a blog-hosting platform, meaning that authors can write and self-publish their ideas without going through an editing process. So even though ThoughtCo appears more formal than Edublogs, it still is not a mediated source.

It is always better to use information provided by a well-regarded professional institution than to gamble on a website that only *appears* to be authoritative.

Determining whether a source is reliable is hard! In the next section, I’ll explain how to approach online research so you can avoid crowd sourcing and blog-hosting websites. Even if you use news.google.com, which will return only news articles, it is difficult to know if the information provided in the article is true. But you are not alone in this! Fact-checking websites can help you determine fact from fiction, or even fact from exaggeration, when reading news stories. These websites use unbiased sources and neutral language to clarify and explain claims and issues that appear in the news. There are many well-regarded fact-checking websites, each with its own focus and expertise.

**FactCheck.org** is a non-partisan non-profit run by the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg Public Policy Center. It monitors the factual accuracy of what politicians say in their speeches, press releases, TV ads, and even

debates. They develop articles that explain contentious issues and clarify political statements.

**Politifact.com** is also a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that rates the accuracy of politicians' statements. They often put more emphasis on what is said over social media and what is current in the news, and use their Truth-O-Meter to rate political statements from "True" to "Pants on Fire," making fact-checks easily understandable to the public. Politifact also publishes the list of sources used to fact-check (when available) so readers can follow the organization's research.

**Snopes.com** is another respected fact-checking site, but functions differently than FactCheck and Politifact. Unlike the first two, Snopes tackles issues outside of politics and is usually the first to investigate rumors. However, Snopes determines what issues they investigate based on reader interest, so their coverage is not necessarily comprehensive.

**ProPublica.org**, though not a fact-checking website, is a non-profit, independent newsroom that supports investigative journalism. Their reporting covers a wide range of issues and is considered one of the most thorough fact-finding journalism websites.

These websites are essential research companions that will help you double-check the information that you find, especially in news sources. Many platforms make money off of clicks and shares on social media. These "fake news" sites will often bend, exaggerate, or even fabricate information to outrage readers. In such a research atmosphere, it is essential that you know how to tell the difference between legitimate and dishonest news sites. Fact-checking websites are unified by the goal of fighting misinformation and helping researchers, not gaining clicks, and can help keep your research focused on facts.

- Mediated sources are sources that have been fact-checked or edited by someone other than the author.
- Unmediated sources are sources that have not been fact-checked by a third party.
- You only want to use mediated sources for your research papers.
- Basic Google searches often return a mix of mediated and unmediated sources, so you will need to determine which sources are mediated and thus reliable for your research.

- Avoid crowdsourced or blog-hosting platforms, as they are not mediated.
- Do use sources from authoritative, well known institutions.
- Fact-checking websites (like FactCheck.org, Politifact.org, Snopes.com, and ProPublica.org) can help you verify information before you use false or exaggerated information in a research paper.

## Can I use social media as a source?

The internet has not only expanded student access to information, but also diversified the mediums used to spread such information. These days, we are constantly plugged into social media, YouTube, and podcasts where we can quickly learn and share new things. Though these platforms may feel like genuine sources, they cannot be treated the same way as true, mediated sources.

While your instructor will determine what types of sources you can use for your papers, here is a general guide for how you should approach using social media, YouTube videos, and podcasts for academic research.

YouTube has become the center of learning for students. Want to learn how to cook an omelet? Need to review a math equation? YouTube is full of instructional videos that can help anyone master a skill.

When you are researching for an essay, though, you aren't simply trying to learn information as quickly as possible. Your goal is find and process that information, develop your own thoughts on the subject, and then explain those thoughts clearly in your own words. Most YouTube videos have been produced as crash courses on a topic, providing the information as simply as possible so a wide viewership can easily grasp it. So when you watch a YouTube video, you are absorbing the basic information, but are not doing the intellectual work necessary to develop your *own* ideas on a topic.

Some reputable institutions—such as the Smithsonian, the *New York Times*, and *National Geographic*—have produced excellent videos on a variety of topics. But even these videos have been crafted to maximize quick absorption, as opposed to providing detailed research on a topic. In these cases, it is always better to review the published articles by these institutions on the same subject



for your research. Think of the YouTube videos as pointers towards published articles, rather than stand-alone sources.

YouTube videos not produced by well-regarded institutions have another issue: they are unmediated. Even if the producer claims to be an expert or enthusiast on the subject, YouTube has no fact-checking measure in place to ensure the information in the video is accurate. Since these videos are self-published, they are more similar to blog posts than the mediated, reputable sources we discussed earlier.

This same rule applies to posts on social media. Often, self-proclaimed experts will post their claims on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. No matter how well they argue their point, you should never blindly accept or cite social media posts as accurate. If you are interested in a point someone makes on social media, use authoritative sources and fact-checking sites to further investigate—and cite mediated sources, once you find them, instead.

Lastly, podcasts can fall into the same traps as YouTube videos and social media posts. Podcasts are often developed as sources of entertainment, and thus simplify or exaggerate information to appeal to broad audiences. Podcasts produced by journalistic institutions (like NPR or *The New York Times*) on current events are edited and fact-checked, so their information is more reliable. But producers often fail to mention or include their sources, even in the show notes.

For example, in July of 2019, the NPR and WBUR affiliated radio show “Here & Now” invited Nathan Daniel Beau Connolly and Edward Ayers, two historians who host their own podcast “Backstory,” to discuss the history of regulating the tobacco industry. The historians used Sarah Milov’s newly released book, *Cigarette: A Political History*, to research and develop their talking points for the show. However, when the segment aired, they failed to credit Milov or her book at all. Instead, over Twitter, Connolly gave her work a “shout out.” It wasn’t until the omission was publicized and critiqued that WBUR released a statement promising to add her name to the show notes. Even the most well researched podcasts sometimes fail to make their sources clear. So if you are a researcher, it is difficult to rely on the content of podcasts since you may not be able to trace where they found their information.

# Part 2

## Taking Notes

### What sorts of notes should I take?

Think about sources as your foundation—they provide the necessary information for you to formulate your ideas, arguments, and conclusions on a specific topic. As you read through your sources, you should take notes on any interesting information, facts, or quotes that are relevant to your paper topic. Notes should be short for easy assembly later in the writing process (see Part 5). But even when you keep your notes brief, by the end of the researching and note-taking process, you should have a great deal of raw material. You'll use your notes to construct your draft, putting the information in as quotes, summarized information, and paraphrased ideas. (We'll talk about each of these.)

But before we move on, let's talk about *how* to take notes efficiently.

Before you can begin taking notes, you must have a clear topic that you intend to gather information on. That topic will be your guiding light as you seek information. When taking notes, you must stay focused on one particular thing, and only jot down information related to that idea. If you don't stay focused, you could end up copying out most of the source—which is very time consuming and would lead to an unfocused paper.

For example, while researching Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War, I might encounter this paragraph from Larry Berman's *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam*:

Johnson's patience was wearing thin. He did not want to stop all of the bombing of North Vietnam when the communists had not ceased infiltration and were poised for another offensive. On July 26,

1968, he invited Republican candidate Richard Nixon to the White House in order to hear the probable Republican nominee's views on Vietnam. Rusk and Rostow were the only others present. Nixon made it very clear that he did not favor a bombing pause because bombing was "one piece of leverage you have left." As Nixon was leaving the White House, he told LBJ, "I do not intend to advocate for a bombing pause." LBJ was certainly leaning the same way.<sup>1</sup>

Since my paper topic is Nixon and the Vietnam War, I only want to jot down information relevant to my topic and ignore everything else. Here are what my notes would look like:

Berman, Larry. *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam*. New York: Free Press, 2001.

Nixon "made it very clear that he did not favor a bombing pause" (27)  
He saw bombings as a crucial political tool (27)

The rest of the information in the paragraph is about Johnson, not Nixon—so I wouldn't write it down.

Remember: take your notes on a very focused topic! You can always return to the source later if you need more.

- Before you can write your paper, you need to take notes by summarizing and quoting information in the source that is relevant to your paper topic.
- Notes should be short for easy organization later on.
- You only want to take note of information relevant to your paper topic.
- That information will serve as the basis for your draft.

---

1. Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (Free Press, 2001), 27.

## How do I keep track of who said what?

Notice how my notes are written in a particular format. When writing notes, you always want to follow four basic rules:

1. Always write down the full source information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, and year of publication) as if you were writing a Works Cited entry (we'll cover this in Part 3, don't worry!). Then, list your notes from that source below. This ensures that you know what source you have found the notes from.
2. You can either quote directly from your source, and use quotation marks around the exact wording from the source (as in my first note), or you can paraphrase the information in your own words (like in my second note). We'll talk more about the difference in a minute. But either way, be sure to follow the next rule:
3. Always write the page number of the source next to the notes so that you know where exactly you found that information.
4. If you are reading an eBook or online source, never copy and paste words into your notes. Always write or type your notes out. This forces your brain to process the information and begin forming connections between ideas and bits of information even before you begin drafting. When you copy and paste, you'll always put *too much information* in your notes—and that will slow you down when you begin writing.

These rules will save you time, as you won't need to go back and find the source information later when you include documentation in your essays. But most importantly, these rules will help you avoid plagiarism. If you always include quotation marks around the exact phrasing you have taken from the source, you are more likely to include those quotation marks again when you begin drafting. By including the source information and page numbers, you also have all the necessary information for writing your footnotes efficiently.

There are two primary ways to take notes: on index cards or in a word-processing program such as Microsoft Word.

Traditionally, students have been taught to take notes on 3x5 index cards, using a different card for each quote. The first card would include the full bibliographical information, while the rest of the cards include just the author's name. But now that many students use word processors more frequently, using index cards isn't necessary. Typing your notes in a word processor document, with the source information at the top and notes listed below, can be a more efficient method. But it can also lead you to take *too many* notes. Always try to distill the information you need down into as few words as possible!

- When you start taking notes, always write down the full source information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, and year of publication) as if you were writing a Works Cited entry. Then list your notes from that source below.
- Your notes should include a mix of direct and indirect (paraphrased) quotes from the source.
- Always include the page number next to the notes so that you know where exactly you found that information.
- When taking notes from online sources, never copy and paste words or phrases into your notes. You should always write (or type) your notes out.
- You can write your notes on index cards (with each note on its own card and the full source information written on the first note card) or in a word processor document.

### **What's the difference between paraphrasing and quoting?**

Notice in the above examples that I use a mix of **quoted** and **paraphrased** information. Quoted information is when the exact words of the author are used in your notes, surrounded by quotation marks (see rule #2 above). Paraphrased information, however, is when you use your own words to explain what the author is saying in the source. When you start taking notes, you will need to decide what information should be quoted and what information should

# Part 3

## Documentation

### What is documentation?

It's essential to tell your reader where you found the information you use throughout your research paper. After all of the hard work you have put into your research, you don't want your reader thinking that you pulled your information and quotes out of thin air. And what if someone wants to confirm the truth of your facts for themselves?

So how do you show what sources you have used?

If you look carefully at a work of nonfiction, you may notice a few things you wouldn't find in a novel. For example, you might see a sentence followed by a brief superscript number:

Through the nineteenth century, the role of newspapers and magazines in American life began to shift. According to Richard Ohmann, editors began dropping prices and manipulating the content of newspapers and magazines to appeal to larger audiences. Instead of serving as mouthpieces for political factions and ideological movements, editors started to send reporters out to collect information about the community.<sup>1</sup>

That superscript number will then be repeated either at the bottom of the page, or at the end of the chapter, alongside information about the source in which that information was originally found:

<sup>1</sup> Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (Verso, 1996), 20.

You may also find, at the end of the book, a list titled “Reference” or “Bibliography” or “Works Cited.” Here, the author will list all of the sources used throughout the book.

These are all examples of **documentation**: the ways in which the writer is letting you know where information was found. Documentation goes by many names (citations, references, etc.) but its goal is always to identify and give credit to the sources used in the research and writing of the piece.

Documentation can come in many different forms. What type and style of documentation you use will be dependent on your teacher’s preferences or class subject area, but this section will provide a general overview of how to use different types of documentation throughout your paper.

- Documentation is the process through which writers show where they found certain information while researching.
- Documentation is sometimes referred to as “citations” or “references.”

## What types of documentation can I use?

As you gathered your notes to prepare your paper, you picked out direct quotations, summarized paragraphs, and paraphrased (wrote what the author said in your own words). As you add this information to your essay, you will need to declare to your reader where, in that specific source, you found that specific information. There are three types of documentation you can use for that: **footnotes**, **endnotes**, and **in-text citations**.

### Footnotes and endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes are written in the same way. The only difference is where they are placed in your paper. For both, you start by inserting a superscript number at the end of the sentence you have written with the borrowed information. For example:

According to Richard Ohmann, editors began dropping prices and manipulating the content of newspapers and magazines to appeal to larger audiences.<sup>1</sup>

That superscript number will then lead to the footnote or endnote containing the source information. With a footnote, the source information is placed at the bottom of the page where the sentence is (look at the bottom of this page for my footnote). If it is an endnote, the source information will be placed at the end of the paper, either on the last page (for short papers) or on a separate page (for very long papers).

No matter their placement, the source information will always be written in a certain order based on the style of documentation. There are many different styles of documentation: **Turabian, Chicago Manual of Style, Harvard Style, MLA, and APA**. And each one of these styles of documentation has changed over time. I will explain each style later in this chapter, but to begin I am using Turabian style, a style common to student papers:

<sup>1</sup> Author's name, *Title of Book* (Publisher, Year of Publication), page number.

<sup>1</sup> Sheri Fink, *Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm-Ravaged Hospital* (Crown Books, 2013), 17.

If there are two authors, list them like this:

<sup>1</sup> Author's name and second author's name, *Title of Book* (Publisher, Year of Publication), page number.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (Dial Press, 2008), 35.

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1. Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (Verso, 1996), 20.



*The Journal of American History* 93, no.3 (December 2006): 774, JSTOR.

### Web pages and other digital resources

#### 1. Website content

<sup>1</sup> Author/editor/sponsoring organization or website, “Name of Article,” URL (date accessed).

<sup>1</sup> Mallory Daugherty, “Baa Baa Black and White Sheep Treats,” <http://www.southernliving.com/home-garden/holidays-occasions/spring-table-settings-centerpieces-00400000041389/page8.html> (accessed Sept. 12, 2013).

#### 2. eBooks with flowing text (meaning: no traditional page numbers)

<sup>1</sup> Author name, *Name of Book* (Publisher, date of publication), Name of eBook format: Chapter number, and other information given by the eBook platform.

<sup>1</sup> Paul de Kruif, *Microbe Hunters* (Harvest, 1996), Kindle: Ch. 7, Loc. 2134.

### Recordings

#### 1. Films, videos, or other recordings

<sup>1</sup> Name of creator, “Title of work,” name of interviewer or director, Sponsoring organization/distributor, Date of creation or publication, medium, time. URL

<sup>1</sup> Terisa Folaron, “Comma story,” *TEDEd*, July 9, 2013, video, 4:59. <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/comma-story-terisa-folaron>

### Social media citations

#### 1. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Name of author/editor/sponsoring organization (handle or username if different), “Caption of post,” Social media platform and medium, Date of post, URL.

<sup>1</sup> Pete Souza (@petesouza), “Three amigos: President Obama with President of Mexico and Prime Minister of Canada in 2016,” Instagram photo, August 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BnCWsiCFruM/>.

Because the sources available for research are always expanding, you may need to do some research of your own to find out how to cite different types of sources in the future. You can use the steps I outline in the final part of this section for how to research updates in citation style.

- How you format your documentations will change depending on the type of source and will not always look exactly the same.
- You can use a style guide to search how to format your documentation based on the specific types of sources.

## How do I make a Works Cited page?

A Works Cited page is a separate page at the end of your paper that lists, in alphabetical order by last name of author, the sources that you have already footnoted. Works Cited pages are always included alongside your in-essay documentation, but are especially important with in-text citations because they include so little source information. But no matter whether you are using footnotes, endnotes, or in-text citations in your paper, you must finalize your paper with a Works Cited page. The Works Cited page will look like this:

### Works Cited

Ohmann, Richard. *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. New York: Verso, 1996.

# Part 4

## How to Avoid Stealing

### Why do we document our sources?

Documentation is complicated! Many of the rules may seem silly, and you may wonder why there are so many small things that you need to check and double check to make sure your documentation is written correctly.

So you may be asking yourself: WHAT'S THE POINT?

One goal of writing documentation correctly is for your reader to be able to find the exact same information or quote you have used in your paper. The specific details of your footnotes, endnotes, or in-text citations are intended to point your reader to an exact location in a source. Theoretically, your reader could fact-check you, but more often a curious reader might simply want to read more on the subject.

But for the purposes of this book and your writing classes, you need to document for a much simpler reason: So that you avoid unintentional **plagiarism**.

- Documentation should show your reader exactly where you found a quote or piece of information from a source.
- Documentation is the system through which we give proper credit.

## What is plagiarism?

If you use someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit, you are plagiarizing. Even well-known authors are sometimes caught using ideas and sentences that aren't their own! It is vitally important that you avoid this trap.

### Plagiarizing words

You should not use someone else's exact words without giving them credit. Include accurately written documentation for all borrowed quotes from any source, and surround any borrowed words or phrases in quotation marks. Since you are explicitly using someone else's phrasing, it only makes sense that you should give credit.

Imagine that you were collecting information to write an essay on Charles I of England, and came across the following passage:

The executioner, who wore a mask that he might not be known, began to adjust the hair of the prisoner by putting it up under his cap. When the king, supposing that he was going to strike, hastily told him to wait for the sign, the executioner said that he would. The king spent a few minutes on prayer, and then stretched out his hands, which was the sign which he had arranged to give. The axe descended.

If you used this information in your own essay, you would not want to write:

Charles I ascended the scaffold for his execution. He spent a few minutes in prayer, and then stretched out his hands. The executioner swung the axe and beheaded him.

If you did that, the second sentence in your paragraph would use the exact same words ("spent a few minutes on prayer, and then stretched out his hands") as the third sentence in the original paragraph—with only one change, using *in* instead of *on*. All the rest of the words are the same. Using the

author's words without acknowledging him or her is the most obvious form of plagiarism! Instead, you would want to surround the author's words in quotation marks and write:

Charles I ascended the scaffold for his execution. He “spent a few minutes on prayer, and then stretched out his hands.”<sup>1</sup> The executioner swung the axe and beheaded him.

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Abbott, *History of King Charles the First of England* (Henry Altemus Company, 1900), 282.

To avoid plagiarism, put quotation marks around any words taken directly from another source, and also provide documentation (like the footnote in the example above).

### **Plagiarizing ideas**

Plagiarism can occur even if you aren't using an exact quote—even if you move the words around or change them completely. Even if you paraphrase what a source says, using your own words, you're still using someone else's ideas. So you always need to use documentation to show where you find your ideas. That means that you also need to include documentation for any sentence, even if it doesn't include a quote, that includes borrowed information.

In 2006, a major publisher published a novel called *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life*. The novel was written by a freshman college student named Kaavya Viswanathan. She received a lot of attention for writing the book at such a young age. But readers soon pointed out that some of the ideas, scenes, and descriptions were very, very close to ideas and scenes in novels by four other writers. Look through the following chart to see the similarities:

# Part 5

## Bringing It All Together

At this point, you have learned how to find reliable sources, take notes, document your sources, and avoid plagiarism in your research papers.

But between taking your notes and documenting your sources, there is (of course!) the messy business of actually writing the paper.

The entire process of drafting and editing your composition falls somewhat outside of the scope of this handbook (and within the scope of your writing program), but let's look at one specific part of it: how to prepare and use your notes in your paper.

### **How do I use my notes to outline a first draft?**

Before you can begin drafting your paper, it is *essential* that you organize your notes to create a roadmap for your paper. You might think, “But I’ve been reading all of these sources and taking notes for so long! Can’t I start writing already?!” Sure. But if you start writing before you organize your notes in a logical way, your draft will likely read as jumbled, or the final flow of thought through your paper will be disconnected. Then you’ll spend much more time writing and re-writing your paper than if you had spent the extra time organizing your notes. I always tell my students: organizing should be the hard part, and it will make drafting the easy part.

How you organize your notes will of course depend on the content and requirements for your paper. But an **outline** is an excellent organizational tool

that can be applied to almost every type of paper because it allows you to group your notes by topic and organize those groupings in a linear fashion. No matter how complex the paper topic, your explanation or argument must flow from Point A to Point B, and an outline helps you plan each step you'll take between points.

A standard outline for a paper will typically include two **levels**. The first level of an outline, usually marked with a Roman numeral, identifies the main topic or idea of a section. The second level, indicated by capital letters, includes the notes related to the topic indicated by the first level. Here is an example skeleton to help you visualize this:

- I. Main idea/point 1
  - A. Note related to main point 1
  - B. Note related to main point 1
- II. Main idea/point 2
  - A. Note related to main point 2
  - B. Note related to main point 2
  - C. Note related to main point 2
  - D. Note related to main point 2
- III. Main idea/point 3
  - A. Note related to main point 3
  - B. Note related to main point 3

If you are writing a very long or detailed paper, you may find that you need a third level (noted with numbers) to help you organize your information. In that case, the second level can be used to classify subtopics of the main topic:

- I. Main idea/point 1
  - A. Subtopic for main point 1
    - 1. note related to subtopic
    - 2. note related to subtopic
  - B. Subtopic for main point 1
    - 1. note related to subtopic
    - 2. note related to subtopic