



Avoiding plagiarism

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QG GEN027 [www.abdn.ac.uk/library/documents/guides/gen/qggen027.pdf]

Acknowledging your sources

It is extremely important, in academic writing, to give full acknowledgement of other people's work. Properly acknowledging your sources allows your reader to trace back where you found the information that informed your own analysis. Evidence correctly presented and referenced can be used to strengthen your arguments.

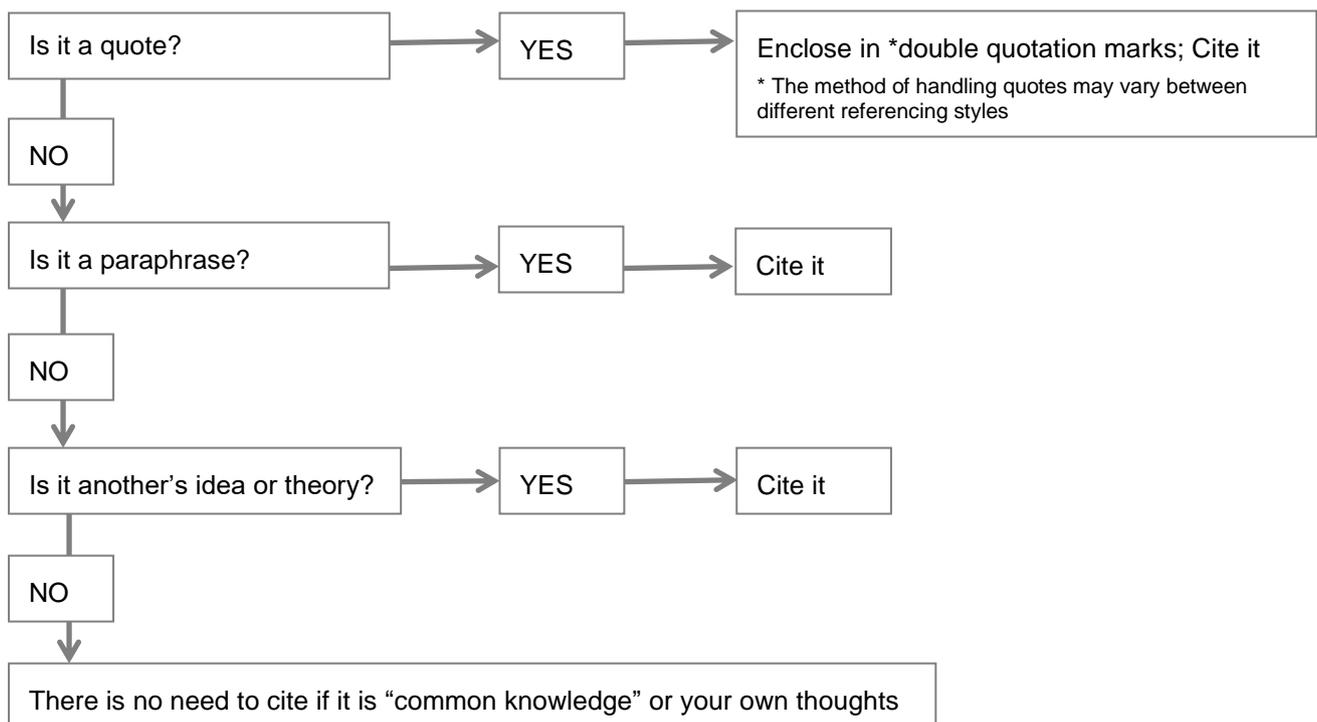
Plagiarism is deliberately presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own. Committing plagiarism is a serious academic offence and something that you want to avoid, so it is important to understand how to acknowledge sources properly.

When and how should I acknowledge my sources?

Always acknowledge your sources when:

- quoting exact words written by someone else – by enclosing the quote in “quotation marks” and giving a reference (include in this category the work of another student – with or without their knowledge).
- paraphrasing words or ideas belonging to someone else – by giving a reference.
- using data, charts, diagrams, images or other evidence belonging to someone else – by giving a reference.

Summary¹



What is a reference?

A reference is a source you have read and specifically referred to in the text of your work. When you give your reader a reference, you state exactly where you found the source.

References can be given for all types of evidence e.g. books, journal articles, conference papers, reports, websites, newspaper articles, lecture notes, emails and telephone conversations.

¹ Cardiff University, 2006. "Manage and cite your references: using information effectively, legally and ethically" [Online] <https://ilrb.cf.ac.uk/citingreferences/citingflowchart/shouldciteflowchart.jpg>, accessed 27 July 2020.

What is a reference style?

A reference style is a format by which you write a reference. There are two systems in use and many thousands of styles within each system.

- **Author/date system**, e.g. Harvard. Cite the family name of the author followed by a year of publication in the text of your work, and add a list of references in full, and in alphabetical order by names of authors, at the end of your work.

Example - referencing a book in Harvard style:

In the text of your work (in-text citation): **(Bell, 2010, p. 4)** or ...**according to Bell (2010, p. 4)**

At the end of your work (in a reference list or bibliography): **Bell, J. (2010) *Doing your research project*. 5th edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.**

NOTE: in the author/date system it is crucially important that you have a reference list or bibliography at the end of your assignment because it works by referring the reader from a short in-text citation to the full reference. For example, a reference in your work might look like this: (Bell, 2010, p. 4), but your reader needs the full reference in your reference list to know that Bell wrote a book called 'Doing your research project', published by Open University Press in 2010. You have already told your reader that the information referred to is on page 4 of this book.

- **Numbered system**, e.g. Vancouver. A sequence of bracketed or superscript numbers throughout your text matched to full citations in footnotes or endnotes, or to a list of sources at the end of your work.

Example – referencing a book in Vancouver style:

In the text of your work: ...**according to Bell (1)** or ...**according to Bell¹**

In the footnotes, endnotes or list of sources at the end of your work: **(1) Bell J. *Doing your research project*. 5th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press; 2010.**

What is a bibliography?

A bibliography is a list of everything you have read in preparation for writing your assignment. It includes sources that you have cited in your work and also those you have read but decided not to cite.

What is a reference list?

A reference list is a list of the sources that you have referred to in your assignment, and arranged alphabetically by the author's family name. It comes at the end of your essay, often on a separate page. It lists every source that you have discussed throughout your assignment, but not those you have read but decided not to cite.

NOTE: the terms *bibliography* and *reference list* are often interchangeable, so check with your course Co-ordinator or Supervisor to find out what is required by your School.

What is common knowledge?

It is often said that there is no need to give a reference when you are referring to something which is common knowledge. This sounds simple, but is not always so easy. We can all agree, for example, that knowing who the Prime Minister is should be common knowledge – we shouldn't have to give a reference stating that we read who the Prime Minister is in *The Times* newspaper. However, in academic writing, 'common knowledge' is not so clear-cut. It usually means knowledge common to your course or discipline. For example, you might not expect the average person at the bus stop to know when Darwin published his book *Origin of the Species*; however, if you are taking a course on evolution, it would be common knowledge on that course that Darwin's famous treatise appeared in 1859.

IF IN DOUBT – CITE – BETTER TO DO THAT THAN BE ACCUSED OF PLAGIARISM

Where do I go for help and advice?

Course Co-ordinator or Supervisor for guidance on the referencing style required by your School
Student Learning Service for instruction on academic writing www.abdn.ac.uk/students/academic-life/study-resources-3379.php#panel3953

Information Consultants in the library for help with referencing www.abdn.ac.uk/library/support/contacts-106.php#panel162

See Library guide [QG CIT001 Referencing and Citing-an introduction](#)