



Citations – Common Errors

How to Avoid Mistakes on Your Works Cited Pages

- A. INSTRUCTIONS** - exist for a purpose
Read all instructions carefully before beginning any research assignments.
HINT: Most errors come from NOT taking the time to read and follow instructions.
- B. CARELESSNESS** - almost always leads to incorrect citations
Check the spelling of names and titles, accuracy of dates, etc. This information must be written exactly as it appears. Omitting one word from a title or one letter from an author's name could mean that the article, book or Web site might never be located.
HINT: If you misspell information in your notes, you will misspell it in your paper.
- C. STYLE GUIDES** – faculty choice
Always ask instructors whether you should use MLA or APA or other style guides.
HINT: The library staff will always give you guidance on citations.
- D. TITLES** – no shortcuts allowed
Always include subtitles. For example, the reference works Great Lives from History: the Renaissance and Early Modern Era and Great Events from History: the Renaissance and Early Modern Era would be incorrect if cited as The Renaissance and Early Modern Era.
HINT: Make it as easy as possible for instructors to locate your original references.
- E. BOOK PUBLISHERS** – available more often than not
It would be rare for a book not to include a publisher and place of publishing.
HINT: If you cannot locate them, go back to the online catalog and look at that record. If you are still unsure about the name of the publisher or the city, ask the library staff or your instructor for help.
- F. PLACE OF PUBLICATION** - style guides differ
With multiple cities, list the first one only.
HINT: Always check your style guides for this as they most likely will be different.
- G. AUTHORS IN REFERENCE WORKS** - sometimes hidden
In citing material in reference books, search everywhere. Look at the end of the article to see if you can find the author's name.
HINT: There will not always be an author listed for specific articles in reference books.
- H. ARTICLE TITLES OR PERIODICAL TITLES** – no confusion please
Although articles in databases may not always include authors, you will be able to find article and periodical titles.
HINT: Be extra careful not to mix them up when you do your citation.

I. JOURNALS OR NEWSPAPERS – not always obvious

Often instructors want specific types of publications, such as journals, magazines, newspapers or Web sites. It isn't always easy to tell the difference. For example, *Newsweek* is not a newspaper, it's a magazine.

HINT: There is no shame in asking your instructor or library staff to help with this.

J. ONLINE ADDRESSES – the long and short of it

All material found online, in databases or not, will have a URL or Web address, and. It is not unusual for instructors to want to check your research. However, it is no longer required in the MLA or APA Style Guides that you include the entire address to specific articles.

HINT: Many databases now provide help with citations, but you always need to consult a style guide to check any citation help that has been provided within articles or databases.

K. VOLUME AND ISSUE OF PERIODICALS – hide and seek

It will be highly unusual for printed journals and magazines not to list volume and issue (or number). If they are not on the cover, look inside. They are usually on the back of the front cover or at the top of the table of contents page.

HINT: You may have to search a bit to find them. Ask for help.

L. INTERNET SITES – good, bad, ugly

Internet sites must always be evaluated for reliability. Be critical. Never assume online information is correct.

HINT: Always think about why the site was designed and who did it. That will help you better evaluate the site.

M. SOURCES INCLUDED – don't go wild

Include only those sources that you have cited in your paper.

HINT: You will not need to include every book or article or Web site you looked at.

N. MEDIUM OF PUBLICATION – a new requirement

Most style guides now require that you include a brief description of the medium.

HINT: Print resources are no longer the default.

O. HELP WITH RESEARCH – here for the asking

Never hesitate to ask the library staff for help.

HINT: Your success is important to us, too.