Citing Responsibly, Avoiding Plagiarism: An NPS Refresher

Citations make your research credible. They validate information, give credit where credit is due, and allow other researchers to follow in your footsteps. Citations tell your readers how to verify claims, data, or facts discussed in your writing by pointing them to the specific works from which you gathered information. To determine if you need a citation, ask yourself the following questions as you write and revise:

- Do I know this information/data because I read it somewhere?
- Is this knowledge the result of emails or conversations? (You still must cite unpublished information.)
- Is this my own analysis based on my personal knowledge or research, or is it analysis I borrowed from another person?

**You do not need to cite your own experience and findings, or common knowledge.**

Common knowledge is something your readers already know. For example, “The average adult body contains about 250 grams of salt” or “George W. Bush served as president of the United States from 2000 to 2008.” As a rule of thumb, if you can find an unattributed fact in five credible sources, a citation is not needed. Consult a faculty member from your department or your reference librarian if you are unsure if something is field-specific common knowledge.

**Include a citation or signal phrase when you borrow a source’s idea, statistic, or wording.**

Your readers should understand which pieces of information came from which sources (cite!), and which are your original thoughts and data (don’t cite).

**One citation at the end of a paragraph cannot “cover” the entire paragraph.**

Cite the source completely the first time it is used in each paragraph. Then, throughout the paragraph, make it reasonably clear that you are continuing to discuss information from the same source. Cite the source again, if needed, before your focus moves to another source.

**Differentiate between information that is paraphrased and information that is directly quoted.**

Generally, a phrase that contains five or more consecutive words exactly as they appear in the source should appear in quotation marks (proper nouns and common language excluded) or be paraphrased. Remember: whether you are paraphrasing or quoting source information, always cite it.

**Try to limit direct quotations.**

While quoting can be effective—and sometimes essential for precise wording—paraphrasing demonstrates your understanding of the topic and your critical thinking skills. Generally, though there are exceptions, no more than 10 percent of your document should be quoted from other sources.

**The Graduate Writing Center and Thesis Processing Office can help!**

Writing coaches and thesis processors can help you build your paraphrasing, quoting, and citation skills. You may also ask a writing coach to run a draft paper run through NPS’s plagiarism software; the coach will meet with you to discuss problem areas and guide your revisions.
IEEE Style: Citing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting

For citing in IEEE, use **bracketed citations, like this [1]**. Signal phrases linking sentences to previously cited sources may be used in place of repeated citations. It must always be clear which pieces of information came from which sources. If it’s not, that’s when you’ll want to add a citation. If a sentence is not cited or linked to a previous citation, the reader will assume that it is your own original thought or finding as an author (or common knowledge).

IEEE ground rules (from [http://libguides.nps.edu/citation/ieee](http://libguides.nps.edu/citation/ieee)):

- **When using IEEE, in-text citations are numbered sequentially in the order they appear in the text.** The reference number appears in brackets. Once a source is ascribed a number, it keeps that number for all subsequent citations in your paper.
- Grammatically, in your body text, references may be treated as footnote numbers:
  - as shown by Brown [4], [5]
  - as mentioned earlier [2], [4]–[7], [9]
  - Smith [4] and Brown and Jones [5]
  - Wood et al. [7] (Note: Avoid use as possessive, such as “Wood et al.’s”)
- **Reference numbers can also be used as nouns in your body text:**
  - as demonstrated in [3]
  - according to [4] and [6]–[9]
- The author and source title need not be mentioned in the text, but may be if desired.
- List citations in numerical order when citing more than one.
- Punctuation (commas and periods) falls *after* the citation.

Here’s an example paragraph. Citations are highlighted in yellow and signal phrases are in blue. Note that the second sentence is common knowledge, whereas the final sentence is clearly the opinion of the author.

Smith’s study [1] indicates that red and yellow are the best colors with which to decorate your restaurant because they induce feelings of hunger. Consider popular fast-food chains, which often use red and yellow in their advertising and décor. **According to Smith’s study,** restaurant customers felt more energized in red and yellow environments, which encouraged them to order more food. **The same study** explained that patrons felt relaxed in blue and purple environments, which encouraged them to “spend more time considering the menu options and eat at a slower pace.” Although other hospitality research suggests blue décor can give your restaurant a casual, laid-back atmosphere [2], **Smith believes** it encourages patrons to linger at their tables without ordering additional food or beverages. Accordingly, it is difficult to identify a popular chain restaurant that decorates with calmer hues.