

How to Write Simple Citations

The purpose of citation is to give credit to those whose work you have used and to enable your readers to track down your sources. A good citation tells **who is responsible** for the information presented, **where to find** that information, and **when** the information was published.

There are many different formats for writing citations. This is a simplified format based on MLA.

Step 1: Identify the essentials

- Author
- Title of the work
- Container (the “container” of a short work is the book, magazine, newspaper, or site that contains it, such as **USA Today** or **YouTube**. A book is its own container.)
- Date of publication. This could be just a year, or a more specific date.
- For books: Publisher
- For online sources: URL

Step 2: Write your citation:

Part 1: Author.

- a. Put the last name first, then a comma followed by the rest of the name: **Doe, John** or **Barley, Anne Marie**

Part 2: Title of the specific work.

- a. Capitalize the first word and any important words: **The Best Days of a Bad Year**

Part 3: Details of the container, including the publication date.

- a. Title, capitalized as it usually appears: **WebMD** (If your source is a whole book, the title is already in Part 2 -- don't write it again here, just skip to the next detail.)
- b. For a book, list the publisher and date. For example: **Perfect Publishing, 2016**.
 - i. Specific dates go in the order Day Month Year (no commas): **2 May 1997**
- c. For online containers, list the site name, the publication date, then the URL:
YouTube, 8 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgsqb.

Step 3: Format your citation

- Separate the parts of your citation with punctuation marks.
 - End each of the three parts (author, title, container details) with a period
 - Put a comma between each different kind of information in of the container details (**Container Title, date, URL or Publisher, date.**)
- Format your titles
 - Short works (articles, poems, short stories, video clips) go in quotation marks: **“Title of Short Work.”** Note that the end quote goes after the period.
 - Longer works (books, websites, magazines) go in italics: ***Title of Longer Work.***

Step 4: Deal with any exceptions

- If your work has two authors, put the first author's name last-name-first as described above, then the second in normal name order: **Jones, Matilda and Sarah Xiong.**
- If your work has 3 or more authors, list only the first and add “et al.” (short for the Latin phrase “et alia” meaning “and others”): **Doxtater, Lee, et al.**
- If there is no author listed, skip that section and just start the citation with the title.
- If the author is identified only by a pseudonym or username, use that: **BunnyBoo**
- If there is no date listed for an online source, skip it. Instead, after your citation add another part telling when you accessed the site: **Accessed 5 Jan. 2018.**

Example Citations:

- Doe, John. *Small Mammals of America*. Perfect Publishing, 2016.
- Evans, Cristella. "Duck, Duck, Squirrel!" *Fantastic Animals*, 2 June 2013, www.fanan.net/dds.
- Smith, Jane. "I Sing of Squirrels." Perfect Poems, perpoem.com/isos. Accessed 5 Jan. 2018.
- Park, K. J. "Nature's Snipers." *World's Best Magazine*, May/June 2014.
- Jones, Matilda, and Sarah Xiong. "When Good Squirrels Go Bad." *YouTube*, 8 May 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgsgb.
- Doxtater, Lee, et al. "Squirrel Attacks Dog." *Mapleville Gazette*, April 5, 2011.
- Barley, Anne Marie. "Bright Eyes and Sharp Teeth." *Literary Jewels of New England*. PublishCo, 1998.
- BunnyBoo. "Protecting Yourself From Animal Attacks." *Animal Facts You Won't Believe*, June 2014, www.animalfactsnoway.com/articles/123421204.
- "You Never Promised Me Walnuts." *StoriesByStudents*, 2015, www.sbys.org/ynpmw.

In-Text Citations

Whenever you use information from one of your sources within your paper, let your reader know where you got the information by using an in-text citation. To do this, you mention the source either in the body of the sentence or in parentheses at the end. In either case, the page number (if there is one) where you found the information always goes in parentheses at the end.

Citations incorporated directly into sentences

You refer to your source by using the author's name (or names, if the work has multiple authors). If you mention the author(s) in your sentence, you can use either just the last name, or the full name if you prefer. You may include the title of the work as well if it makes sense to do so.

- Jones, McInnis, and Xiong report that squirrels can be found in all major American cities.
- In Anne Marie Barley's terrifying tale "Bright Eyes and Sharp Teeth," squirrels go mad and destroy a village (37-41).

Parenthetical citations

If you are using a parenthetical citation, just use the last name(s). If the author of a source is not identified, use the title of the work. Put the title in italics or quotation marks as appropriate.

- Squirrel attacks have been increasingly common in recent years (Doxtater et al.).
- Victims of animal violence may have difficulty trusting family pets ("You Never Promised Me Walnuts").

Direct quotations

If you quote your source's exact words, put them in quotation marks. Be sure to include the page number of the quote, if there is one, in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

- According to Park, squirrels are "more deadly than water balloons" (14).
- Some authorities claim that reports of squirrel attacks "are exaggerated to the point of absurdity" (Doe 137).
- Hikers should have "bells, pepper spray, and stout hearts" (BunnyBoo).