

CHAPTER 25: DOCUMENTING SOURCES—AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Chapter outline

- When to document—and why
- Guidelines
 - Reference lists
 - Parenthetical citations

Documentation—or citing your sources—is a key part of any writing in academia and much professional writing. This chapter explains why and how to document your writing in EDC. Failure to document your work is a serious violation of academic integrity. You can find yourself in trouble—and accused of plagiarism and cheating—even if your failure to document is unintentional. Thus, read this chapter carefully, and discuss any questions you have about documentation with your professors.

25.1 WHEN TO DOCUMENT AND WHY

In writing related to engineering design, as in all academic writing, you need to credit each source you use in your reports, proposals, emails, and essays, whether your information comes from printed material (books, articles, manufacturers' literature), the Internet, lecture notes, face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, other people's emails, or other sources.

Documenting your sources serves several purposes:

- Makes your writing more credible
- Helps readers locate information mentioned in your report
- Demonstrates that you are ethical
- Avoids serious academic and legal repercussions of using sources without acknowledging them—in other words, plagiarizing

You may be surprised to learn that people want to know how you are building on other people's ideas and will even respect you more for knowing “the liter-

ature”—that is, what else has been written in an area, rather than looking as if you’ve developed every idea by yourself (which would be impossible). You may also not realize that in academia you are responsible for giving credit to others’ ideas even when you don’t quote them directly. When you write, you’re actually joining a new community, a conversation that has been going on before you entered it and to which you are now contributing. Documentation identifies that conversation and shows what you are using, questioning, and adding to it.

If you borrow too much information from your source material, readers will wonder what you’re contributing to a paper or report. Your own voice—your analysis and your ideas—needs to dominate your writing. Whatever you quote or paraphrase should be used to support your ideas.

Document your ideas as you go along; do not wait to add your citations after you’ve written your entire draft. There are two important reasons for this. First, if you don’t write down your sources as you do your research, take notes, and write your research summaries, you may omit required information that will be hard to find later (and will lead to a waste of time). Second, if you don’t add citations as you draft your documents, you may forget what you’ve quoted and plagiarize material unintentionally.

To give you the most valuable feedback, your instructors need to see which of your ideas are based on research, what kind of research you’re doing, and how you’re analyzing what you find. Without accurate documentation, they won’t be able to assess your work properly and give you helpful advice.

25.2 GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTING SOURCES

Documentation consists of two parts: a reference list and citations within your text. Below are guidelines for both.

25.2.1 Reference lists

1. Include a reference list at the end of all documents (reports, research summaries, essays, slide presentations) that use information from outside sources. Information needs to be documented regardless of whether you are quoting specific material or paraphrasing information. The list should include all written sources (books, articles, websites, emails, etc.), video or audio sources, and interview sources that you use in developing your document. You even need to document your own work if you are drawing on a paper or report you have written and submitted somewhere before.
2. In a college course, it is common practice for instructors to read your reference list to see if you’ve based your analyses and arguments on impres-

sive, well-chosen, up-to-date information. In many cases, your reference list is like a snapshot of your research.

A reference list does not need to include everything you've read for your project; it should include only what you've used. For example, if you refer to a dictionary or encyclopedia to get some general background information that most people know and that you're not using directly in your report, then you should not cite that information.

3. **Use the citation format your instructors prefer.** Three commonly used formats come from the MLA (Modern Language Association), APA (American Psychological Association), and the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers).

Appendices N and O contain details on APA and MLA formats, but only on the most commonly used kinds of sources in EDC. For additional information, good advice can be found online at the Purdue Online Writing Lab site (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. For information on IEEE format, go to http://www.ece.uiuc.edu/pubs/ref_guides/ieee.html. Note that each format has specific rules for formatting a reference list entry. Whichever format you choose, follow those rules exactly because readers from different fields are used to reading reference lists in a conventional way. The punctuation helps them see at a glance what kind of source is being mentioned. Do not guess about the punctuation or rely on what you used to do in high school.

Here is an example of a short reference list in MLA format and, below that, explanations of some of the items:

Example 25.1: References list in MLA format

References

Cooper, Ian. "Pick me for NU student affairs vice president." *The Daily Northwestern* 12 Feb. 2001. 24 June 2003 <<http://www.dailynorthwestern.com/daily/issues/2001/02/12/forum/cooper.shtml>>.

"Marlok Information." 15 Dec. 2002. IPRT Facilities and Engineering, Institute for Physical Research and Technology. 27 June 2003 <<http://www.iprt.ameslab.gov/FE&S/marlok.htm>>.

"Millennium Online Security Management Systems." Kaba Ilco Corporation. 27 June 2003 http://www.kaba-ilco.com/products/access_controls/millennium.asp.

Yarnoff, Charles. Personal Interview. 20 June 2003.

The first three items are online sources: a newspaper article and two websites. Note the following about the references:

- The newspaper article and the “Marlok Information” website include two dates: The first one indicates when the material was published; the second tells when it was downloaded by the author of the paper.
- Neither of the two websites has an author; in such cases, begin with the title of the page that contains the information you have used. If there is no title, begin with the name of the institution or organization sponsoring the site.
- The list is alphabetized using the first word in the entry. This is the author’s last name, if there is an author.
- The last item is an interview that the author of the paper conducted with Professor Yarnoff.

25.2.2 Parenthetical citations

Within your text, use parenthetical citations for any material that is quoted or paraphrased, and for any facts you have gotten from a specific source. These short citations show readers that your information comes from somewhere else and that they can find the full reference by going to your reference list.

- **Quotations:** You are **quoting** when you use the exact words of your source. Indicate quoted words by putting them in quotation marks (or, for passages longer than three lines, by indenting). **Use quotation marks even when you’ve quoted only a phrase or word from your source.** Cite the source using parentheses at the end of the quoted sentence(s), or at the end of the sentence containing the quoted phrase. It is good practice to integrate quotations into your text by indicating their source in an introductory phrase. It is also good practice to divide long quotations or to paraphrase information that can be easily described in your own words.
- **Paraphrases:** You are **paraphrasing** when you **use your own words** to summarize ideas or information from your source. Do not use quotation marks when you paraphrase; just cite the source using parentheses at the end of the paraphrase.
- **Facts:** If you get specific facts from a source—for example a statistic or other number—cite that source at the end of the sentence containing the fact. It is particularly important to cite facts that your readers may want to verify. Here is an example of a fact from an EDC paper that needs to be cited: “Every year, over four million babies are born in the United States; however, nearly seven of every one thousand die within one year of birth” (World Health Organization).

Use the same style for parenthetical citations (MLA, APA, or IEEE) that you use for the reference list. Each style has minor differences. For example, MLA style includes the name of the source in a parenthetical reference and, if applicable, the page number. APA style also includes the date of publication.

The following section from an analysis of Northwestern’s Marlok key system illustrates key guidelines in using parenthetical citations. (See References List in MLA Format for the paper’s reference list.)

Example 25.2: Using MLA style in citations

The Marlok key system has two major advantages: First, it offers excellent security by allowing only authorized people to enter specified buildings and rooms. Each authorized person has a key that has been encoded so it can be read by an “infrared optical key reader attached to a door memory unit” (“Marlok Information”). If the key reader at a door doesn’t recognize a key’s code, it means the key holder hasn’t been authorized, and the door will not open. The second advantage of the Marlok system is that the university can easily program it and train people to operate it by searching by user name and other identifiers. In addition, door locations pop up quickly on the computer monitor (“Millennium”).

The Marlok system has two major disadvantages: The first is that the infrared reader sometimes fails to recognize the key code when the key is dirty. Professor Charles Yarnoff reports: “My key has failed several times, and only after repeated cleanings was I able to open the door. This was especially inconvenient and embarrassing when I was escorting a visiting professor around campus.” The second disadvantage, admittedly a selfish one, is that Marloks are programmed to open doors in the dorm where the student lives, but not other dorms. This “disadvantage” is expressed by a columnist in *The Daily Northwestern*, who maintains that students “want their Marlok keys to get them into all the dorms on campus so they do not have to wait outside in nasty weather” (Cooper).

Note the following about these parenthetical citations:

- They list the last name of the author (or the first word[s] of the title when the source doesn’t list an author) so the reader can flip to the References page and quickly find the source.
- The citation of online sources does **not** include the URL, which will appear in the full citation on the References page.
- None of the citations includes page numbers because the citations are from websites. If the websites had page numbers, they would have to be included in the parenthetical citation.
- Parenthetical citations are placed at the end of sentences that contain quotes, paraphrased material, or source-specific facts.
- The quotation from Yarnoff is not followed by a parenthetical citation because his name is used in the body of the sentence that introduces the quotation.

