Correct Citation Practice

It is essential that you cite everything which is not your own work. Any idea, quote, concept or fact which is obtained from another person must be cited.

If in doubt, cite.

The more citations your work contains, the better. Academic papers average one citation for every 100 words. You cannot have too many citations.

It is acceptable to cite multiple sources for the same item.

EG:

Many people in rural areas experience a sense of isolation (Thomas, 2004; Jones, 2006; Hawthorn & Smith, 1999; Jacobs, 2015)

Citing multiple sources shows you can cross-reference between sources and have done good research. It also suggests there is wide support for your point and makes it harder to disagree with.

Failure to cite is called “plagiarism.” It is a form of theft. It is the worst sin you can commit in academia. Intentional plagiarism can get you expelled from university, have your degree withdrawn, and ruin your life.

No one will give you the benefit of the doubt over plagiarism. If you don’t cite something which you should have, it will be assumed you were trying to trick people into thinking it was your own work.

Citation styles

There are two parts to a citation – the “inline reference” and the bibliographic information. The inline reference goes into your sentence at the end of the fact you are citing (it is “in the line”). It is never the full information, merely enough information that the full details can be found in the bibliographic information. The bibliographic information is usually placed in a bibliography at the end of your document, but a few citation styles place it in footnotes of the page where it was used.

There are over 300 different citation styles. These differ in terms of how they do the inline references and bibliographic information. They will vary in terms of the order of the author’s name (eg: “Bob Jones” vs “Jones, Bob”), what goes in the inline reference, the punctuation used, the order in which items of information are provided and the punctuation used. Every single element, including the smallest comma, is absolutely vital. A single mistake can render a citation unusable. Every space, comma, full stop and every other formatting element is equally important. For example, the difference between Chicago-style and APA-style inline citations is that APA puts a comma after the author’s name, but Chicago does not. This tiny difference is considered very important. The people marking your work will notice even the smallest error and your marks will suffer.

The following provides examples of the same citation in different styles. If you cannot see the differences, look again. You need to develop your citation skills to the level where the differences are clear. These are the major citation styles, and you should be familiar with their differences, down to the last space and comma.