

Citing and giving credit

It is crucial to support your argument with evidence. As with most aspects of academic writing, a set of shared professional standards governs how we write about others' ideas and findings. One central standard of academic writing is that the evidence you present requires a citation.

There are many reasons to cite. You draw on the work of other writers, and you must document their contributions by citing their words and ideas. Sources are cited for three reasons:

- To tell readers where your information comes from, so they can assess its reliability and/or locate the original source
- To give credit to writers from whom you have borrowed words and ideas
- To prevent plagiarizing or misappropriating your sources, an offense that HGSE takes seriously (see the [Student Handbook](#) for more information).

Citing is a skill that takes time to learn, but it is an important one, and will become easier with practice.

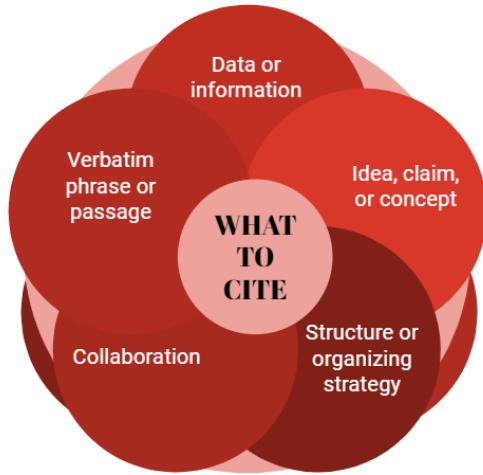
It's an old saying that all writing is rewriting. Graduate school's hectic pace may force you to rush sometimes, but whenever possible, it's best to give yourself ample time for paper assignments. Professional writers in every field go through multiple rounds of revision, and so should you – it's too difficult to change everything all at once. The process looks different for every writer, but we recommend a few general tips:

- **Start with the big picture.** Don't get bogged down in editing details at the beginning; instead, focus on your content. Look carefully at your thesis. Is it clear and specific? Your argument, structure, and main points should be sound before you worry about grammar and punctuation.
- **Engage readers and seek feedback.** Ask a classmate, writing group, Writing TF, or friend to read your paper. Another set of eyes can identify problems you are too close to see.
- **Revise in stages.** Instead of trying to catch all problems at once, read through your paper multiple times, looking for different issues. This eases the cognitive load of editing and helps your brain catch more errors.

Test out different strategies to figure out what works. You may need more or fewer separate rounds of revision. Knowing your strengths and problems as a writer helps you revise. Have you shown your readers why your argument matters? When you present evidence, do you analyze it? If you habitually overuse hyphens or parentheses, do one complete revision

looking only for those punctuation marks. If you find it more effective to revise sentences and wording together, combine them. The key is finding a strategy that serves you well.

When to cite



Based on Harvey (2008)'s typology of plagiarism, we identified five situations that require a citation, which are represented in the diagram at left:

- Verbatim phrase or passage;
- Data or information;
- Idea, claim, or concept;
- Structure or organizing strategy; and
- Collaboration

Verbatim phrase or passage

Use quotation marks and a parenthetical citation to indicate the specific words that are borrowed verbatim from the source.

Source	"Like running, the more you do it, the better you get at it. Some days you don't want to run and you resist every step of the three miles, but you do it anyway. You practice whether you want to or not. You don't wait around for inspiration and a deep desire to run. It'll never happen, especially if you are out of shape and have been avoiding it. But if you run regularly, you train your mind to cut through or ignore your resistance. You just do it. And in the middle of the run, you love it. When you come to the end, you never want to stop. And you stop, hungry for the next time" (Goldberg, 1987, p. 11)."
Citation	She describes the arduous process of writing as "train[ing] your mind to cut through or ignore your resistance" (Goldberg, 1987, p. 11).

Data or information

Any data, including statistics, that come from elsewhere, must be attributed to the source. Not only does this give credit to those who gathered and analyzed the information, it adds credibility to your argument because your reader knows where the data came from.

Source	"By the age of 26, just 12 percent of high school graduates have failed to enroll in a two or four-year college. Of this 12 percent, many are male, from the South and tend to come from the lower end of the
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socioeconomic scale, according to a new analysis from the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Center for Public Education.

On average, non-college enrollees did worse in high school than their college-going counterparts. According to the NSBA analysis, they took less rigorous courses and had lower grade point averages" (Klein, 2014).

Citation	Most high school graduates attend college, and those who do not also tend to have lower GPAs (Klein, 2014).
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Idea, claim, or concept

Just as you cite others' findings, you must also cite their ideas or arguments. The underlined sentence in the source text below is reflected in the writer's sentence, so it requires a citation.

Source	"This article briefly reviews a portion of basic writing history in order to familiarize readers with the common positioning and labeling of struggling student writers. <u>By internalizing and taking up aspects of negative instructor discourses, some students, especially those with multicultural or disadvantaged backgrounds, may come to see themselves as ineffectual and inept writers.</u> The first section of this paper explores the theoretical stance that supports our practice. We go on to describe pedagogical practices that can help students question the 'truths' they have accepted about their writer identities. These reflective practices can be easily adapted to content-area classes as a way of inviting students to counter and expand their understanding of writing in the academy. Academic writing is a process that can involve struggle and conflict for many, especially when genres and/or discourses are new" (Fernsten & Reda, 2011, p.172).
Citation	When learning to write, the environment matters. Negative teacher talk can influence how students perceive themselves as learners (Fernsten & Reda, 2011).

Structure or organizing strategy

This is a bit trickier to pin down. If you are summarizing a larger amount of information, or going in depth into a particular piece, it's important to clearly indicate which of the ideas originated from the source. Take the following paragraph:

There are several types of plagiarism, including an unquoted verbatim phrase, uncited data or information, an uncited idea, or an uncited structure or organizing strategy. Additional, more contextual forms include misrepresenting evidence,

improper collaboration, dual or overlapping submissions, or abetting plagiarism – that is, encouraging or assisting another person to plagiarize (Harvey, 2008).

Even though the passage cites Harvey, it's not clear how much of the paragraph that citation covers. By adding small cues, it becomes apparent that the whole "organizing strategy" - in this case, the typology of plagiarism – comes from Harvey's work.

Harvey (2008) identifies several types of plagiarism. On the micro level, plagiarism takes the form of an unquoted verbatim phrase, uncited data or information, an uncited idea, or an uncited structure or organizing strategy. He also describes four macro forms: misrepresenting evidence, improper collaboration, dual or overlapping submissions, or abetting plagiarism – that is, encouraging or assisting another person to plagiarize.

Provide enough context so that you don't misrepresent the original material. A statement like "Harvey (2008) compares four types of micro-plagiarism to four types of macro-plagiarism" would be an improper citation. While Harvey does list types, he does not compare or rank them, or emphasize a macro/micro distinction. For another example of citing an organizing structure, review how we cite Susan Gilroy in our guide to critical reading.

Collaboration

Scholars often test and develop their ideas in collaboration with colleagues. Doing so does not make your writing or your ideas any less your own, but you must give credit to those who help you in various ways, including:

- Points made in class
- A study group discussion, which you might cite with a footnote or an acknowledgement
- A co-author (common in group projects or problem sets)
- Your own written work, used elsewhere, whether published or as part of your work for another course. AT HGSE, it is generally not permitted to submit the same piece of writing in multiple classes. However, if you want to build on work you've done previously, or combine related work across courses, it is often possible to work something out in conversation with your instructors.

If someone – whether a course TF, writing TF, classmate, friend, etc. - provides help with the structure or mechanics of your paper and not the content, you do not typically need to cite them unless your professor specifies otherwise. The most common exception to this rule at HGSE is a take-home exam paper. On the other hand, if they contributed significantly to your development of the idea (rather than to something less idea-centric, such as organization or clarity), then they should receive credit for their ideas. If you're unsure, you can always ask your professors.

References

- Fernsten, L. A., & Reda, M. (2011). Helping students meet the challenges of academic writing. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(2), 171-182.
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- Harvey, G. (2008). Writing with sources: A guide for Harvard students (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Klein, R. (2014, September 29). This is why 12 percent of high school graduates don't go to college. *The Huffington Post*.