## **How to Use, Quote, and Document Sources**

## Tips on Using Sources[[1]](#footnote-1)

Unintentional plagiarism is a serious matter in graduate school. Unintentional plagiarism most often occurs when a student loses his or her own voice. That is, instead of the student remaining in control of what he or she is writing, the student begins to rely on “experts” to say what the student should be saying with her or his own voice. The scenario goes something like this: the student finds a source with whom he or she agrees and, making a few changes in wording, basically follows the structure of the source material. Even if citations are used, this is a recipe for plagiarism. The following are some commonsense suggestions to help you avoid unintentional plagiarism.

* Use your own voice. Put what you have to say in your own words. Don’t hide behind the “experts.”
* Do not compose essays with source materials open. Take notes from source materials and then use your notes to compose your essays. Make sure you clearly distinguish your words from quotations in your notes in order to avoid plagiarism in your paper.
* Record full bibliographic information in your notes so you don’t have to find your sources later in order to cite them.
* Keep quotations brief and few. Use direct quotes as spices in a meal, not as the main dish. In other words, quote only what you need to quote and integrate those quotations into your text.
* Use block quotations (lengthy quotations) only when you plan to analyze or comment on the quoted material.
* Quotations and the ideas of others should usually be introduced by naming the author (e.g., According to Helmer, “Quote”).
* Do not let a quotation stand by itself. It should be introduced in some way that leads into the quote and/or it should be followed up with a comment.
* Summarize or paraphrase material using a sentence structure that differs significantly from the source. (Changing a few words, but keeping the same basic sentence structure of the original is still plagiarism.)
* Provide a citation for all quoted, paraphrased, or summarized material. When in doubt, provide a citation.

### When to Quote or Not to Quote a Source

* Quote a source when doing so “will help you support your thesis or explain important ideas to your reader.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Quote a source when you want to recognize or preserve the distinctive language of an author, that is, the author has written something in a unique or especially interesting, insightful, or succinct manner and you would find it difficult to express these ideas in your own words.
* Quoting an expert or authoritative source can provide support for something you have said or for the argument you are trying to make. “You must be sure, though, that in your effort to find support for your position, you do not misrepresent an author’s thoughts or findings” by leaving out or adding words to a quote or taking words out of their context and making them mean something other than what the author intended.[[3]](#footnote-3) Also, it is helpful to mention the source’s credentials the first time you quote that person if the person is not well known to your readers (for example, “Religious educator Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook . . .”).
* “Often it is a good idea to quote authors who offer views or data that call into question the position you are advocating in your paper. . . . When you include in your paper a variety of perspectives, your readers are more likely to perceive you to be fair and thorough in your treatment of the subject: these quotations demonstrate that you recognize and understand alternative points of view. Second, such quotations allow you the opportunity to examine critically the other person’s position, acknowledging its worth or value when needed and criticizing it when appropriate.”[[4]](#footnote-4) When you provide opposing ideas, alternative explanations, or data that contradicts your thesis, it is important to discuss how they do not hurt your position, how they may actually support your thesis, how they are questionable or wrong, or how your thesis might be altered to accommodate the opposing position.
* Whenever you use more than three words in a row from a source, you need to put quotation marks around those words.[[5]](#footnote-5) Exceptions: You do not need to quote a person’s official title or an organization’s name. If you use a word or term from a source that is unique, significant, or unusual, you should probably put quotation marks around it.
* “Use quotations *selectively*; they should never make up the bulk of your paper.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Therefore, you should not use quotes just to fill up space.
* Do not rely on quotations to make the points you want to make. In other words, don’t use quotes to demonstrate your thinking for you. Quotations serve the purposes of supporting and illustrating your assertions. Usually, you will need to comment on a quote, “explaining in your own words the quotation’s meaning, relevance, or importance.”[[7]](#footnote-7)
* Do not quote material because you don’t understand it well enough to put it in your own words.

### How to Quote Materials

* Only use a **comma before a quote** that is a complete sentence (independent clause) and that is introduced with a verb like *says* or *argues* (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th ed., 6.43 and 12.14). The exception is when the attribution comes in the middle of a quote: “Our easiest sin,” Marjorie Suchocki asserts, “is to hide our sin from our own eyes.”[[8]](#footnote-8)
* You can also introduce a quotation with a **colon** (:). A colon is commonly used before a quotation that is an elaboration or an illustration of a point you have made. Make sure that you have a complete sentence before the colon. No space precedes the colon and just one space follows it.
* Instead of introducing quoted material with a comma or a colon, you can **run the quote into your sentence**, relying only on quotation marks to indicate someone else’s language. Make sure each quote is integrated into the syntax of the sentence surrounding it (you may need to change your sentence to fit the quote). A sentence should flow as if the quote is a natural part of it. Note that if you are weaving quoted material into the syntax of your sentence (like you use the word *that* to introduce a quote), then you do not put a comma before the quoted material. You can also change a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence in the quoted material to a lowercase letter.
* Anything between **double** **quotation marks** should be exactly as it was in the original unless otherwise indicated. Exceptions: Obvious typographical errors may be silently corrected (i.e., without using brackets). Footnote or endnote reference marks (numbers) may be omitted. You can change an initial letter to a capital or a lowercase letter in order to fit the syntax of your sentence, and you can change double quotation marks to single quotation marks when there is quoted material inside a quotation.
* Therefore, the only time you should use **single quotation marks** is when there is quoted material inside a quotation (i.e., a quote inside double quotation marks).
* An **ellipsis** (. . .) is used when words are left out of a quote. An ellipsis is three dots (periods) with a space before and after each dot or at least before and after the ellipsis if a word processor’s ellipsis character is used. If the end of a sentence is left out in the middle of the quoted material, a period is placed before the ellipsis. Generally, anellipsisis not used at the beginning or end of a quote. See *The Chicago Manual of Style* (*CMS*), 18th ed., 12.59-12.68 on the use of ellipses.
* **Brackets** ([ ]) are used around material that has been added to a quote or around a word that replaces a word in the source (see above for changes that may be made without using brackets).
* If you add **italics** to quoted material to provide emphasis, you need to indicate that by saying “italics mine” or “emphasis added” inside brackets in the quotation, in parentheses after the quotation, or in the footnote for the quotation.
* It is preferred that you put the **footnote reference number** at the end of the sentence. If you are citing from different pages or sources, then in the footnote you put the pages or sources in the order in which you quoted them. However, it is acceptable to put the footnote number at the end of a clause, which you might do when you want to make clear which part of the sentence was from a particular source.
* In the United States, **commas and periods** are placed inside the quotation marks, for example, “word,” or “Sentence.” But if you are using parenthetical, in-text citations, then the period goes after the citation: According to Author, “Quoted sentence” (Author year, page number). “Bible verse” (John 3:16, NRSV).
* If you have an extended quotation of one hundred words or more (*CMS* 13.10) or more than five lines (Turabian, 9th ed., 25.2.2.1), then it is appropriate to use a **block quotation**. A block quotation is not enclosed in quotation marks. It starts on a new line and is indented 0.5 inches from the left margin. It is also single-spaced, but a blank line precedes it and comes after it.
* When you are copying a **graph or table** from another source, you should include a legend for it that says, “Reprinted from [author, title, date].” If you reformatted the graph or table, then you would say, “Source: [author, title, date].”

### Examples of How to Use Sources without Plagiarizing[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Original Source #1:**

“Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Plagiarized Version #1A:

Cheap grace means the justification of sin but not the justification of the person who sinned. Some people say that grace alone does everything, so everything can remain the same.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Comment:

Even though the writer has cited the source, quotation marks were not used around direct quotations such as “cheap grace means the justification of sin” and “grace alone does everything.”

Plagiarized Version #1B:

Cheap grace is taking care of sin without dealing with the one who sins. God’s unmerited favor alone takes care of everything, some say, so the situation can stay as it was before.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Comment:

This is still plagiarism. Replacing key words with synonyms but keeping the basic sentence structure of the original is still plagiarism, even if you provide a citation.

Acceptable Version #1C:

According to Bonhoeffer, cheap grace refers to the theological position that a sinner can be justified before God without changing his or her behavior. In this theological position, one does not need to change to receive justification, for it is provided by grace alone.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Comment:

This is a legitimate paraphrase of Bonhoffer’s words. Note that it is both introduced and footnoted. Also note that short phrases (usually three words or less) do not necessarily need to be placed in quotation marks, especially if the sentence structure is completely different from the source.

**Original Source #2:**

“As Christianity spread, and the Church became more secularized, this realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded. The world was Christianized, and grace became its common property. It was to be had at low cost. Yet the Church of Rome did not altogether lose its earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was astute enough to find room for the monastic movement, and to prevent it from lapsing into schism.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Plagiarized Version #2A:

Christianity spread throughout the Empire, but at the same time it became more worldly; thus the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded away. As the Empire embraced Christianity, grace became its common property and was available cheaply. Nonetheless, the Church of Rome did not completely lose its earlier vision. That the Church was smart enough to make room for the monastic movement and to keep it from dividing from the Church is highly significant.

Comment:

This is plagiarism: not only does the writer copy the outline and sentence structure of the original, she or he fails to place within quotation marks long phrases taken directly from the source, such as “the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded” and “grace became its common property.” Moreover, there is no citation.

Plagiarized Version #2B:

According to Bonhoeffer, Christianity spread throughout the Empire, but at the same it became more worldly; thus “the realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded.” As the Empire embraced Christianity, grace became its common property. Nonetheless, the Church of Rome did not completely lose its earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was “astute enough to find room for the monastic movement,” and to prevent it from “lapsing into schism.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Comment:

Still plagiarism. Although the writer has introduced the material, included a citation, and placed some quoted material in quotation marks, other direct quotations are not in quotation marks, such as “grace became its common property.” Moreover, the sentence beginning with

“nonetheless” is a direct quote except for two words replaced by synonyms. Finally, the overall structure of the paragraph and of each sentence mimics the original too closely.

Acceptable Version #2C:

Bonhoeffer argues that monasticism within the Church is evidence that the concept of costly grace was not completely lost after Christianity became the state religion. Nonetheless, the Church was largely secularized during this period, and for most, grace “was to be had at low cost.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Comment:

Notice that the paraphrased information is introduced and a citation is provided; both the overall structure and the sentence structure differ significantly from the source. One small quotation is used to add flavor.

## Documentation

### Principles of Documentation

You need to cite the sources of quotations and the sources of information or ideas that are not your own and are not common knowledge (in the field of study you are writing in). It should always be clear in your writing which words and ideas are yours and which words and ideas came from a source other than yourself (whether it was something written or oral).

Reasons for properly citing sources:

* You need to give credit to the source of the ideas or words you are using because they are considered intellectual property.
* You need to help your readers assess the quality of your sources: Are they credible? Are they scholarly?
* Well done citations help readers find your sources if they want to pursue the ideas in the sources or use them in their own work.

Similarly, you need to cite the sources of images (photos, charts, diagrams) that are not your own.

### Basics of Documentation

**Order of Information:** Author(s), Title, Facts of Publication (publisher, date), Page number(s), URL.

Do not use people’s titles or descriptors in citations. For example, eliminate titles like “Dr.” and “Saint” and descriptors like “SJ.”

Use italics for the titles of books and journals. Use quotation marks around the titles of chapters in books; the titles of articles in journals, newspapers, or magazines; and song titles.

Note that commas and periods are located inside the quotation marks in Chicago style. Items in footnotes are generally separated by commas, while items in bibliography entries are generally separated by periods. In footnotes, the first name of the author comes first, and in bibliographies, the family (last) name of the author comes first, followed by a comma and then the first name.

When you are citing **books**, use the information on the title page and the copyright page. Sometimes, a title or author’s name may be written one way on the cover and another way on the title page, so use the form given on the title page. For **publisher’s names**, an initial *The* is omitted and *Inc.*, *Ltd.*, *Co.*, *Publishing Co.* and similar extraneous words or abbreviations can be omitted (*CMS* 14.33). For the **publication date**, check the title page or the copyright page. The publication date is usually the same as the copyright date, and should not be confused with the date of a subsequent printing or a renewal of copyright (*CMS* 14.41–14.45).

For guidance on citing different types of sources, see the following:

* *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th ed.
* Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (note that this follows the 17th edition of the *CMS*).
* [“Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide”](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
* *The Chicago Manual of Style* Citation Guide for Claremont School of Theology

### Titles and Headings: Title Case

1. Capitalize the first and last words in titles and subtitles (but see rule 7) and all other major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions—but see rule 4).
2. Lowercase the articles *the*, *a*, and *an*.
3. Lowercase prepositions of fewer than five letters, except when they are used adverbially or adjectivally (*up* in *Look Up*, *down* in *Turn Down*, *on* in *The On Button*, *to* in *Come To*, etc.) or when they compose part of a Latin expression used adjectivally or adverbially (*De Facto*, *In Vitro*, etc.). In rare cases, a shorter preposition may be capitalized when paired with a longer preposition (*for* in *For and Against*). Note that the five-letter rule includes abbreviations (e.g., *Versus* would be capitalized, but *vs.* would not be).
4. Lowercase the common coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, and *nor*.
5. Lowercase *to* not only as a preposition (rule 3) but also as part of an infinitive (*to Run*, *to Hide*, etc.) and lowercase *as* in any grammatical function.
6. Lowercase the part of a proper name that would be lowercased in text, such as *de* or *von*.
7. Lowercase the second part of a species name, such as *fulvescens* in *Acipenser fulvescens*, even if it is the last word in a title or subtitle.[[17]](#footnote-17)

### Page Number Ranges (Condensing Inclusive Numbers)

The chart below has been copied from *CMS* 9.63. When citing page number ranges, you can use the principles in the chart. (These principles do not apply to Roman numerals.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *First number* | *Second number* | *Examples* |
| Less than 100 | Use all digits | 3–10  71–72  96–117 |
| 100 or multiples of 100 | Use all digits | 100–104  1100–1113 |
| 101 through 109,  201 through 209, etc. | Use changed part only | 101–8  808–33  1103–4 |
| 110 through 199,  210 through 299, etc. | Use two digits unless more are needed to include all changed parts | 321–28  498–532  1087–89  1496–500  11564–615  12991–3001 |

Technically, the dash that indicates inclusion (“up to and including” or “through”) is an en dash. An en dash is created on a PC by holding the Ctrl button and the minus button on the number keyboard at the same time.

For inclusive numbers with commas and inclusive years, see *CMS* 9.65 and 9.66.

1. The original version of this tips list was copyrighted by Scott Gillis (all rights reserved). This version has been revised and edited by Vicki Wiltse. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stephen Wilhoit, *A Brief Guide to Writing from Readings* (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wilhoit, *Brief Guide to Writing*, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wilhoit, *Brief Guide to Writing*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Wilhoit, *Brief Guide to Writing*, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wilhoit, *Brief Guide to Writing*, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Wilhoit, *Brief Guide to Writing*, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *In God’s Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1996), 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The original version of this section on plagiarism was copyrighted by Scott Gillis (all rights reserved). Vicki Wiltse has added the footnotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 18th ed., 8.160. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)