

How to Cite a Site

Essential Question

How do I cite different types of online sources?

Lesson Overview

Students reflect on the importance of citing all sources when they do research. They then learn how to write citations for two different types of online sources in Modern Language Association (MLA) style, and practice doing so.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- explain the value of giving proper citations.
- name the components of an MLA style citation for different types of websites.
- create MLA style citations for online articles and professional sites.

Materials and Preparation

- Copy the **Citing Online Sources Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Review the **Citing Online Sources Student Handout** and be prepared to guide students through the components of a bibliography citation for two types of online sources.
- Copy the **Cite Your Site Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Preview the four sites listed in Teach 2 together with the correct bibliography citation for each.
- Review the Modern Language Association's (MLA's) formatting and style conventions. In addition to the MLA website (www.mla.org), sites like EasyBib (<http://www.easybib.com>) and The Purdue Online Writing Lab (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>) may be of help.

Family Resources

- Send home the **Respecting Creative Work Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade 3: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

grade 4: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

grade 5: RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

NETS-S: 3b, 3c, 3d

Key Vocabulary –

source: where something comes from (for example, a piece of information)

citation: key information about a source used for a report or other research project, including its author, title, publisher, and date of publication

bibliography: a list of the sources used for a report or other research project, including books, article, videos, and websites

update: to change or add new information to something to make it more current (for example, a website)

introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

HAVE students name some books, magazines, newspapers, and websites they have used for research papers and projects. Remind them that these are called their **sources** of information.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **source**.

ASK:

Why would someone reading your paper want to know what sources you used?

Sample responses:

- To make sure what I wrote is true
- To make sure I got my information from a trustworthy source
- In case they are interested in finding out more about the subject

How do people reading your report figure out what sources you used?

People can look at the sources listed in the report's bibliography.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **bibliography** and **citation**.

DISCUSS how a bibliography is a key part of any research project. It is the part that tells others which sources you used to gather the information used in the project. It allows others to decide for themselves whether those sources are trustworthy.

GUIDE students to understand that listing a source's citation, which often includes the author, title, and the date that the source was published, not only helps people locate that source elsewhere, but it's also a sign of respect.

teach 1

Citing Online Sources (10 minutes)

EXPLAIN that bibliographies should include all the sources that students use to help them write their reports — online sources as well as printed ones like books and newspapers.

POINT OUT that different sources lend themselves to different types of citations. For example, a citation for a website would require different information, and a different format, than a citation for a book.

DISTRIBUTE the **Citing Online Sources Student Handout** to each student.

GUIDE students through the handout, which explains how to cite two types of online sources: online articles and professional sites. You may want to tell students that this citation format was created by the Modern Language Association, or MLA, an organization of college teachers in English and foreign languages. It is one of the most widely used and respected formats, so it's a good one to learn.

HIGHLIGHT the following points:

- When the source has an author, the author’s name comes first (last name, then first name). Otherwise, the title of the article or webpage comes first.
- The title of an article is placed inside quotation marks. The title of a website italicized.
- Periods follow most of the parts of a citation. However, a comma follows immediately after a source’s publisher.
- The word *Web* is included in a citation for an online source to show that the student accessed it online.
- Angle brackets (< and >) are used before and after the URL. These can be found on the comma and period keys of the keyboard (by pressing the shift key at the same time).
- Citations include two dates: the date the source was last updated or “published” and the date the student used the site for research.

ASK:

Why do you think it is important to include the date you visited the site?

Information on a website can easily be changed. Later on, the site you used as a source might contain different information than it did on the day you visited.

Why do you think the professional site does not list an author’s name?

The information was created by the staff of the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, rather than an individual author. Sometimes professional sites list individual authors, but often they don’t.

POINT OUT that it’s a smart idea for students to compile a bibliography as they do their research. It’s much easier than doing it all at the end. By creating a bibliography as they go, students also can easily return to their sources if they need to.

teach 2

Cite Your Site (15 minutes)

ARRANGE students into pairs, and give each pair a copy of the **Cite Your Site Student Handout**.

ASSIGN each pair of students one of the two research topics found on their handout – mammals or Mount Rainier National Park – or allow them to choose between the two.

ENCOURAGE students to use the examples on the **Citing Online Sources Student Handout** as a guide, along with the prompts on the **Cite Your Site Student Handout**. Have them visit both websites for their topic, find the required information, and then write a citation for each website. Share the following tips with groups as they work on their citations:

- On professional sites, sometimes it can be difficult to figure out which is the name of the site and which is the name of the organization. Suggest that students fill in the organization first (for example, Federal Bureau of Investigation or National Parks Service), and then look for the website name. Often, the website name is part of the URL.
- Sites do not always show the date they were last revised. Students should look carefully at the bottom of the page where this information often appears.

The bibliography citations below show the complete, correct information for each source (dates the site was last revised and dates they visited the site will change). Share these with students only after they have attempted completing their own citations.

Research Topic: Mount Ranier National Park

Online news article: Doughton, Sandi. "Mt. Rainier's Melting Glaciers Create Hazard." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 31 Jan. 2010. Web. 27 Aug. 2012. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/31/nation/la-na-rainer-debris31-2010jan31>>.

Professional Site: "Mount Rainier National Park: Nature & Science." *National Park Service*. National Park Service, 13 Aug. 2012. Web. 27 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.nps.gov/mora/naturescience/index.htm>>.

Research Topic: Mammals

Online news article: Bhanoo, Sindya N. "Mammal Growth Spurt After Dinosaurs Died." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 29 Nov. 2010. Web. 27 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/science/30obmammals.html>>.

Professional Site: "What Makes a Mammal?" *San Diego Zoo Kids*. The San Diego Zoo, 2012. Web. 04 Sep. 2012. <<http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/mammals>>.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

Why include a bibliography in a report or research project?

Bibliographies tell the readers which sources you used to gather information. They allow others to decide for themselves whether those sources are trustworthy. Bibliographies also show respect to the sources' authors.

Why is it better to record your citations as you do research, rather than waiting until the report is finished?

If you wait, you may forget which sources you used. Furthermore, if you're using websites, the pages often change, so it is better to capture a record of the site at the time you retrieved the information.

What kinds of information should be included in a citation of an online source?

Author; title of page, section, or article; website title; date updated or published; dates referenced by student; and the site's URL in brackets.

How to Cite a Site

Directions

1. Choose a research topic.

Research topic: MOUNT RAINER NATIONAL PARK

Online news article: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/31/nation/la-na-rainer-debris31-2010jan31>

Professional site: <http://www.nps.gov/mora/naturescience/index.htm>

Research topic: MAMMALS

Online news article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/science/30obmammals.html>

Professional site: <http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/mammals>

2. Follow the URL to the webpage for your online news article. Create a citation in the boxes below.

Author of article	Article title
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Website title	Publisher name	Date published
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Date you visited the site	URL of the page you used
web. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



3. Follow the URL to the webpage on your professional site. Create a citation in the boxes below.

Title of page or section

Website title

Name of organization

Date site was last updated

web.

Date you visited the site

URL of the page you used

How to Cite a Site

Online Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Most online newspaper and magazine sites are connected to printed newspapers and magazines. However, there are also online-only publications.

Here's an example of a citation for an online magazine article:

Plasket, Kelli. "The Gassy Dinosaur Effect." *Time for Kids*. Time Inc., 09 May 2012. Web. 27 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.timeforkids.com/news/gassy-dinosaur-effect/38946>>.

Here's how you would create the citation:



Professional Websites

Professional sites include those created by schools, universities, governments, museums, organizations, and companies.

Here's an example of a citation for a page found on a professional site:

“Words and Voices.” *MuralFarm.org*. City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, 2013. Web. 02 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.muralfarm.org/Muralfarm/Search.aspx>>.

Here's how you would create the citation:



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1. True or false: It is important to write the date you visited a website when you cite it for a school report.

- a) True
- b) False

2. Read the following citation for an online article and then answer the question below.

Martínez, Alicia. "5 Reasons to Start Composting." *Green Living*. 12 Sep. 2009. Web. 04 Jan 2013. <<http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com>>.

Which statement is **INCORRECT**?

- a) The author is Alicia Martínez.
- b) Whoever wrote this citation visited the website on January 4, 2013.
- c) The website title is "5 Reasons to Start Composting."

3. A(n) _____ is a list of the sources used for a report or other research project.

- a) dictionary
- b) bibliography
- c) encyclopedia

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1. True or false: It is important to write the date you visited a website when you cite it for a school report.

- a) True
- b) False

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**, True. Information on websites can easily be changed. It is important to show the date you visited a website because the site might show different information at different times.

2. Read the following citation for an online article and then answer the question below.

Martínez, Alicia. "5 Reasons to Start Composting." *Green Living*. 12 Sep. 2009. Web. 04 Jan 2013. <<http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com>>.

Which statement is INCORRECT?

- a) The author is Alicia Martínez.
- b) Whoever wrote this citation visited the website on January 4, 2013.
- c) The website title is "5 Reasons to Start Composting."**

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **c**. The website title is *Green Living*, not "5 Reasons to Start Composting."

3. A(n) _____ is a list of the sources used for a report or other research project.

- a) dictionary
- b) bibliography**
- c) encyclopedia

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **b**. A bibliography helps readers decide whether the sources you used are trustworthy.