

When to Use Citations

Adapted from Chapter 6 in *Writing for Sociology* (2nd Edition)¹

We cite to give credit where credit is due. Citations let the reader know who came up with an argument, data, theory, etc. To understand when you use citations, let us distinguish between statements representing:

1. **What the author says.** The first kind of statement refers to direct quotations. When directly reproducing sentences or phrases from the text, use quotation marks and cite a page number. Borrowing key terms from the reading (e.g. “universal opulence” or “relations of production”) usually fall under #2 below (i.e. you will want to discuss how the author defines the term). However, to make it clear that you are using the author's term and not yours, put it in quotes (as above) without a page number.
2. **Your interpretation of what the author says.** When writing the second type of statement listed above, make it clear you are expressing what you believe the author is saying. For example, “For Smith, the division of labor means X, but for Marx the division of labor means Y.” In this case, specific page numbers are optional. (If you give page numbers, however, it is easier for your GSI to recognize that you are giving an interpretation of the text, and decipher where this interpretation comes from. So, you might write something like this: “Adam Smith believes the division of labor is good for society (p. XX).”) There are also longer versions of the second type of statement, where you summarize an author's whole argument. In this case, you don't confine the summary to quotation marks, but you do include a citation with page numbers referencing sections relevant to the summary.
3. **New ideas and points that you have developed.** We can assume that everything else is a statement of the third type. That is, if you are not either giving a direct quote (#1), or clearly attempting to express the idea of an author (#2), you are offering a new idea of your own (#3). For example, you might say: “As this example demonstrates, Adam Smith’s theory does not apply to contemporary society.” Here it is clear that you are offering a new interpretation and making your own argument, something that you will almost always have to do!

Important Terms:

- **Quotation.** Taking from another source the exact words of the author and using them in your own written work. These words need to begin and conclude with a quotation mark.
- **Paraphrase.** Taking short passages from a source, restating the content of the passage, reconstructing the passage phrase by phrase, and rephrasing the author's words in your own. Paraphrased material is not enclosed in quotation marks.
- **Summary.** Taking lengthy passages from a source, reformulating or outlining them in your own words, and using them in your own written work. Summarized material is not enclosed in quotation marks.

¹ Courtesy of Marcel Paret.