

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 three types of online sources.
- Copy the **Cite Your Site Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Preview the six sites listed in Teach 2 together with the correct bibliography citation for each.
- Review Modern Language Association's (MLA's) formatting conventions (www.mla.org/style).

Family Resources

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

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core: RI.3-5.1, RI.3-5.4, RI.3-5.10, RF.3-5.4a, W.3-5.4, W.3-5.10, SL.3-5.1a-d, SL.3.3, SL.3-5.6, L.3-5.3a, L.3-5.6

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

Key Vocabulary –

source: a reference work or firsthand document

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 revise a website to include the most recent information

introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

HAVE students to 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 of the sources that students use to help them write their report — 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 (www.mla.org/ style). 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 the 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 (pressing the shift key at the same time).
- All the citations have 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 there is no author’s name on the professional site ?

The information was created by the staff of the Smithsonian Institution, rather than an individual author. Sometimes professional sites list individual authors, but often they don’t.

Why do you think the date on the encyclopedia entry spans several years?

It takes a long time to create an encyclopedia! Parts of this one were published over several years.

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 them 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, then you may forget which sources you used. Furthermore, if using websites, the pages often change, so it is better to capture a record of the site at the time you have 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

Extension Activity

Have students collaborate to create a bibliography on a theme of their choice. They should search for informational and interesting sources, then organize the proper citations into a bibliography to distribute to the class. As an option, they can use EasyBib (www.easybib.com) to generate a bibliography online. Remind

students that entries in a bibliography are listed in alphabetical order according to the first word in each entry. Sometimes this is the author's last name and sometimes it is the first word in a title.

At-Home Activity

Ask students to compile a list of family members' favorite childhood books. Using the books' information (which can be obtained from booksellers' sites if students don't have the physical books), ask them to create a fictitious bibliography of the publications. They can focus on the MLA style of citations for non-online sources by reviewing the guidelines provided on the Science Buddies website (www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_mla_format_examples.shtml).

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Online Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Most of these sites are connected to printed newspapers and magazines. However, there are more and more magazines that are only published online. Here’s a bibliography citation for a magazine article that you found online:

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:

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Author of article (last name, then first name, followed by a period) | Article title (followed by a period, all inside quotation marks) | Website, newspaper, or magazine title (italicized, followed by a period) | Publisher | Date article was published (followed by a period) |
| Plasket, Kelli. | “The Gassy Dinosaur Effect.” | <i>Time for Kids</i> . | Time Inc., | 09 May 2012. |
| Web. | 27 Aug. 2012. | < http://www.timeforkids.com/news/gassy-dinosaur-effect/38946 >. | | |
| “Web” shows that you found it online | Date you accessed the article online (followed by a period) | URL of the specific page you used (in angle brackets, followed by a period) | | |

Professional Websites

Professional sites include those put on the Web by schools, universities, governments, museums, organizations, and companies. Here’s a bibliography citation for a professional site:

NASA Education. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 22 Aug. 2012. Web. 08 Sep. 2012. <<http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/index.html>>.

Here’s how you would create the citation:

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Website title (in italics, followed by a period) | Name of organization sponsoring the site (followed by a comma) | Date the site was last revised (followed by a period) |
| <i>NASA Education</i> . | National Aeronautics and Space Administration, | 22 Aug. 2012 |
| Web. | 08 Sep. 2012. | < http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/index.html >. |
| “Web” shows that you found it online | Date you visited the site (followed by a period) | URL of the specific page you used (in angle brackets, followed by a period) |

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Directions

1. Choose a research topic

Research topic: MOUNT RAINIER 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 style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | |
| Website title | Publisher | Date published |
| <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> |
| Date accessed | URL of the specific page you used | |
| <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/> | <input style="width: 100%;" 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 revised

Date you visited the site

URL of the specific page you used

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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. December 2010. 22 May 2011 <<http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com>>.

Which statement is INCORRECT?

- a) The author is Alicia Martínez.
- b) Whoever wrote this citation visited the website on May 22, 2011.
- 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. December 2010. 22 May 2011 <<http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com>>.

Which statement is INCORRECT?

- a) The author is Alicia Martínez
- b) Whoever wrote this citation visited the website on May 22, 2011
- 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.