



## wasatch range writing project by Mike Handy

### **Lesson Title: Citing Electronic Sources**

**Burning Question:** Can students understand the necessity of giving credit to the correct author, even if the information they obtained was from an electronic source?

**Objectives:** Students will be able to correctly cite electronic sources according to MLA format.

**Context:** In this lesson students practice creating works cited entries for common electronic sources: web documents, video, online periodicals, and social media. They do so by rigorously repeating the practice of creating the citations on different source texts. Ideally they will practice it enough that when they are asked to cite sources independently they will have the skills to do it almost without thinking. Can be done in any content area class at any time of year. Useful when discussing citing sources.

### **Materials:**

- MLA Handbook
- Computer access for each student (likely time in the computer lab)
- An LCD projector for the teacher station is helpful

**Time Span:** Approximately 20 minutes per source type—80 minutes total if all four types of sources are used.

### **Procedures:**

1. Introduce the idea of documenting sources, including why it is done. (To help readers of your research verify your sources or learn more, to avoid plagiarism, etc.)
2. If the students have not already learned this concept, explain the difference between print and electronic sources.
3. Identify the four most common types of electronic sources: web documents, online periodicals, video, and social media. Discuss the strengths and limitations of each as a source of information. Discuss the meaning of the different types of web domains (.com, .gov, .edu, .net, .org, .mil, etc.).
4. Explain to students the MLA policy on use of URLs: URLs only need to be included if it is assumed that the source cannot be easily found by a competent user.
5. Discuss how electronic sources can function as multiple source types, especially online reproductions of print materials. Explain that in those cases, the first part of the citation will mimic the work's original form, and the latter part of the citation will resemble a web citation.
6. Teach the students how to find dates of online publication and publishing organizations. Remind them to include the date of access in all citations of electronic sources.

7. Teach explicitly how to cite a web document: author's name (inverted), title of article or document, title of host web site, date of online publication, publisher, and date of access. An example: Britt, Ryan. "J. J. Abrams, Star Wars, and the Homogenization of Geek Pop." *Tor.com*. Tom Doherty and Associates, 29 Jan 2013. Web. 9 Feb 2013.
8. Complete a few exercises of guided practice, preparing sources using examples from the students.
9. Invite the students to create citations of several web documents.
10. Repeat steps 7-9 for the other source types. See special instructions for each below.
11. For online periodicals, access Pioneer Online Library and have the students use its databases, such as EBSCO, SIRS, and the Utah newspaper archives to locate appropriate articles. You will need the following information: author's name (inverted), title of article, title of magazine, date, page numbers, database, and date of access. Citations will look like this: McKenna, Phil. "The Cyber-Bullies Are Always with You . . ." *New Scientist*. 21 Jul 2007: 26-27. SIRS Issues Researcher. Web. 26 Jan. 2013.
12. For video, it would be wise to use an educational video collection such as Safari Montage or WatchKnowLearn if your school has access to them, rather than YouTube. Citations will look like this: Khan, Sal, prod. "Multiplying Fractions." *WatchKnowLearn*. Web. 9 February 2013.
13. For social media, it would be wise to use blogs approved by your school rather than Facebook or Twitter. You can teach students how to cite those resources, but for the lesson itself it would be safer to avoid those popular social media sites. Citations will look like this: Reich, Henry (MinutePhysics). "In case you haven't seen it yet, what happens when an immovable object meets an unstoppable force?" 26 Jan. 2013. 10:28 a. m. Tweet. Details about various types of social media are available at [Purdue OWL](#).
14. Have the students check their work using the Son of Citation Machine, [www.citationmachine.net](http://www.citationmachine.net).

#### Assessment:

Evaluate the students' performance on the works cited entries. Remediate and re-teach as necessary.

**Extensions:** One way to keep the concept fresh in the students' minds is to keep, throughout the year, a running works cited list of everything you read online as a class.

**Rationale:** This lesson is designed to be an introduction to the skills of documenting sources. It would be best used early in the school year, prior to students' being required to use formal documentation in research writing. It can be taught either as a whole or in discrete sections.

CCSS: Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g., *MLA Handbook*, Turabian's *Manual for Writers*) appropriate for the discipline and writing type. (L 9-10.3a)

#### Resources:

MLA Website

<http://www.mla.org/style>

The MLA website provides some resources for searching questions about their citation style. It also provides a very convenient place to buy the books, which are an important resource to have in the classroom if you are using the documentation style.

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

One of the best online resources for writing, especially for research writing.

It includes a searchable database for multiple styles of documentation (MLA, APA, Chicago), lessons and tips on a host of writing modes, genres, and problems, and an opportunity to email brief writing questions to writing lab tutors.

Son of Citation Machine

<http://citationmachine.net/index2.php>

The Son of Citation Machine is an online tool to build citations, both in-text and bibliographic, in four different citation styles: MLA, APA, Chicago, and Turabian. The site requires students to enter the information that is needed for the particular type of source under consideration and organizes the information to the correct format. One warning: the site does not fix spelling or capitalization errors introduced by the student.

Creating Citations in Microsoft Word

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/create-a-bibliography-HA010368774.aspx>

Microsoft Word has tools available to create citations. The link above shows steps to use these tools. One common mistake students make is to neglect to select the style, and they end up creating APA citations instead of MLA. Word will create citations in the following styles: APA (5th and 6th editions), Chicago, GB7714, GOST (Name Sort and Title Sort), Harvard, IEEE, ISO 690, MLA (6th and 7th editions), SISTO 2, and Turabian.