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Strategies for Studying, Learning, and Researching
By David Alderoty © 2014

Chapter 10) Unconventional versus Conventional Styles for Citations and Page Layout, with Related Concepts
2128 words

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The Requirement for Citing Sources

The Requirement and Purpose for Citing Sources

When you use **quotes**, **paraphrases**, or the **original ideas, or data, of an author**, in your writing, you are required to cite the source. There are four primary reasons for citing sources, which are as follows:

1) Because it is required, by ethical and academic standards, which if violated, results in accusations of plagiarism

2) To give credit to the authors who created the sources you are

using.

3) To differentiate your thoughts and ideas, from the information you obtain from your sources

4) To reinforced the validity or authority of the material in your paper. That is your sources can support your own comments, interpretations, and ideas.

Unconventional Versus Conventional Writing Styles

The Most Common Writing and Citation Styles

Three of the most common writing and citation styles are MLA (Modern Language Association), APA (American Psychological Association), and CMS (Chicago Manual of Style).

The three styles are used in colleges and universities, but each has its own primary focus. MLA is primarily focused on high school and college students, and the research papers they write. APA is primarily focused on the behavioral sciences, for graduate school and PhD theses, and for professional submissions to peer-reviewed journals. CMS is primarily focused on professional writers and editors, especially for academic books and articles.

The most complex, and the most versatile of the three styles is CMS. APA is less versatile, but simpler. However, the simplest is MLA. The three styles have approximately similar requirements for page numbering, margins, font size, and double spacing.

The MLA, APA, and CMS styles appear to be designed to facilitate the editing and evaluation of hard copy. This is

suggested by the requirement for double spacing, which is essential for editing hard copy. Documents in the electronic format do not require double spacing because text can be moved to enter comments, editing notes and assessment remarks.

The citation styles of MLA, APA, and CMS also suggest a focus on hard copy, because they are not based on hyperlinks. Documents in the electronic format can have citation styles based on hyperlinks. This can involve clicking on links to access reference sections, or to access the original source directly.

Conventional Writing and Citation Styles

The conventional writing styles, such as MLA, APA, and CMS. They have a predefined set of rules for writing, and for citations. This generally includes rules for page layout, margins, line spacing, headings, subheadings, font size, paragraph structure, wording, and voice. These rules appear to be based on tradition, but they may have some practical utility, and they are often required by professes and publishers.

However, the application of rules of this nature can interfere with creativity, and can sometimes result in documents that are difficult to comprehend. A predefined set of rules, does not take into account the details of a specific writing task. This can make it difficult to describe complex phenomena, or unusual personal experiences, in a way that will be understandable to the readers. In general, rules can also interfere with communication in written

language, especially when the writer is creating material for a diverse audience.

It is important to keep in mind, that rules that are considered correct with one writing style might be considered incorrect with another style. For example, the active voice is often considered the only proper way of writing, especially in elementary English classes. However, styles of scientific and academic writing, minimize the use of the active voice, or prohibited entirely. All of this raises the question, what is the ideal set of rules, for writing.

The Ideal Writing Style, and Set of Rules for Writing

There is **no** single writing style, or set of rules, that is ideal for all writing tasks. However, you may be able to determine what the ideal is for a specific writing task, by considering the following eight factors.

1) The potential reader(s) of the document: For example, are the potential readers, <u>professes</u>, <u>publishers</u>, <u>clients</u>, <u>students</u>, <u>general consumers</u>, <u>technicians</u>, <u>scientists</u>, or <u>experts in a specific field</u>.

2) The purpose of the writing task, such as an essay for an English class, a term paper for a history class, a magazine article, a scientific paper for a peer-reviewed journal, an email to a friend, a business letter to obtain employment.

3) The subject that will be presented in the document: For example, is the subject science, history, or set of instructions on

how to use software, a computer, or some other technology.

4) The type of writing, such as writing comprised of <u>explanations</u>, <u>descriptions</u>, <u>instructions</u>, <u>fiction</u>, or <u>nonfiction</u>. Writing often contains two or more of the above.

5) The complexity of the material: For example, is the material <u>intricate or simple</u>, <u>technical or non-technical</u>, does it involve concepts or theories that may not be familiar to your readers.

6) The amount of material in the document, such as a short article, a pamphlet, or a book

7) The format of the document, such as an HTML webpage, PDF, email, **hard copy** letter, article, or book

8) The writer's <u>knowledge</u> and <u>point of view</u>, about the subject that he or she is writing about: This can influence or determine the role the writer takes. <u>For example, a writer that has little knowledge about a subject might act as a reporter, compiling information from sources.</u> <u>A writer that is knowledgeable about a subject might take the role of a teacher.</u> The writer might take the role of a <u>critic</u>, <u>supporter</u>, an <u>impartial evaluator</u>, or a <u>non-judgmental narrator</u>. Sometimes a writing task can involve two or more of the above.

The Entire Document Conveys Ideas

The important idea to understand is the entire document, including its layout, is created to communicate specific ideas and information in a specific way. Thus, the headings, subheadings, line spacing, font type and size, are part of the communication

process that takes place with written language. When rules inhibit any of the above, it inhibits communication, and creativity.

However, writing without any predefined set of rules, requires more knowledge and skills to create a good document. It may also require trial and error, experimentation, and testing the results with the reader(s) to create the ideal document.

From A Practical Perspective, What Is The Best Writing Style?

From a practical point of view, the best writing style is the style that your professor, publisher, or boss demands. This is usually the audience, which you must please, to succeed. If you are dealing with an individual interested in creativity, and good communication, they will probably provide the freedom to create a style that is optimized for the specific writing task.

Unconventional Citation Styles

Unconventional Methods for Citing Sources

There are four unconventional methods for citing sources presented in this subsection. Some instructors and publishers might consider these methods unacceptable, because of their unusual nature. However, the methods presented below have some significant advantages over the conventional citation styles.

Note, the books, and the authors used in the examples, in this chapter, do not exist. I created them to illustrate citation

styles. These examples are in brown text.

Method 1) Cite the Source Directly in the Body of the Text

This method is sometimes used in published material. It involves stating the title of the source, the name of the author, and page number, if relevant, directly in the text. In some cases, you may want to put part or all of the citation in parentheses. See the following example.

Jane Doe, <u>The Book of Study Techniques,</u> states on page 22 that cramming, and missing sleep, is counterproductive in the long-run.

Another example, using parentheses is as follows:

Jane Doe, <u>The Book of Study Techniques</u>, (second edition 2007, Doe Publishing Company.) explained on page 22, that cramming and missing sleep is counterproductive in the long-run.

Method-2) Use Footnotes, for Citations

(Actually, footnotes are used by CMS style, but in a way that is slightly different from the method described here.) You can use footnotes for citations, which should contain all the information the reader needs to access the source. See the following example.

The general theory of health states that moderation in all aspects of life, reduces illness, and improves general well-being [1].

The footnote is usually placed in the lower margin, but you can

place them at the end of a paragraph, such as the following.
_____

1 Mike Doe, <u>The Book of Health</u>, second edition, 2007, page 28, Doe Publishing Company.

Method-3) Cite Some of the Source in the Body of the Text, And Part of, or All of, the citation in a Footnote

This technique is a combination of the two methods presented above. This involves stating some of the citation directly in your text, and some or all of the citation is presented in a footnote, such as the following example.

Mike Doe, <u>The Book of Health,</u> states on page 28: "Excessive quantities of vitamin A, is unhealthy." **2**

Footnote can contain the portion of the citation that was not placed in the body of the text, such as the following:
2 Second edition, 2007, Doe Publishing Company

Alternatively, the footnote can contain the entire citation, such as the following:
2 Mike Doe, <u>The Book of Health</u>, second edition, page 28, 2007, Doe Publishing Company.

Method-4) List the Citations in a Separate Paragraph

This method involves, placing sources in one or more paragraphs, which I am calling <u>citation paragraphs</u>. You can also enter a commentary about the source(s), and other relevant information, in these paragraphs. The <u>citation paragraphs</u> can be as long as necessary, or as short as one sentence. **With this method,** a

citation paragraph can be placed just above the paragraph that utilizes a source. Alternatively, you can place the citation paragraphs, below the main paragraph that utilizes the source(s).

Variations of this method can involve, placing the citations in introductory paragraphs, or placing them in introductory subsections.

I used Method-4, described above, combined with hyperlinks, a number of times in the chapters that deal with MLA, APA, and CMS. Examining these citations and the following three examples will clarify all of the above.

EXAMPLE 1)

The primary source for the following paragraph is John Doe, The Book of Truth, second edition, page 233, Doe publishing company, 2002.

EXAMPLE 2 an introductory paragraph:

The primary sources for the following paragraphs are as follows:

John Doe, The Book of Truth, second edition, Chapter 2, Doe publishing company, 2002,

Mike Doe, The Book of Health, pages 125-135, Doe Publishing Company, 2007

EXAMPLE 3, a subheading at the beginning or at the end of the

paper:

The Sources For This Paper

The primary sources for this paper are presented below

> John Doe, <u>The Book of Truth,</u> second edition, Chapter 2, Doe publishing company, 2002,
>
> Mike Doe, <u>The Book of Health</u>, chapters 1 to 5, Doe Publishing Company, 2007
>
> Jane Doe, <u>The Book of Psychology</u>, pages 12-89, Doe Publishing Company, 2007

With examples 2 and 3, it might be necessary to provide a brief statement, or hyperlink, indicating the author and page number, in the exact section of the text, where the information from a source is used.

For Web-Based Material, Use Hyperlinks

If you are using web-based material, especially with the four unconventional methods mentioned above, you should use URLs and/or hyperlinks. I used this method in this e-book and you can access my sources and additional information by clicking on links.

In many cases, the author's name, and/or the title of the website are not available. However, this is not a problem if you are using hyperlinks, because once the user clicks on the link, all the available information on the website is displayed. A hyperlink can be created with any of the words on a website, or even with your own description. See the following examples:

This is a hyperlink created with my own description:
<u>This website consists of links to various advertisements.</u>

This is a URL of the above website: www.john-doe.com

This is a combination URL and hyperlink <u>www.john-doe.com</u>
(Incidentally, the hyperlinks and the related website are real.)

<u>The Advantages of the Unconventional Methods and Techniques Presented In This Section</u>

With the four citation methods presented above, the reader does not have to look up a source in a list at the end of a paper, to obtain it. If the material is web-based, the reader just has to click with the mouse on a link, to access the source directly. The techniques presented above were designed for convenience and efficiency. The conventional citation styles are based on tradition, and it appears they are not designed for the convenience of the reader or the writer. However, the following three chapters are focused on the conventional styles of <u>MLA</u>, <u>APA</u>, and <u>CMS</u>.

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