

Citing and Evaluating Web Sites

Citing a Web Source

If information from a Web site is to be referenced or quoted in a report, essay, or other document, a citation must be used to give credit to the original author and allow the reader to locate the cited information. A widely accepted form for citation is published by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in its publication *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Sixth Edition*.

In general, a citation for material located at a Web site should look similar to:

Author's Last Name, First Name MI. "Document Title."
Site Title and last-updated date. Access date.
Organization name. <URL>.

A citation of a personal Web site does not have many details and may look similar to:

Rawlings, Julie. Home page. 23 Dec. 2007. 15 May
2009 <[http://www.lpdatafiles.com/jrawlings/
index.htm](http://www.lpdatafiles.com/jrawlings/index.htm)>.

A citation of an article in an online magazine should include a volume number or issue number and could look similar to:

Schiffman, Paula. "Making Vinegar at Home." Vinegar
Monthly Vol. 1 May 2007. 30 Oct. 2009. <[http://
www.lpdatafiles.com/vinegarassoc/journal.
asp](http://www.lpdatafiles.com/vinegarassoc/journal.asp)>.

A citation of a posting to a discussion group could look similar to:

Cruz, Anthony. "Are Orchestras Going Downhill?"
Online posting. 10 June 2008. Oboe Discussion
Group. 23 Nov. 2009 <[http://www.lpdatafiles.
com/odg/
downhill.txt](http://www.lpdatafiles.com/odg/downhill.txt)>.

Evaluating a Web Site

Information found at a Web site, like most information, should be evaluated for accuracy. Anyone can post a Web site on the Web. There are no rules as to the accuracy or reliability of the information. This means that you must discriminate, read carefully, and check sources.

A few topics to think about and questions to answer when evaluating a source are:

- **Up-to-date.** On what date was the Web page last updated? Is the information current?
- **Bias.** Is the information incorrect or incomplete in order to give a particular or slanted view of a topic?

- **Validity.** Is the information truthful and trustworthy? What is the primary source of the information? Information posted by NASA or Yale University is more likely to be valid than information posted by a high school student who cites no sources.
- **Author.** Does the author present his or her credentials? A well established authority in the field you are researching is probably a trustworthy source.

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