**Recommendations for Teaching Citation Conventions**

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Digital technology has radically altered traditional citation conventions. Online databases, books, newspapers, and magazines, digitized archives, photographs, and art works, websites, podcasts, blogs, and social media have expanded research possibilities and required new ways to document sources. The growth of online scholarly journals has also necessitated new citation rules and formats. For example, in 2016, the MLA issued a radically revised set of guidelines that specifically addressed “documentation for the digital age” (These have since been expanded on in the Ninth edition of the handbook: <https://style.mla.org/ninth-edition-whats-new/>)

Given these evolving changes, as well as the variability of different media and publication documentation conventions, the Department of English recommends that faculty concentrate on general, universal concepts and skill-building rather than stylistic particularities.

**For example:**

* Discuss why documenting sources is important and emphasize the basic information that all styles require: author or creator’s name, the name of the publication, website, blog, etc., and publication or performance date.
* Teach students how to identify, evaluate, and research sources. What is it? Where is it? How did it get there? Is it a reliable, reputable source? Design exercises that enable students to practice these skills.
* Stress that conventions are continually in flux and that sometimes it is difficult to identify what a source is and the publication venue. Provide opportunities for students to practice source and publication identification.
* Focus on the rudiments of how to document sources and create citation lists: e.g. provide page numbers if possible; be consistent in one format; order work cited sources alphabetically by author’s last name or document title; and include basic information.
* Teach students where to find general information about citing sources. [The OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html) is one of the best, most current, and easy to use sites.