Introduction to Citations in the Dental Clinical and Academic Professions

What is a citation?
“Citation” refers to all of the information needed for a person reading your work to be able to find where you acquired your information.

What is an in-text citation?
An In-text citation is an abbreviated version of a citation, usually noted as just a superscript number or the author’s name and page number/year within the text of a work. For example:

The number highlighted in yellow is an in-text citation. ¹
The author name and page number highlighted in yellow is also an in-text citation (Liaw et al. 427).

In-text citations provide sufficient information for the reader to locate the complete citation, which is listed with all the other citations at the end of the work, often called “references” or “works cited.”

If you are not writing a paper, presentation, or poster and simply want to provide someone with the citation, you do not need the in-text citation. You just need the citation information you would provide for a references list.

What is included in a citation?
You need to provide enough information for your reader to easily find your sources.

In general, citations include the following information:

- Author and/or editor names
- Title of article or chapter
- Title of journal or book
- Volume and issue numbers (journal articles)
- Pages
- Year of publication
- Place of publication and publisher (books and book chapters)

What is a citation style?
Citation styles are established sets of rules and conventions that determine how the citations should appear, also known as what format they are in. Citation styles are usually set by organizations or journals.

How do I know which citation style to use?
Most professions have a general preferred citation style. In dentistry this is The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA), which is based on The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). If you are working on a project for a class, you should ask your professor for their preferred citation style. If you are working on a journal article for submission, you should check to see what style the journal requests. Similarly, if you’re working on a poster for presentation at a conference, you should check with that conference to see what style they prefer.
Sample Journal Article Citation

Here’s a sample of what a citation may look like with all of the elements labeled.

**Author Names**


**Article Title**

Why do citations matter?

Let’s let the dental literature itself address this question. Here’s a quote from an editorial in JADA. (Full citation to follow).

There are several reasons for using citations. One of the most important uses of references is to show the pathway to a discovery that led to a specific research finding or opinion. References also should be used to validate and confirm hypotheses and statements in the narrative of the manuscript. The reference list should include works that enable a reader to find similar, as well as different, discoveries and opinions. On the whole, the number of citations and the criteria used to select citations are good reflections of scientific rigor...

What constitutes an appropriate reference list? The source of a statement or quote in a manuscript should be cited. Credit needs to be given to previous research and to researchers whose works were pertinent to the present study. Readers should be given an opportunity to find more information about a subject. Complex issues could be clarified with appropriate citations, and references should be used to provide context to ideas and opinions. In general, the reference list should not be an afterthought or an appendage, but an integral part and continuum of the rest of the article."

Why can’t I just give a link?

The LA Review of Books recently published an article addressing just this question.

If anything, the reference system provided by a good citation style has come to matter even more in the age of the internet, rather than being rendered obsolete by the seemingly infinite networking and searchability of texts and other cultural resources online. Things migrate with great fluidity these days: that article might still be associated with the journal in which it was published, but it’s very likely been found through an online journal aggregator like JSTOR, and that might make a difference to a future researcher trying to track down a source.

A book might be consulted not in print but through Google Books, and knowing that might provide information about anomalies in the source. A television episode watched through a streaming service like Netflix might have features that the originally aired version did not. And so on: publications and other cultural objects are no longer quite as fixed in format as they were, and their very malleability may heighten the importance for future scholars of knowing precisely which version today’s researcher consulted.


Are there any tools to help me make citations?

Yes! There are guides for creating citations yourself or you may install and use citation management software. For information on both, check out our Citing Information Research Guide: http://researchguides.library.tufts.edu/c.php?g=249163&p=1658912