

[MUSIC PLAYING]

MIGNON Grammar Girl here. Today's topic is how to deal with electronic citations. Now, to get started,
FOGARTY: here's a listener question.

LAURA: Hi, Grammar Girl. My name is Laura and I am a teacher a ninth grade English and a big fan of your podcast. I've use your podcast in my classroom and the quick and dirty tips definitely come in handy. My question is how do I cite your podcast and podcasts in general? Do You know of a website that keeps really up to date with how to cite things, especially citing things from the web?

Thanks a lot. I'd love to hear you do a podcast about this one. Buhbye.

MIGNON Thanks, Laura. All three of the major style players, the Modern Language Association, the
FOGARTY: American Psychological Association, and the Chicago Manual of Style, have issued guidelines on how to cite electronic sources. I'm not aware of a specific website that lists examples of how to cite podcasts from all three sources together, but you can do a search on Google for something like "Chicago cite a podcast" and find examples for each style.

Instead of telling you how to write citations, because it's kind of a visual thing, I'm putting examples in the transcript of this podcast. I'll show you on the website how to cite a podcast in an article on a website in all three of the main formats. So I guess now you could say that Grammar Girl is a good source on how to cite things.

But today I would like to talk about some other things related to citations. First, many people have asked me why it's important to include citations in the first place. Aside from the fact that many teachers or editors require you to include citations in your work, including citations is necessary to acknowledge the people whose work you've incorporated into your document. Not including citations is a quick route to plagiarism, more commonly known as taking credit for someone else's work or ideas. Including citations is mandatory when you've drawn on someone else's original work or quoted someone verbatim.

Even when citations aren't necessary to avoid plagiarism, including citations helps people who want to learn more about your topic. Citations are a great starting point for further research, and including citations adds credibility to your writing. Frankly, I include citations at the end of

most of my transcripts to head off people who disagree with my recommendations relating to points of style or topics where there are common misconceptions.

I'm completely open to disagreement and discussion, but I don't just make this stuff up. I research every topic I cover. I'm almost always sorry when I don't include references on the website, and more than once I've gone back, reconstructed my work and added them in.

So now that I've convinced you to include citations, it's time to think about the special risks of citing an electronic source like a website, podcast, or blog. First, you have to determine whether it's a credible source. And second, you have to worry about whether it will still exist tomorrow.

Determining whether a source seen as credible is subjective, but here are a few things to look for and consider. Can you tell who wrote the site? And if so, does the author seem to have any expertise in the area you're researching? The Stanford Cancer Center is likely to be a more credible source than Aunt Mary's cancer page.

Has the web site been reviewed by experts? Does it bear a seal of approval or adhere to content standards? For example, health sites that want to boost their credibility adhere to standards set by the Health On the Net Foundation.

Can you tell when the page you're looking at was written? Something written recently is generally more credible than something that hasn't been updated in years. Does the page cite other credible sources you can check? There's that point about citations adding credibility again.

Does it sound too good to be true? If it does, it probably is. Is the site selling something based on the information it's providing? If so, be wary.

Do other credible sites link to the site? You can find out who links to a site by doing a specialized search on Google. Enter "link:" in the URL into the search box. For example, you could enter "link:http://www.genetichhealth.com" to learn that sites that link to the Genetic Health website include a Japanese genome center, the Lance Armstrong Foundation, and a variety of hospitals.

Are there a lot of typos? If there are a lot of language mistakes, it can mean that there are a lot of factual mistakes too. Finally, use common sense and evaluate the arguments yourself.

It's up to you to determine whether a site's conclusions are actually supported by its statements.

So you have control when you're evaluating a site's credibility, but you have less control over the fact that pages might disappear or change their web address. If it's an important source, you should consider printing out the page or saving it on your own computer as HTML, a screenshot, or an audio or video file. If you find that a web page is gone and you haven't had a chance to save it, you can search for a copy at the Internet Archive, also known as the Wayback Machine at <http://web.archive.org>.

Despite the risks, an abundance of credible information resides on the web, and you shouldn't dismiss a source simply because it is in an electronic format. Finally, it's good style to use a consistent format for your references. You can go to the Grammar Girl section of quickanddirtytips.com to see examples of citation styles from the Modern Language Association, American Psychological Association, and the Chicago Manual of Style.

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Also this week, three lucky listeners win a copy of Bonnie Trenga's book, *The Curious Case of the Misplaced Modifier, How to Solve the Mysteries of Weak Writing*. Bonnie's my longtime copy editor, and this is a cute little grammar book that uses a solve the mystery format to make writing rules fun. The books are even signed, so if you're subscribed to our email newsletter, check your inbox to see if you've won. For people who didn't win and are interested, I'll put a link to the book on the Grammar Girl website.

Questions and comments for me go to feedback@quickanddirtytips.com or the voicemail line at 206-338-GIRL. Also this week, the Get-It-Done Guy has a great episode about how to subversively lead a meeting even if you're not in charge, so check it out at quickanddirtytips.com. That's all. Thanks for listening.