

# In Context Toolbox – How to Cite

The **In Context Toolbox** tip sheets are designed to help middle school and high school researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain how to **cite sources** used in your report.

Need more help with your report? Visit Help in any In Context resources for more **In Context Toolbox Tip Sheets!**

What kind of information goes into a report? Lots of kinds: facts, ideas, conclusions, quotes, etc. Where does the information come from? Sometimes it comes straight from you. For example, say you do a science experiment, and you write a report about it. The source of the information in your report is the results of your experiment. Since you are the person who did the experiment, the source is you. You don't need to give credit to anyone else.

## Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

But often, the information comes from something you have read. Whenever you read something and use it in a report, you have to give credit to the person who wrote the information you're using. This is called "citing the source."

There are several ways to cite a source. Your teacher may have special rules for citing sources. If so, you should follow them. The point behind these rules is simple. When citing a source, always tell the reader at least two things:

- the name of the person who wrote the source
- the title of the source

## An Example

Let's say you're writing a report on tree frogs. You read Sara Murray-Plumer's *U.S. Kids* article "Fitting In" as part of your research. In the article, you learn that some tree frogs hide by changing their skin color and they use this camouflage ability to hunt for insects. You decide to use this information in your report so you must cite the source.

You can do this in several ways. You could mention the author in your report itself. For example, you might write, "According to Sara Murray-Plumer, some tree frogs change their skin color to help them find food." Another way is to put a bibliography at the end of your report. A bibliography is just a list of the sources you used to find the information that goes into your report. Below is an example:

## Bibliography

Murray-Plumer, Sara. "Fitting In." *U.S. Kids*, June 1997, pages 19-23.

Poo, Sinlan, and David P. Bickford. "Exceptional Parents: A Frog Species That Defies the Rule." *Natural History* May 2014: 12. Science in Context. Web. 17 Mar. 2015.

Wehner, Karey. *Tree Frogs*, 1996.

Wilsdon, Christina. "Rrrribbit! Tree Frogs." *National Geographic World*, October 1994, pages 23-28.

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This bibliography lists four sources: three magazine articles and one book; note that one of the magazine articles comes from *Science In Context*, an online library database.

Each citation has a certain form. They all start with the author's name, last name first. Then comes the title of the article or book. If it's an article, the title appears in quote ("" ) marks. If it's a book, the title is either written in *italic* style or is underlined. When the source is a magazine, the magazine's title comes next. Just as with book titles, the magazine title is either written in *italics* or is underlined. Next comes the publication date. If the source is a book, that's all you need to write. If your source is a magazine, newspaper, or encyclopedia, you should end with the page numbers for your article. If your sources comes from an online resources you may also need to include the database name, URL, and date of access.

There are several types of citation styles out there with their own rules; they're referred to as style guides. A few of the most popular styles are MLA, APA, and Chicago. Your teacher may require that you use one of those styles and their rules but they may also prefer a different citation form. Always follow your teacher's rules **for the best outcome on your report!**

## Something to keep in mind about library databases...

Library databases are accessed via the web and may look like websites and are often made up of encyclopedias, books, magazines, primary sources, and other types of sources. These types of sources require their own kind of citation. Gale's In Context resources offer a Citation Tool that will create your citation for you – what a great shortcut!

**Need more help? Ask your librarian!**