

DOCUMENTING SOURCES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Why is it important to cite your sources?

Just like in academia, you must cite your sources in business. But businesspeople are mostly concerned with the strength of your logos and ethos.

- **Logos:** Citations allow readers to locate and consult your sources. This option allows your readers to gain additional insights or information, which make your argument more compelling.
- **Ethos:** Citations reinforce your credibility by demonstrating the validity of your sources and evidence. For example, if you simply write “Studies have shown...” without citing any specific studies, why should the reader trust your argument?

How do I cite my sources?

When citing sources in business, you must consider your communication’s level of formality and your company/industry guidelines. For less formal writing, a hyperlink to your source is generally sufficient. This can be included directly in the text of your document. For example:

“Yet, a study by Morgan Stanley disproves this misconception. Companies that adhere to environmentally friendly practices show better operational performance, which translates to a [positive effect on stock price performance](#).”

For formal writing (e.g. a business forecast to external clients), you should include formal citations to sources such as government agencies and trade publications.

We don't prescribe a particular citation style at the Wharton School. What’s most important is that you (1) cite language and ideas that aren’t your own and (2) make the source material easy to find for your reader. Beyond that, you should simply pick a style and stick with it for consistency’s sake.

Do I need to cite sources for speeches?

Yes. When substantiating your logos in oral presentations you must reference your source. Remember that citations in business are about logos and ethos. If you were the audience, which statement would you find more convincing?

- “Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to choose an eco-friendly brand.”
- “A 2020 report from McKinsey shows that consumers are 20% more likely to choose an eco-friendly brand.”

Additional Resources

If you have any doubt about whether or not you need to use citations, refer to the following guide for avoiding plagiarism: [The Purdue Online Writing Lab's Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism](#).

You can also use tools like those listed on the [Citation Management Tools](#) guide to format your citations.

If you are only dealing with a small group of references, you may find one-off resources like [EasyBib](#) useful.

The Wharton Undergraduate Communication Program helps students develop fundamental business communication skills that are critical to long-term success.