Being digital

Referencing websites

1. Introduction

When you're writing an assignment, or any other written work which will be seen by others, you are expected to acknowledge the sources you've used.

Using a **referencing style** will help you to present this information in a format that anyone reading your work will recognise and understand.

This activity will help you to understand the basics of referencing websites. There are a number of referencing styles, which may differ slightly, so be sure to find out which one you should be using. You will normally find this information in your study guide. Your tutor will also be able to advise you, if you're unsure.

This activity forms part of a set that covers referencing. If you haven't already done so, you may benefit from completing the **Introduction to referencing** activity before starting this one.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, you should be able to:

- reference a website within your writing
- create a full reference for a reference list, that presents the correct book information in the right format.

2. Citing 'in-text'

When you refer to, or quote, someone else's work within the content of your own written work, you must provide some information on the source. This is called an **'in-text citation'**.

An in-text citation isn't a full reference. You are only required to provide enough detail to direct people to the full details in the reference list.

The basic information you need for an in-text citation is:

- the name of the website author, or the name of the company, institution or organisation who produced the website
- the year the website was created or last updated, if a date is available.

The way you word your sentence will determine where your in-text citation should be placed, and the format you should use. Look carefully through the examples in the next section.

3. Citing a website 'in-text'

The seven case studies below provide some examples of where to include the citations within your written work, and how to format them.

You are required to provide the year the website was published or last updated. This isn't always obvious, so we've provided some hints and tips in the **Finding the year** in Section 5, as well as some advice on what to do if you can't find a date.

In each case, full details must be provided in your reference list.

[Note: due to the amount of text if written out in full, this has been produced in a table instead to help with readability]

Case	Citing query	Example 1	Example 2
Case 1	**Citing a website with no stated author(s)** *There may be times when a website does not have any stated authors. It may have been published under the name of the institution or organisation. Use this in place of the author(s).*	Some examples (BBC, 2013) have been found to support this claim.	Examples provided by BBC News (2013) support this claim.
Case 2	**Citing a website by one author**	Some challenges to using mobile learning (Gottfredson, 2013) have been highlighted.	Gottfredson (2013) lists a number of challenges.
Case 3	**Citing a website by two authors**	One review (Maylard and Junor, 2011) outlines a number of approaches.	Gottfredson (2013) lists a number of challenges.

Case	Citing query	Example 1	Example 2
Case 4	**Citing a website by three or more authors** *To reference a website written by three or more authors, you only need to list the first author, followed by **et al.**, which means 'and others'.*	Further evidence (Stone et al., 2013) supports this claim.	Evidence provided by Stone et al. (2013) supports this claim.
Case 5	**Citing a quote within a sentence** *When including a direct quote within a sentence you have written, you should include the **publication date** (or last update) in brackets, either in the lead-in to the quote, or at the end of the sentence*	The BBC (2013) reported that, when it was bought in the 1950s, 'it was thought to have been drawn in the style of the Old Master'.	The BBC reported that, when it was bought in the 1950s, 'it was thought to have been drawn in the style of the Old Master' (2013).
Case 6	**Citing before a blockquote** *If you mention the author's name (or institution/organisation) before a blockquote, put the year the website was published (or last updated) in brackets directly after the name.*	BBC News (2013) explains that the sketch was sent for conservation, which led to its value being realised: Experts in Old Masters drawings subsequently verified its authenticity for the university, and Antiques Roadshow contributor Adam Schoon valued it at £75,000.	
Case 7	**Citing after a blockquote** *If you include a blockquote, without mentioning the author's name (or institution/organisation) within the sentence before, put the name of the author (or institution/organisation) and the year the website was published (or last updated) in brackets on a new line.*	The examination revealed an interesting find: When removed from its frame it was found to have the mark of Jonathan Richardson, a noted collector of Rubens' work in the 18th Century. (BBC News, 2013)	

4. Full reference

For every 'in-text citation' you have included within your assignment or written work, there should be a detailed reference in your **reference list**.

The key pieces of information you need to include for a website are:

- the name of the author, institution or organisation
- the year the website was published, or last updated
- the full title of the website
- the online details, and the date you last accessed the website.

The step-by-step guide below will take you through the order and format you need to use to present this information in a reference list.

The example will build with each step. The relevant addition for each step appears in bold for clarity. There are four steps.

Step 1: Start with the name of the author, institution or organisation.
Example:
BBC News

Step 2: Add the year the website was published, or last updated, in brackets.
Example continues:
BBC News **(2013)**

Step 3: Add the full title of the website, in italics. Follow with a comma.
Example continues:
BBC News (2013) *University of Reading sketch is by Rubens,*

Step 4: Indicate the source is online, add a full stop and then the URL. Add the date you accessed the article in brackets. Finish with a full stop.
Example continues:
BBC News (2013) *University of Reading sketch is by Rubens,* **[Online]. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-22692050 (Accessed 30 May 2013).**

5. Finding the year

When you cite a website, you're required to provide the year that the site was either published or last updated. You will need to look carefully at the page to see if a date is provided. If the date isn't obvious, these tips will help you.

No dates available
There will be instances where the date is not provided. If this is the case, replace the year with **n.d.** to indicate that no date is available. This stands for 'no date'.
Example
(Open University Library Services, **n.d.**)

Old content
If the date you find suggests that the content is old, you may want to question whether the information on the site is still valid. Ask yourself whether you should be using it.

6. Quiz

Have a go at this quiz, to test your understanding of how to reference websites, both as in-text citations and within a reference list. There are three questions.

Question 1 of 3
The following options show three in-text citations. Which one is written correctly?
a) The report provided details of a scandal which broke out at the 1913 Paris premiere of The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky.

b) The report provided details of a scandal which broke out at the 1913 Paris premiere of The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky (BBC News Magazine, 2013).

c) The report provided details of a scandal which broke out at the 1913 Paris premiere of The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky (2013).

Question 2 of 3
The following options show three formats for referencing a website. Choose the option that shows the right information, in the right order.
a) Author/Organisation (Year of publication / last update) Full title of website, in italics [Online]. Available at and URL of website.

b) Author/Organisation (Year of publication / last update) Full title of website, in italics [Online]. Available at and URL of website (Accessed and the date you last accessed the website).

c) Author/Organisation Full title of website, in italics [Online]. Available at and URL of website (Accessed and the date you accessed the website).

Question 3 of 3
How would you indicate that your source is online?
a) [Website]

b) Online

c) [Online]

d)

(You will find the answers to these questions in **Appendix 1** on page 6.)

7. Summary

The following framework provides information on the order and format of full references for websites. You can use this as a quick reference.
Name of author or organisation (Year the website was published, last updated) Full title of the website [Online] Available at URL (Date you accessed the website).
There are a number of different referencing styles. Your university or institution will provide you with details of which one you should be using, along with the relevant guidelines for that style. If you are unsure, you will find the information in your study guide, or you could ask your tutor.

Appendix 1. Quiz answers and feedback

The answers to the exercise are detailed below.

Question 1
The correct in-text citation is:
b) The report provided details of a scandal which broke out at the 1913 Paris premiere of The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky (BBC News Magazine, 2013).
This is correct because it includes the organisation and the date in brackets. In this example, this information is at the end of the sentence. You could choose to include it at the beginning of the sentence instead.

Question 2
The correct format to use when referencing a book is:
b) Author/Organisation (Year of publication / last update) Full title of website, in italics [Online]. Available at and URL of website (Accessed and the date you last accessed the website).
This is correct because it includes all the relevant details in the correct order.

Question 3
The correct way to indicate that your source is online is:
c) [Online].

This is correct because it provides the right terminology within square brackets.