

Helping Students Navigate Academic Citations

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” --Zora Neale Hurston

Often, we find that students are meeting our field’s citation style for the first time. These two tools can make that experience less frustrating.

The *KnightCite* Citation Service

Maintained by the Hekman Library of Calvin College, this is one of the best free citation tools on the web. (URL for *KnightCite*: <https://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>?)

- The service generates citations in the three major styles--MLA, APA, and Chicago
- It will create citations in many formats: book, book chapter, journal article, multimedia, and more
- Anyone can set up an account and save their citations
 - Users can set up folders for individual projects
 - Citations can be placed in alphabetical order
 - Citations can be exported in *Word* or Rich Text Format

KnightCite is a great little tool, but no magic wand. For example, students may need more detail on how a particular style handles capitalization, or whether to include the page numbers referenced in a source, or whether to use a full date or just the year. When students are beginners, it can be useful to treat *KnightCite* as a teaching tool. Here’s one way that might look:

- Early in the project, ask students to identify several sources and use *KnightCite* to generate a citation list. (This has the additional advantage of getting students started a little earlier.)
- Decide on three or four aspects of the citation format to address.
- In class, have students work in small groups to examine specific aspects of their citations, occasionally overriding what *KnightCite* supplied. The Purdue *OWL* is a great tool for this.

The *OWL* or *Online Writing Lab*

Maintained by Purdue University, the *OWL* offers comprehensive information on APA and MLA styles. (URL for the *OWL*: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)

- This service provides detailed information on virtually any aspect of two important academic formats but can be a bit overwhelming for first-time users
- It is a reference tool, not a citation generator
- If students will be checking *KnightCite* citations against the *OWL*, direct them to the appropriate buttons within that tool’s APA or MLA Formatting and Style Guides
- Beyond the impressive reference material, the service also contains sample papers and tutorials.

--Leslie Todd (Mabee Library)