

# Writing your Research Paper – tips and tools to get it right – MLA style

Northwest Technical College Library

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# Tips and Tools

Ask	Always ask your instructor what is expected. They have the last say in what content is absolutely required. Use this as a guide and reference.
Use	Use the tools in Microsoft Word that you are comfortable with.
Check	Double check copied citations, any citation engine includes errors. Know what is a correct citation.
Mind	Mind your commas and periods. It matters where there is a comma, period, parenthesis, italics, colon and any punctuation in a citation. Some instructors want precision.
Standardize	The more consistent you make your formatting, the more it is acceptable. When in doubt, standardize.
Avoid plagiarism	It can be better to err on the side of too many citations rather than plagiarizing another author's works.
Write to your theme	When writing, keep in mind that the best works circle back to emphasize the important findings – your findings – what <u>you</u> have learned from the research.

# Where to start

## Find related terminology – create an outline!

- Pick your topic and do some background research around terminology related to your topic. This background research can be done on the open internet, through Wikipedia, or other sites. What you want to find are terms that relate to your topic – this helps you create an outline or something that lays out a plan for what you will research.
- Don't worry if your first plan for a topic changes – let your research guide you to a subject that
  - Interests you
  - Provides lots of information for you to draw from
  - Best meets the requirements of the assignment

Tip: Don't use Wikipedia as a source for your research – but it's great as a way to find terminology for your background research!

Now that you  
have an IDEA

- Begin with the Library catalog: It provides the best trusted information for your report!!!
  - Go to the ntcmn.edu website
  - Under Student Life, select Library
  - Click on “Click here to search the NTC Library Catalog”

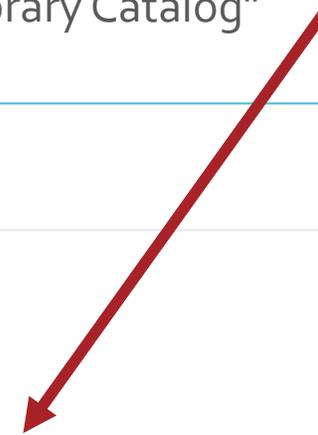
## Library

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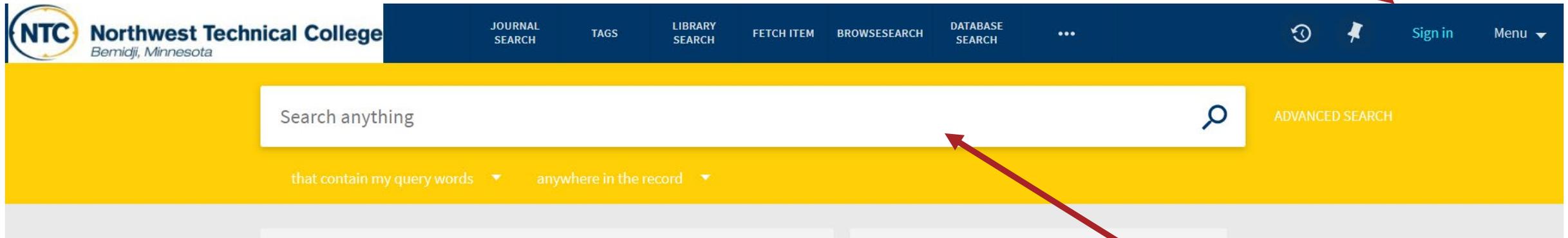
### Database Resources

**[Click Here to Search the NTC Library Catalog](#)**

The NTC Library features many online databases for you to access for your research needs.



First sign in with your Star ID if you haven't already. The catalog will let you into the databases if you are signed in.



Using terms from your preliminary search, enter them one by one in the search bar above.

- Try specific terms that narrow your search but also broad ones that provide greater background on your topic.
- Facets on the left side of the results page offer ways to narrow down your search.
  - Look for more recently published articles from peer-reviewed journals (hint: there are facets for both)
  - Be careful not to select articles too far off your topic – many professional research articles, at least the kind you want to use, provide abstracts or a brief synopsis of what the research is, and results found.

Climate Change in Minnesota



Northwest Technical College



ADVANCED SEARCH

that contain my query words

anywhere in the record

### Active filters

Peer-reviewed Journals X

Reset filters

### Modify My Results

Expand My Results

Sort by Relevance

Availability

Available online

Open Access

Subject

Resource Type

Including "*climatic changes*". Just search *Climate Change in Minnesota*



0 selected PAGE 1 19,846 Results



Save query



Personalize



1



ARTICLE

#### Succession, climate and neighbourhood dynamics influence tree growth over time: an 87-year record of change in a Pinus resinosa-dominated forest, Minnesota, USA

Curzon, Miranda T ; D'Amato, Anthony W ; Fraver, Shawn ; Huff, Emily S ; Palik, Brian J ; Gilliam, Frank  
Journal of Vegetation Science, 2017-01, Vol.28 (1), p.82-92

“ ...? Location Natural mature *Pinus resinosa*-dominated forest in northern Minnesota, USA. Methods Using a spatially explicit data set of repeated diameter measurements recorded over an 87... ”

PEER REVIEWED

Available Online >



2



ARTICLE

#### Interaction of fire, climate and vegetation change at a large landscape scale in the Big Woods of Minnesota, USA

Umbanhowar, Charles E  
The Holocene, 2004-07, Vol.14 (5), p.661-676

“ .... To reconstruct changes in vegetation, fire and climate, sieve charcoal (120 gm), pollen, environmental magnetism and loss-on-ignition were used... ”



# Real World Research – Dig in

- To do well in your research you must study what the articles you find are about. Read the abstract and maybe the conclusion.
- Select articles that
  - 1. Provide supporting or conflicting evidence to your research – contrasting views shows you know your subject.
  - 2. Provide solid evidence for your topic – peer reviewed means that you can trust the information – you can't get that from the open internet!
- As soon as you find an article that you want to use – go back to the Library catalog to copy and paste the citation information to a Microsoft Word document:

Umbanhowar Jr, Charles E. "Interaction of Fire, Climate and Vegetation Change at a Large Landscape Scale in the Big Woods of Minnesota, USA." *Holocene*, vol. 14, no. 5, Sept. 2004, pp. 661–676. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1191/0959683604hl745rp.



ARTICLE

## Interaction of fire, climate and vegetation change at a large landscape scale in the Big Woods of Minnesota, USA

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PEER REVIEWED

Available Online >

TOP

SEND TO

VIEW ONLINE

DETAILS

TAGS

CITATIONS

Send to



EXPORT BIBTEX



EXPORT RIS



EASYBIB



ENDNOTE



REFWORKS



PRINT



CITATION



PERMALINK



EMAIL

MLA (7th edition)

APA (6th edition)

Chicago/Turabian (16th edition)

**MLA (8th edition)**

Harvard

Select citation and MLA (8<sup>th</sup> edition)

Umbanhowar, Charles E. "Interaction of Fire, Climate and Vegetation Change at a Large Landscape Scale in the Big Woods of Minnesota, USA." *The Holocene*, vol. 14, no. 5, Sage Publications, July 2004, pp. 661-76, doi:10.1191/0959683604hl745rp.

COPY CITATION TO CLIPBOARD

Remember to check citations for accuracy before including them in your work

# Use the catalog to search a specific database:



The screenshot shows the Northwest Technical College library catalog search interface. The top navigation bar is dark blue with the following items: 'JOURNAL SEARCH', 'TAGS', 'LIBRARY SEARCH', 'FETCH ITEM', 'BROWSESEARCH', 'DATABASE SEARCH', and a menu icon. The 'DATABASE SEARCH' button is highlighted in yellow. Below the navigation bar is a search bar with a yellow background. The search bar contains the text 'EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier' and a green magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, the results section shows '1 Results'. The first result is 'EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier' with a link icon, an envelope icon, a star icon, and a more options icon. Below the result title is a link 'Available Online >'.

NTC Northwest Technical College  
Bemidji, Minnesota

JOURNAL SEARCH TAGS LIBRARY SEARCH FETCH ITEM BROWSESEARCH DATABASE SEARCH ...

Database Search EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier × 🔍

1 Results

1 [EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier](#) 🔗 📧 🌟 ⋮  
🔗 Available Online >

Searching: **Academic Search Premier** | [Choose Databases](#)

Climate change in Minnesota

Search

[Search Options](#) | [Basic Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Search History](#)

### Search Options

#### Search Modes and Expanders

##### Search modes [?](#)

- Boolean/Phrase
- Find all my search terms
- Find any of my search terms
- SmartText Searching [Hint](#)

##### Apply related words

##### Also search within the full text of the articles

##### Apply equivalent subjects

#### Limit your results

##### Full Text

##### Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

##### References Available

##### Published Date

Month  Year:  — Month  Year:

Limit your search to Full Text and Scholarly Journals to obtain best results!

Climate change in Minnesota

Search

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#)

## Refine Results

### Current Search

#### Boolean/Phrase:

Climate change in Minnesota

#### Expanders

Apply equivalent subjects

### Limit To

- Full Text
- References Available
- Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

2001 Publication Date 2018

Search Results: 1 - 10 of 30

Relevance

Page Options

Share

1. Talking About **Climate Change** in Trump Country: In **Minnesota**, "Rural **Climate Dialogues**" get people across the political spectrum to discuss global warming.



Periodical

By: OSTRANDER, MADELINE. *Sierra*. Jan/Feb2018, Vol. 102 Issue 7, p1-8. 8p.

**Subjects:** CLIMATE change mitigation; COMMUNITY involvement; GLOBAL warming; COMMUNITY-based programs; BARKER, Jim

[PDF Full Text](#) (4.6MB)

2. Interaction of fire, **climate** and vegetation **change** at a large landscape scale in the Big Woods of **Minnesota, USA**.



Academic Journal

By: Umbanhowar Jr, Charles E. *Holocene*. Sep2004, Vol. 14 Issue 5, p661-676. 16p. DOI: 10.1191/0959683604hl745rp.

**Subjects:** FIRE; CLIMATOLOGY; VEGETATION & **climate**; LANDSCAPES; CHARCOAL; SEDIMENTATION & deposition; **MINNESOTA**; UNITED States; Cyclic Crude, Intermediate, and Gum and Wood Chemical Manufacturing; All other merchant wholesalers; Other basic organic chemical manufacturing

[PDF Full Text](#) (5.2MB)

# Interaction of fire, **climate** and vegetation **change** at a large landscape scale in the Big Woods of **Minnesota**, USA.

**Authors:** Umbanhowar Jr, Charles E.<sup>1</sup> [ceumb@stolaf.edu](mailto:ceumb@stolaf.edu)

**Source:** *Holocene*. Sep2004, Vol. 14 Issue 5, p661-676. 16p.

**Document Type:** Article

**Subject Terms:** \*FIRE  
\*CLIMATOLOGY  
\*VEGETATION & **climate**  
\*LANDSCAPES  
\*CHARCOAL  
\*SEDIMENTATION & deposition

**Geographic Terms:** **MINNESOTA**  
UNITED States

**Author-Supplied Keywords:** 'Little Ice Age'  
'MEDIAEVAL **CLIMATE ANOMALY**'  
BIG WOODS

You can use the citation tool within the database as provided. Notice the differences between how the database versus the catalog creates the citation. Always ask your instructor for what details are important to include in the citation.

- Google Drive
- Add to folder
- Print
- E-mail
- Save
- Cite
- Export
- Create Note
- Permalink

Below is a citation from within Ebscohost Academic Search Premier database in MLA format:

**MLA** Works Cited  
(Modern Language Assoc.) Umbanhowar Jr, Charles E. "Interaction of Fire, Climate and Vegetation Change at a Large Landscape Scale in the Big Woods of Minnesota, USA." *Holocene*, vol. 14, no. 5, Sept. 2004, pp. 661–676. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1191/0959683604hl745rp.

- Cite
- Export
- Create Note

# When to cite

- There are 4 instances when you should use citations to acknowledge the use of others' work and avoid plagiarism:
  - **Quote** – when you use the words of someone else in quotation marks. “Quoting is a way of weaving someone’s exact words into your text” (Bullock et al. 108). ← *This is an in-text citation!*
  - **Paraphrase** – one of the hardest to discern, this type includes information from another author specific to their research but in your words (Bullock et al). ← *This is an in-text citation!*
  - **Summarize** – using the main points of another’s works, especially without the details according to Bullock et al (108).  
↑ *This is an in-text citation!*
  - **Signal phrase** – If you want to make a statement that, as Bullock, Brody and Weinberg say is different than what you say and you use the author’s names, you have given a signal that requires a citation (108). ↗ *This is an in-text citation!*

Citation in MLA style: Bullock, Richard, Michal Brody, & Francine Weinberg. *The Little Seagull handbook : with exercises* (Third edition). W.W. Norton & Company, 2017.

# Where to Cite / Know your terms

Within the Text:

- **In-Text citations** are provided to show precisely what you are using that comes from another author's work.

At the end:

- **Works Cited lists** provide a full bibliographic record of in-text citations but not websites or personal communications such as if you refer to an email within your report.
- **Notes** can be used with superscript to explain concepts in the text. Use the footnote tool in Microsoft Word. Cite as normal in-text citation.

Know your terms well:

- A **bibliography, as a list of sources** is not used in APA or MLA style reports, but commonly occurs with works in history and some humanities using Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). However, Reference Lists and Works Cited include a bibliography, a formal list of titles and credits authors and publishers, of works cited in the report.

# Types of in-text citations:

Resource for easy to follow in-text citations: Bullock, Richard, Michal Brody, & Francine Weinberg. *The Little Seagull Handbook*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014. pp. 161-165. (There is a newer version of this book available).

When you quote an author in the sentence then you add the year published after the author's name, and the page number that references the part you are citing: McCullough described John Adams as having...(18).

If you refer to an author's work, such as a "biographer", add a citation of the person referenced and the page number at the end of the sentence ... (McCullough 18).

If you are referring to an organization in your paper your first reference spells out the organization name (Modern Language Association). Then subsequent citations can be listed with the abbreviation - MLA.

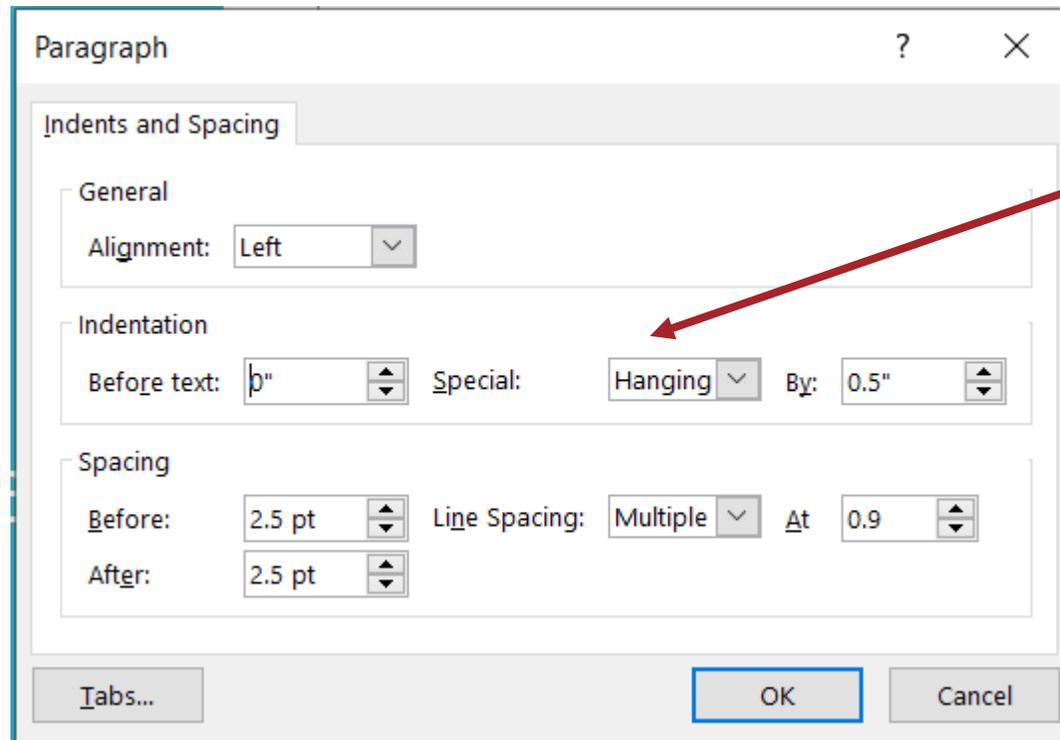
When you have summarized or paraphrased someone's work and need to provide in-text reference to that work, add the information in parenthesis before the final period in the sentence, or last sentence of a paragraph (McCullough 18).

# Full Citations

- Full Citations provide detailed information about sources.
- Full Citations include
  - Author – last name, first name. When there are 3 or more authors “et al” may be used after the first author for in-text citations but NOT in Reference Lists.
  - Title – Italicized. When an edition of a work is indicated the edition is put in parentheses (as is an editor, translator, and other title related detail if required).
  - Publisher/Publication – A publisher is not italicized but a Publication name is to be italicized. When a publication is italicized the title is NOT.
  - Year of publication – in parentheses after the last author.
  - Volume(Issue), page number or range – is given for periodical articles from journals or magazines.
  - Website URL or DOI – often a Digital Object Identifier and/or URL are listed at the end. It is not standard. Check with your instructor if this is required.

# Creating the Reference List

- The Reference List is formatted in a particular way:
  - The first line of the citation begins at the margin.
  - Next, as the words run automatically to the second line, the line is set up to be indented 5 spaces. This is set up in Microsoft Word from the toolbar in Paragraph, under Indentation, as a Hanging indentation of 5 spaces:



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# Glossary of terms

**Abstract** – a beginning section of a scholarly work, usually about 200 words, describing the content and results of research.

**Bibliographic/bibliography** – a title list of sources used in research, also refers to the source list rather than the format and structured list

**Citation** – a specific formatted list of sources and where they came from. Required for any work being published except fictional stories not based in truth.

**Conflicting evidence** – reports that appear to go against the normal or expected outcome of research.

**DOI** – digital object identifier, used in databases which host numerous professional journal articles – identifies the specific article using alpha-numeric unique numbering.

**et al.** – is Latin for “and others”.

**Facets** – variable ways of narrowing down information by looking at different specific aspects of the information that are desired in the search, such as dates, types of documents, etc.

**Hanging indentation** – used mostly in Reference Lists where sorting occurs alphabetically by the first word in a sentence, such as an author’s name or a terminology list like this.

**In-text citation** – a shortened form of giving credit within a paragraph of a written work, to show that specific information was repeated from another author’s research and writing.

**Notes** – In APA style, notes are used to add further explanation to concepts, terms, interesting facts, that is not part of the formal text in a report or research paper yet adds valuable content to the subject being presented.

A note about plagiarism – Plagiarism is theft; it is stealing the thoughts, ideas, research, and hard work that another person has put into the writing you have read. You would not want someone to steal your work and not give you credit for the time you put into a project, would you?

Page numbering – numbering assigned to pages in a book or journal – the way in which pages are numbered, in some periodicals page numbering starts with the very first journal and continues into the thousands. In other journals each new issue begins with page 1.

Paraphrase – Explaining a concept from another author's work in your own words. Requires a citation.

Peer-Reviewed – a system of assuring the quality of work whereby the work is submitted to other experts in the same field of study for content review. This review ensures that the research follows acceptable scientific principles and that the results harbor some truth beneficial to the reader.

Periodical – a professional journal printed on a regular basis. Differs in content from a magazine but the word is often used to group magazines also.

Plagiarism – The presentation of the work of another author as one's own work, whether intentional or not. Plagiarism is highly illegal and can cause expulsion from school, dismissal from jobs and other career ending repercussions. It is closely tied to copyright law. Yes, there are laws that impose fines and other penalties for publicly plagiarizing another author's work.

Quote – presenting the exact words in the exact order as in a previously written document, within quotation marks. Requires citation.

Reference List – In APA style, a reference list is composed of full citations for all in-text citations presented throughout the report.

Signal phrase – presenting evidence from another work by using the author's name within the sentence promoting the evidence. Requires citation.

Summarize – to highlight the important or major points of another author's work without going into the details. Requires citation.