

Citing Sources

You need to cite your sources when you use quotes, paraphrase another's words/ideas, or use evidence (facts, figures, statistics) that are not common knowledge. But what is "common knowledge"?

Think of it as something you would not know unless you had done research on the subject. However, common knowledge can also include certain dates, quotes, and specific facts -- provided you can make the claim that you feel most people would know them.

Which of these statements should be cited? Which would be considered common knowledge?

1) The 1990's were a decade of great prosperity for the United States. Many made a great deal of money in the dot com boom, and there was a prevailing feeling that the good times were going to last forever.

2) Although many primates exhibit caring behavior toward one another, chimpanzees go so far as to kiss, embrace and console each other. They are also capable of using tools.

3) MIT, like other schools, reports a steep increase in the number of student psychiatric hospitalizations - a 69 percent rise between 1995 and 2000.

4) Since affirmative action was voted out in California four years ago, the number of minority students who have been accepted to the University of California at Berkeley has dropped dramatically.

5) Life on college campuses changed dramatically in the 1970's. New federal privacy regulations made students the guardians of their own academic, health and disciplinary records, too.