

MURPHY BI-WEEKLY WRITING TIP

How to Avoid Over-Citing

Dear Murphy Students:

Any time you use a source in your paper, you **must** cite to avoid plagiarism.

However, students wonder: If I write more than one sentence from *one* source, do I need to cite the same source every sentence? **This week's tip aims to answer that question.**

What does over-citing look like?

Rodriguez et al. (2022) found that students struggled to maintain focus in the classroom without material being scaffolded. In the classroom, the scaffolding allowed students to understand the content more easily (Rodriguez et al., 2022). The teachers also found it useful (Rodriguez et al., 2022). As Rodriguez et al. (2022) notes, this approach is very beneficial and worth considering during lesson planning.

If these were *different* sources, then these citations would be *excellent*. However, because they are the same source, it is too *repetitive* and *unnecessary*.

What Can You Do?

Instead of citing *every* sentence, you can: put a citation at **the beginning** and at **the end**, and then *make sure it sounds like it is all from the same source*.

Rodriguez et al. (2022) found that students struggled to maintain focus in the classroom without material being scaffolded. The scaffolding allowed students **in the study** to understand the content more easily. **Their** teachers also found it useful. **According to the results**, this approach is very beneficial and worth considering during lesson planning (Rodriguez et al., 2022).

- We removed the middle citations, but kept the ones in the first and last sentences
- We added words / phrases (“in the study”, “their”, “according to the results”) to show that we are still talking about the same source

By doing this, you can ensure that you avoid plagiarism while at the same time writing paragraphs that are clear, easy, and less-repetitive to read.

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If you have questions or want to put this into practice, feel free to contact me! 😊