When to Cite a Source
A Quick Guide

While the question of whether to cite a source sometimes has a very obvious answer (e.g., a direct quote) other times is is not (e.g., an interpretive issue on which essentially all scholars seem to agree). Keep in mind that the basic purpose of citation is to pre-emptively answer the reader when they ask “where did the author get that information?”. Because of this, it is easiest to keep a few simple rules in mind as you begin to use citation.

• The most basic concept of citation is the following “When you turn in a formal research work, your implicit claim is ‘Everything in this work is a product of my original research and interpretation unless otherwise noted’”
  ○ This means that unless something is footnoted, you are claiming it is an original idea or interpretation. If you are not comfortable making that claim regarding a given statement, then you should cite the origin of that statement's idea.
  ○ If you are in doubt, the safest thing to do is cite it.

• Practically this means you must always cite the following:
  ○ Direct reference to another work (either primary or secondary) in a quotation.
    ▪ E.g., In the Annals, Tacitus writes “I like pie.”
  ○ Direct reference to another work (either primary or secondary) without quotation
    ▪ E.g., Tacitus makes numerous references to his love of pie.
  ○ Indirect reference to the ideas in other works (generally secondary)
    ▪ E.g., Many historians agree that Tacitus' love of pie was his most endearing characteristic.

• You do not need to cite generally accepted facts unless they are evidence for your argument.
  ○ E.g., “Julius Caesar was assassinated” does not need to be cited, since there is no dispute in how he was killed.
  ○ On the other hand, “Julius Caesar showed his vanity by adjusting his toga during his assassination” should be cited, because the while the fact he adjusted his toga is not in question, you are using it as evidence for you interpretation that the act displays his vanity.

For footnote format and style, follow the Chicago-Turabian stylesheet.