

Middle Georgia State University

Student Success Center

Common Knowledge and Quotations

Common Knowledge can be defined as facts known by a large number of people. The following statement is an example of common knowledge:

George Washington was the first president of the United States.

A large number of people know this fact and consequently the above example does not need to be cited.

However, if you state anything not considered common knowledge, or make any statement that is an interpretation of the facts, you will have to cite your source. (The following examples are based on MLA format.)

For example, the following statement would have to be cited:

George Washington, in leading the country through its quest for independence from England, was turned into a monumental legend in his own lifetime (Cunliffe 158).

There are two reasons why the above example should be cited:

- 1) The thought and idea was found in Cunliffe's book *George Washington*.
- 2) Cunliffe interprets the role that George Washington played in the fight for America's independence.

A *quotation* is any phrase or statement that is someone else's exact words. To cite a quotation, simply put quotation marks around the statement in question and document the source using an appropriate style guide!

Marcus Cunliffe writes, "Independence had to be fought for and then made real. It could be said that America became a nation legally before it was one emotionally" (157).

OR

"Independence had to be fought for and then made real. It could be said that America became a nation legally before it was one emotionally" (Cunliffe 157).

* You must always cite the author and the page number when using a quotation.