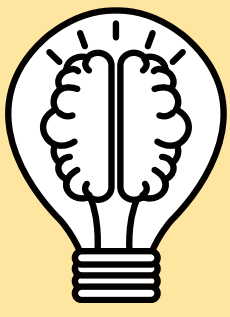


Common Knowledge

To Cite or Not to Cite?



What is common knowledge?

Common knowledge is information you expect your readers to already know or that appears prevalently, both uncited and uncontested, in many sources.

Consider your audience.

Diverse

Your readers come from various fields and are less familiar with the details of your topic.



Field-specific

Your readers are familiar with the general concepts related to the topic.



In 2011, the U.S. Special Forces raided Osama bin Laden's compound in northern Pakistan.



common for all readers



During this operation, the military seized a significant number of written documents (Burke 2016).



common for field-specific readers



In these documents, Osama bin Laden expressed how much he feared drone technology and its capabilities against his terrorist organization (Burke 2016).



not common for all readers



What is not common knowledge?

Datasets, statistics, references to other's studies, and specific dates, numbers, or facts your audience wouldn't be aware of unless researching the topic.

When in doubt, cite!

Examples adapted from G. Santiago, "Cybersecurity risk management process for unmanned aerial systems (UAS) at the strategic level," M.S. thesis, Dept. of Cyb. Syst. and Op., NPS, Monterey, CA, USA, 2019. [Online]. Available: <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/62713>

Descriptions of common knowledge adapted from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "Common Knowledge." Accessed March 20, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/citing-your-sources/what-common-knowledge>



Learn more about citing from the [Graduate Writing Center](#)