

Pre-publication

Referencing web pages and e-journals

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One of the areas that can confuse students and authors alike is how to reference web pages and electronic journals (e-journals). The aim of this paper is to go back to first principles for referencing and see how with examples these should be referenced.

### **First principles**

If you look at a standard reference for a journal paper, for example one of the Learning and CPD papers about citations, referencing and plagiarism<sup>1</sup>, which would be a useful read.

Bryson, D. (2012) Using research papers: Citations, referencing and plagiarism. *Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine* Volume 35, Issue 2, Pages 82-84.

This contains all the necessary information to find the paper. This ultimately is the aim of a reference for a reader so they can look at the original source for themselves. Obviously it needs to be accurate. There is nothing worse than reading a paper and then trying to find a reference only to be unable to locate it.

If you analyse the reference above it comes in the form of

Author(s) Surname and Initial(s). (Year of Publication) Title of the paper. Journal Title Volume number, Issue number, Pages.

The order of this information and formatting will vary for example; Harvard, Vancouver, Chicago Manual of Style, American Psychological Association (APA) Style and all the others<sup>2</sup> but the type of content will stay the same as this is what is required to find the paper. However, with modern searching systems you could still find the article with less but it will take you longer especially if the papers title is very general e.g. "Clinical Photography".

### **Web pages**

The aim in referencing a web page is to glean as much detail as possible for your reference. One of the issues of just using a web link is that these can go out of date very quickly. For example a web designer might change the name of a section from "dermatology" to "dermatological\_research" so your web link of <http://www.greatwebsites.co.uk/dermatology/rashes.html> will cease to function and you will see an error page. However, if you have the pages title and author with a search it is more likely that the page can be found. This is also why when referencing a web page it is usual to state when it was accessed giving you an idea of its currency. The information below might not solve every web page problem but should cover the vast majority of issues.

Figure 1 shows where you might find some of the key details on a web page and another page that is commonly referenced a blog page. As a blog page is more like an article in a magazine getting details such as author is usually easier. If there is no author then the next best thing is to use the company or organization name as with the web page, see Figure 1 left hand side.

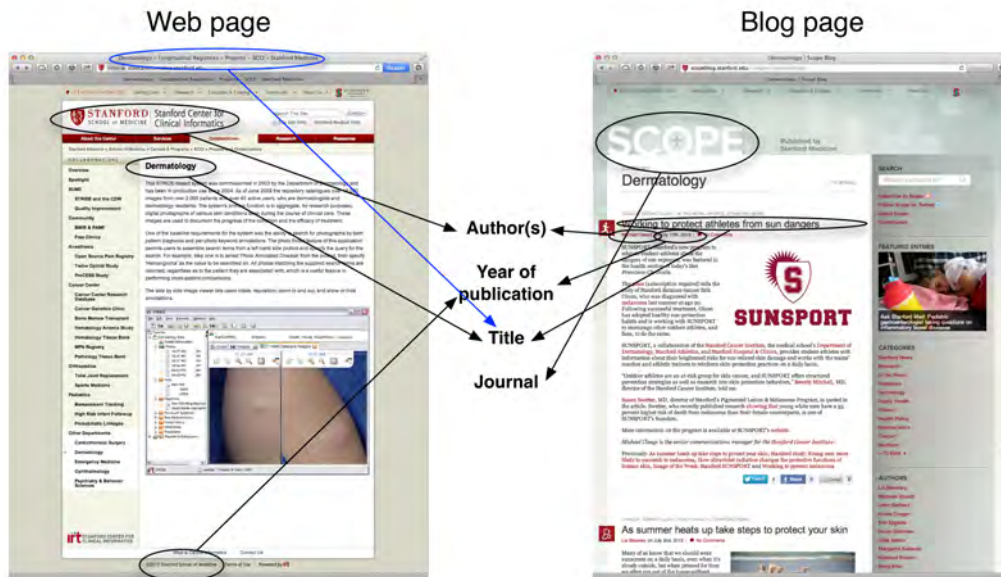


Figure 1 A web page and blog page with indications of where to find referencing information.

Finding a date can be more awkward and there is a standard order that you should use:

1. Date of publication, with a blog page and some web pages you may see not only the year but the date of publication or date last updated e.g. with the Wikipedia page cited above July 5<sup>th</sup> which was when it was last updated. In Figure 1 right hand side it would be the date the blog post was published according to the web page.
2. Copyright date, as at the bottom of the web page<sup>3</sup> in Figure 1 left hand side. A page may have been written after this copyright date but without any other date it is the next best thing.
3. Date you accessed the page, this is only used if there is no indication anywhere of a date on the web page and obviously should only be used in that instance.

The title is usually easy to find as it is the main heading highlighted as a large font size. If you can't see one on the web page then you can use the title in the head of the web page as highlighted in blue on the web page in Figure 1.

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The last elements like journal, volume, issue and page number are unlikely to occur but if they do then they should be included. For example in Figure 1 the blog page is part of the SCOPE publication. Similarly any extra details like actual date of publication can be useful especially with a blog page<sup>4</sup> where new blogs appear first and old ones get pushed down the page and eventually onto another page or archive.

The other elements you need to add for a web page are the web address, often referred to as a Uniform Resource Identifier<sup>5</sup>, and as mentioned earlier the access date. As examples look at the references for the web page and blog page from Figure 1 in the references.

## Electronic journals

This is by far the easier section as an e-journal should be treated like a normal journal. I know that sounds too good to be true but it is. Whether you are referencing a journal that produces a hard copy and also provides an electronic version like the *Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine* or a journal that is only available as an e-journal you should reference them all as a normal journal.

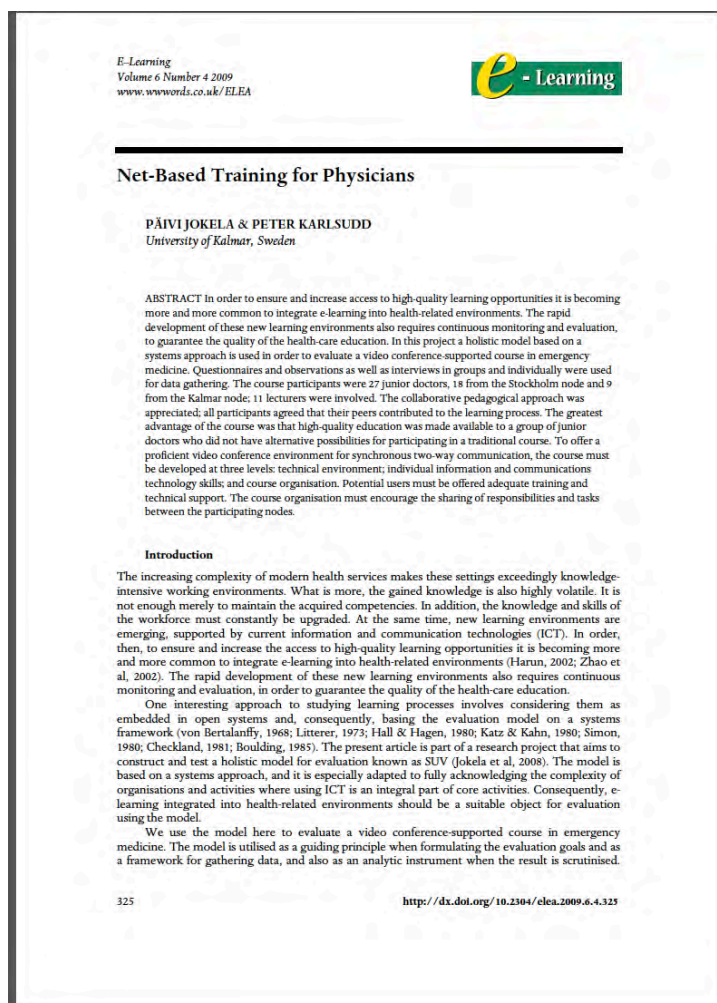


Figure 2 Screen capture of electronic only journal publication<sup>6</sup> displayed as a portable document format (pdf) file.

For example “E-learning and Digital Media” (<http://www.wwwords.co.uk/elea/>) is only available online but it has an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) just like a hard copy journal. It still has Volume and issue numbers as well as page numbers for papers. So taking a particular journal paper, see Figure 2, the reference will be “Jokela, P. Karlsudd, P. (2009) Net-Based Training for Physicians. E-Learning and Digital Media 6(4), 325-335.”

The only extra thing that is worth adding is the digital object identifier (DOI) for the paper above that is <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/elea.2009.6.4.325>. The DOI is used to uniquely identify an object and so enables the paper to be found using your web browser and this address is far more permanent than a normal web address. For further details about the DOI system go to <http://www.doi.org>.

You may have seen some very long web addresses used with e-journals these are not necessary and indeed can be unhelpful as no one is likely to type in a web link that is 3 lines or more long. For example the paper I mentioned at the beginning about plagiarism has this web link <http://informahealthcare.com/action/doSearch?searchText=plagiarism&type=simple&filter=multiple&allowEmptyTermQuery=true&postback=true&categoryId=40054123>. What this tells us is that I carried out a search using the word plagiarism in one of informa healthcare’s journals with the category id 40054213. Whilst this will get you to the page with the paper in it is not exact and could change with time if different search systems are implemented. If you do want to use a web link then you should use the DOI in this case <http://informahealthcare.com/doi/full/10.3109/17453054.2012.690128> for the full text and with the word ‘full’ replaced with ‘pdf’ and ‘pdfplus’ for the other versions.

If you are searching via hospital or university systems then your web link could be even more complex and might only take you back to the main scholar web page or to a page that helpfully says “Forbidden You don’t have permission to access” whereas the doi will get you to the abstract then you can always see if you can access the full version.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Bryson, D. (2012) Using research papers: Citations, referencing and plagiarism. Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine 35: (2): 82-84.

<http://informahealthcare.com/doi/full/10.3109/17453054.2012.690128>

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia (2013) Citation. July 5<sup>th</sup>. [URI <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citation> accessed July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013]

<sup>3</sup> Stanford Center for Clinical Informatics (2013) Dermatology. [URI <http://clinicalinformatics.stanford.edu/projects/dermatology.html> accessed July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013]

<sup>4</sup> Claeyes, M. (2013) Working to protect athletes from sun dangers. Scope blog, July 17<sup>th</sup>. [URI <http://scopeblog.stanford.edu/category/dermatology/> accessed July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013]

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<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia (2013) Uniform Resource Identifier, July 11<sup>th</sup>. [URI [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform\\_resource\\_identifier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform_resource_identifier) accessed July 22nd 2013]

<sup>6</sup> Jokela, P. Karlsudd, P. (2009) Net-Based Training for Physicians. E-Learning and Digital Media 6(4), 325-335. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/elea.2009.6.4.325>