**When to Cite a Source**

You should use evidence (citations) any time you make a claim that is not based on a well-known fact or common knowledge.

* You make a claim that could be challenged.
* You quote somebody.
* You make a specific claim that is not common knowledge.
* You paraphrase information from a source (give the meaning but change the wording).
* Offer an authoritative (expert) opinion.
* You got an idea from somebody else, even through email or conversation.

**Examples of Claims You Should Support**

* Hot water can freeze faster than cold water.
* Poodles are friendlier than Dalmatians.
* American Chestnut trees are nearly extinct.
* Eating while driving is more dangerous than talking on the cell phone while driving.
* Thomas Edison invented a vote counter.

**When You Don't Need to Cite a Source**

**Examples of Common Knowledge or Well-Known Facts**

Common knowledge is basically a fact that practically everyone knows, like the fact that George Washington was a U.S. president, or Pierre Trudeau was a Canadian Prime Minister.

* Bears hibernate in the winter.
* Fresh water freezes at 0 degrees C.
* Many trees shed their leaves in the fall.

A well-know fact is something that many people know, but it is also something that a reader could look up easily if he/she didn't know.

* It's best to plant flowers in the early spring.
* Holland is famous for its tulips.
* Canada has a multilingual population.

A good rule of thumb for any writer is to go ahead and use a citation when you're not certain whether or not is is necessary. The only risk in doing this is littering your paper with unnecessary citations that will drive your teacher crazy. Simply trust your own judgment.