



Referencing Code

This guidance is for all University of Sheffield Library [Referencing styles](#). You will need to adapt this guidance to your referencing style.

It's important to acknowledge the source of code just like you would acknowledge the source of any work that is not your own. Referencing correctly will help to distinguish your work from others, give credit to the original author and allow anyone to identify the source.

If you do not reference code correctly this can be seen as [plagiarism](#).

When to reference

It's not always easy to decide what should and shouldn't be referenced and you may need to use your own judgement to make a decision. If you are unsure please check with your module tutor.

For example, a common function or common approach in programming may not need to be referenced. If you have used a source to check the order of arguments in a function this may not need to be referenced, but if you have copied and pasted a substantial amount of code that is not your own this would need to be referenced.

The general principle is, if you did not create the code you should credit the original author. You should also check that the code's licence allows you to use it, and remember to include any material that the author has said must be included in any copy.

Example code licence

Source for `java.lang.Object`

```
1: /* java.lang.Object - The universal superclass in Java
2:  Copyright (C) 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005
3:   Free Software Foundation, Inc.
4:
5:  This file is part of GNU Classpath.
6:
7:  GNU Classpath is free software; you can redistribute it and/or modify
8:  it under the terms of the GNU General Public License as published by
9:  the Free Software Foundation; either version 2, or (at your option)
10: any later version.
11:
12: GNU Classpath is distributed in the hope that it will be useful, but
13: WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY; without even the implied warranty of
14: MERCHANTABILITY or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. See the GNU
15: General Public License for more details.
16:
17: You should have received a copy of the GNU General Public License
18: along with GNU Classpath; see the file COPYING. If not, write to the
19: Free Software Foundation, Inc., 51 Franklin Street, Fifth Floor, Boston, MA
20: 02110-1301 USA.
21:
22: Linking this library statically or dynamically with other modules is
23: making a combined work based on this library. Thus, the terms and
24: conditions of the GNU General Public License cover the whole
25: combination.
```

Taken from: GNU Classpath developer resources, *Source for `java.lang.Object`* <http://developer.classpath.org/doc/java/lang/Object-source.html>

How to reference

There are two different ways to reference code in your work. In both approaches you would include a citation (acknowledgement) close to the material it relates to.

1. Citing code in a written assignment

If you include or mention code (that is not your own) in the body of your work you need to add a citation in the text, just as you would when quoting or paraphrasing text. A full reference to the source should then be added to the reference list at the end of your assignment.

Examples are given below in the IEEE and APA style. If you are using a different style of referencing take the elements of the reference and create it in that style.

IEEE example

In the body of your assignment

Enclosed number in square brackets, e.g. [2]

In the reference list

[2] INITIAL(S). Surname, *Title of program or source code*, Version number, Year. [Source Code]. Accessed: Abbrev. Month. Day, Year. Available: URL or publisher.

[2] C. Parnot, *Cellular and Molecular Bioengineering*, 1.0, 2012. [Source Code] Accessed: Aug. 15, 2020. Available: <https://github.com/citation-style-language/styles/blob/master/cellular-and-molecular-bioengineering.csl>

APA example

In the body of your assignment

(Parnot, 2020)
Parnot (2020)

In the reference list

Surname, INITIAL(S). (Year). *Title of program or source code*, Version number [Source Code]. Publisher. URL

Parnot, C. (2012). *Cellular and Molecular Bioengineering*, 1.0. [Source Code]. GitHub. <https://github.com/citation-style-language/styles/blob/master/cellular-and-molecular-bioengineering.csl>

2. Including a citation when writing code

If you use or adapt code that is not your own you need to acknowledge the original source by including a comment in your code giving the relevant details. This is placed near the reused code and contains much of the same information you would use when constructing a reference within a written assignment:

Author(s) / organisation or company

Title of program or source code

Version number

Date / Year

Type e.g. computer program or source code

Availability (e.g. URL or publisher)

Example:

```
# FizzBuzz implementation in Ruby
# Oliver Atkinson (09 Feb 2014)
# https://stackoverflow.com/a/21666168 [accessed 02 Sep 2019]
1.upto(100) do |i|
  string = ""

  string += 'Fizz' if i % 3 == 0
  string += 'Buzz' if i % 5 == 0

  puts "#{i} = #{string}"
end
```

Remember you should always check the terms of licence of the code you wish to use. Even if code is open source you should still reference the source as it's not your own work.

Useful links

Choosing a licence - [Choose an open source license](#)

This website also provides a [digest of licences](#)

Full URLs

Referencing styles: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/study/research-skills/referencing>

Plagiarism: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means/index>

Choose an open source licence: <https://choosealicense.com/>

Digest of licences: <https://choosealicense.com/appendix/>

Last reviewed: October 2020

Review due: Summer 2021



Except otherwise noted, this work by The University of Sheffield Library is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercialShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.