

The AI Citation Decision Guide

A one-page reference card for the four decisions AI systems make about your content.

When an AI system decides whether to rely on a piece of content, the outcome lands in one of four places. Learn these four words and you can diagnose most content problems yourself — no jargon required.

CITE

Evidence and source integrity are sufficient. The content can be relied on as-is.

Common reasons, and what to do about it:

- Claims are backed by sources that actually say what's claimed.
- The author or organization is clearly identifiable and credible.
- The content is current, specific and internally consistent.

CITE WITH QUALIFICATION

Useful evidence exists, but material caveats remain.

Common reasons, and what to do about it:

- The claim is broadly supported, but a detail is dated, narrow, or context-dependent.
- The source is credible but not the most authoritative one available on the topic.
- Fix: add the missing context or caveat directly in the content — don't leave it implicit.

VERIFY

Integrity is insufficient for confident use without more evidence.

Common reasons, and what to do about it:

- A claim is stated with confidence but isn't clearly backed by a checkable source.
- The entity behind the content can't be established as qualified for this claim.
- Fix: add a primary source, a named credentialed author, or original supporting data.

DO NOT CITE

A material integrity failure is present.

Common reasons, and what to do about it:

- A cited source doesn't say what the content claims, or the link is broken.
- The content contradicts itself or contains a clear factual error.
- Fix: correct or remove the claim — no qualifier repairs a broken citation or a wrong fact.

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