It's great to use citation generators. Anything that can make it easier for the students to create citations is worthwhile. Whenever I introduce students to generators, whether in Word or online, I also teach them the old computer acronym: GIGO. That stands for garbage-in, garbage-out. If we turn students loose with the generators without first teaching them a few things, we'll get garbage. So here are a few precautions to teach:

--Make sure that students know the difference between first and last names in English. That is, show them the difference between a name without a comma and a name with a comma. Even at level 6, I get things like this: *According to White, Jonathan, the world is coming to an end on December 19, 2018. Jonathan also believes that...* If they don't enter the right name in the right place, that will affect the citation that is generated. And it will probably also affect alphabetical order. As I said...GIGO.

--Make sure that students know what kind of source they are using. Most of the stuff comes from the Internet or the library database these days, but it might still be a good idea to make sure students know the difference between a magazine and a newspaper and a journal. Or the difference between an anthology and an autobiography. Or the difference between a website and a database.

--Make sure that students know when to use quotation marks and when to use italics. Because it's not just a matter of generating citations. They have to refer to these sources in their texts too. And there is no getting around the fact that quotation marks and italics apply to different kinds of sources, is there?

--Teach students what a volume is BEFORE they start filling in information in the generators.

--Help them see that an organizational author does NOT mean that there is no author.

--Work with students to FIND the information in their sources. Examples:

-Where to look for dates on an Internet article. As we all know, sometimes this take a little detective work on other pages of a website where an article is found.

-How to read the citation data on the front page of a PDF printed from the library database.

-How to read the issue information at the bottom of a magazine page.

...That sort of thing.

--Alert students to the possibility that the citations that are generated could be wrong. First, it could be wrong because of the GIGO thing. Second, it could be wrong because it's wrong. I have seen this in the citations provided with articles and other papers from the library database. And I am not just referring to commas and periods.

--Teach students that just because Word generated a bold, sans serif, blue, flush left heading, it should not remain that way. They need to format it like the rest of the paper. My new analogy regarding consistent formatting is the job interview, by the way--inconsistent formatting is analogous to wearing inappropriate clothes to a job interview.

Mostly, students need to understand WHY citations are necessary (plagiarism!) and WHY there are systems (consistency) WHAT the role is for the different kinds of data that go into a citation. This is also a good time to teach them the word *nitpicky*.