



MLA STYLE IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Print & Electronic Sources

MLA 6.1 – 6.5.2

Begley Library and Learning

The Basics

Whenever you refer to information in the text of your paper you must give credit to the author of that information. It does not matter if you reword the information; you must still give credit because it is not your research and/or your idea. If you don't give credit, you have plagiarized. This is not only unethical but also against the law. So, what is an in-text citation? An in-text citation allows you to refer to the work of others in your paper and includes a combination of a signal phrase and parenthetical reference. The parenthetical reference is a set of parentheses that appears in your paper next to the information you have taken from one of your sources and usually includes an author's last name and the page on which you found the information. Occasionally, other situations arise and you may have to vary the information in the citation. Signal phrases transition readers smoothly into a quotation, summary or paraphrase.

Signal Phrases

Signal phrases are used to identify the source and type of information like a quotation or summary or paraphrase. The parenthetical citation directly follows the quotation or borrowed information. Signal phrases usually include the author's name and a verb to introduce the material. Using the author's name in the phrase allows you to keep the parenthetical citation brief. If you do not include the author's name in the signal phrase, then include the author's last name in the parenthetical citation along with the page number.

Some Verbs to Use in Signal Phrases

acknowledges	observes
argues	points out
asserts	refutes
believes	reports
claims	states
contends	suggests
illustrates	thinks
notes	writes

Signal phrase with quotation:

Murray states that "personal electronic devices allow us to do more work in less time" (15).

Signal phrase with paraphrase:

Murray illustrates how personal electronic devices have changed our daily lives (15).

General Guidelines for Print & Electronic Sources

- All references to sources in the text of your paper must correspond to the source information on the Works Cited page. Include in the parenthetical reference the first item that appears in the corresponding Work Cited entry.
- Be as brief and clear as possible. Give only the information needed to identify a source. For print sources this is usually the author's last name and a page reference. If the author's name is written in the sentence, you only need to write the page where you found the information in the citation. When there is no author, cite the title if brief or use a short form of the title followed by the page number.
- Place the parenthetical reference as close as possible to the material being documented and where a pause would naturally occur, preferably at the end of a sentence.
- The parenthetical reference should precede the punctuation mark that concludes the sentence, clause, or phrase that contains the cited material.
- If you wish to cite an entire work, it is preferable to include the author in the text, rather than in the parenthetical reference.

Additional Guidelines for Electronic Sources

In general, electronic or online sources are cited just like print resources in references cited in the text. However, there are some exceptions since these type sources often do not include authors or page numbers.

- If a work is paginated, cite the source as you would a print source.
- Include in the parenthetical reference the first item that appears in the corresponding Work Cited entry. Some examples are website name, film name, or author name.
- Many websites are anonymous. Cite the author's name or sponsor if available. If the author is unknown, use the source's title (or a shortened version of the title).
- If you must list the website name in the signal phrase that appears before a quote in your text, do not include URL addresses in-text. Provide partial URL's, like MSNBC.com not <http://www.msnbc.com>.
- Since many web sources do not have page numbers, leave that portion of the citation blank. Do not use page numbers assigned by the printer. Sources that are PDF files have page numbers that are stable and should be included in the parenthetical reference.
- If you cite an electronic publication that has no pagination or other type of reference, MLA recommends that you reference the source in the text, rather than in a parenthetical reference.

- If a source includes fixed page numbers or section numbering, such as numbering of paragraphs (pars.), cite the relevant numbers. If available, state the author and the paragraph, screen, chapter or line numbers where the information is located. Use the abbreviations "par.," "scr.," "ch." or "lines" or a full word.

I. Examples of Print Sources

A. Author's Name in the Text of Paper (Signal Phrase)

- If the author's name is written in the signal phrase, you only need to write the page where you found the information in the citation.

Example:

Gregory Graham writes that the hand hacksaw is the most commonly used tool to cut metal (32).

B. Author's Name in Parenthetical Reference

- If a signal phrase in the text of your paper does not name the author, put the author's last name in parentheses along with the page number.

Example:

The hand hacksaw is the most commonly used tool to cut metal (Graham 32).

C. Entire Work

- MLA Guidelines state that it is preferable to cite an entire work within the text rather than in a parenthetical reference. If you choose to cite parenthetically, put the author's last name in parentheses; for example, (Blanchfield).

Example:

Fukuyama's *Our Posthuman Future* includes many examples of this trend.

D. Single Author

- If the information in your paper is from a traditional print source, write the author's last name and the page number in the citation. Do not separate with a comma. Also, put the period on the outside of the citation.

Example:

Country woodcraft had its origins in the tradition of the peasant woodworker who had to provide for almost all of his wood product needs (Langsner 3).

E. Author Unknown

- If the source doesn't have an author, note the title if brief or a shortened form of the title in the parenthetical reference in place of the author's name.

Example:

The article details legislation that would require small contracting firms to implement new safety regulations ("A New Safety Legislation"1).

F. Corporate Author

- Cite the corporate author's name followed by the page. However, if the corporate author's name is lengthy, it is better to include the name in the text so that the reading is not interrupted. Abbreviate common terms in parenthetical citations. See MLA Handbook 7.4 for common scholarly abbreviations.

1. Example of corporate author in parenthetical reference:

Failure to restore the aquatic ecosystem now will prove to be costly in the future (Natl. Research Council 3).

2. Example of corporate author in text (signal phrase):

In 1963 the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa predicted that Africa would evolve into an advanced industrial economy within fifty years (1-2, 4-6).

G. Multiple Authors (two–three authors)

- For a source with three authors or less, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical reference.

1. Example of authors in text (signal phrase):

Smith, Yang, and Moore argue that tougher gun control is not needed in the United States (76).

2. Example of authors in parenthetical reference:

The authors state “tighter gun control in the United States erodes Second Amendment rights” (Smith, Yang, and Moore 76).

H. Multiple Authors (more than three authors)

- For a source with more than three authors, follow the format on your Works Cited page.

1. Example of author's last name followed by et al. in text (signal phrase):

Jones et al. counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

2. Example of authors last name followed by et al. in parenthetical reference:

Legal experts counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (Jones et al. 4).

3. Example of all authors' last names in text (signal phrase):

Jones, Driscoll, Ackerson, and Bell counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun law (4).

I. Authors with Same Last Name

- If two or more authors have the same last name, include additional information to provide clarification. Examples are the author's initial of the first name; or, in the case where authors share the same initial, include the author's full first name.

Example:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

J. Multiple works by Same Author

- If you are using more than one book written by the same author, you must include a short title of the book in addition to the last name and page number.

Example:

The idea for the plot in this novel was derived from a picture illustrating a play by Gilbert and Sullivan (Asimov, *Foundation and the Empire* 9).

K. Multivolume Works

- If you cite from different volumes of a multivolume work, always include the volume number followed by a colon. Put a space after the colon and then provide the page number(s). If you only cite from one volume, provide only the page number.

Example:

... as Quintilian wrote in *Institutio Oratoria* (1: 14-17).

L. Multiple Citations

- To cite multiple sources in the same parenthetical reference, separate the citations by a semi-colon.

Example:

... as has been discussed elsewhere (Burke; Dewey 21).

M. Work in an Anthology

- Put the name of the author of the work (not the editor of the anthology) in the signal phrase or in the parenthetical reference.

Example:

In James Joyce's short story "The Dead," the snow represents the story's theme (302).

N. Poem

- When citing a poem, omit page numbers and cite by part, stanza, and line number(s) separated by periods. For poems that do not include part or stanza, just use line number(s). If you are citing only line numbers, use the word *line(s)* in the first reference; for example, (lines 33-34). Use numbers only for subsequent references to the poem; for example, (37-39).

1. Example with part, stanza, and line numbers:

The Green Knight claims to approach King Arthur's court "because the praise of you, prince, is puffed so high, / And your manor and your men are considered so magnificent" (1.12.258-59).

2. Example with line number:

Gerard Manley Hopkins presents his view of life best in a single line: "The world is changed with the grandeur of God" (line 7).

O. Literary Works

- If a literary work does not have a part or line number, cite the page number. When a novel contains numbered divisions, put the page number first, followed by a semicolon, and then the book, part, or chapter in which the passage may be found.

1. Example of a short story without numbered division:

At the end of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," Mrs. Mallard drops dead upon learning that her husband is alive. In the final irony of the story, doctors report that she has died of a "joy that kills" (25).

2. Example of a novel with page number and chapter:

Fitzgerald's narrator captures Gatsby in a moment of isolation: A sudden emptiness seems to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host" (56; ch. 3).

3. Example of a novel with page number, book, and chapter:

One of Kingsolver's narrators, teenager Rachel, pushes her vocabulary beyond its limits. For example, Rachel complains that being forced to live in the Congo with her missionary family is "a sheer tapestry of justice" because her chances of finding a boyfriend are "dull and void" (117; bk. 2, ch. 10).

P. Play

- Cite a play by available division (act, scene, canto, book, part) *and* line. For a verse play, list the act, scene, and line numbers, separated by periods. Use arabic numbers unless your instructor prefers roman numerals. Separate the numbers with periods. If a play does not have a part or line number just cite the page number.

1. Example of a play divided by act only:

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nora's epiphany occurs when she realizes her husband will never reciprocate the sacrifices she's made to protect his pride. She finally stands up to Helmer, telling him, "You neither think nor talk like the man I could join myself to" (act 3).

2. Example of verse play with act, scene, line numbers:

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester, blinded for suspected treason, learns a profound lesson from his tragic experience: "A man may see how this world goes / with no eyes" (4.2.148-49).

Q. The Bible

- Make clear which version of the Bible you are using. Italicize the title and follow by book, chapter, and verse. For subsequent references, cite book, chapter and verse only; for example, (Leviticus 19:18).

1. Example with title, book, chapter, and verse:

Ezekiel saw “what seemed to be four living creatures,” each with faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 1.5-10).

R. Indirect Sources (qtd. in)

- An Indirect Source is a source cited in another source. Use “qtd. in” to indicate the source consulted.

Example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as “social service centers, and they don’t do that well” (qtd. in Weisman 259).

S. When a Citation is not Needed

- You do not need to cite familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge that can be found in many different sources.

Example of a well-known fact:

George Washington was the first President of the United States.

II. Examples of Websites or Other Electronic Sources

Follow the guidelines for printed books unless the source does not have fixed numbering. If the source does not have fixed numbering, then give the author or title in the citation; for example, (Cooper). Do not add numbering if not included in the source. If the source has numbered paragraphs, sections, or divisions, use these abbreviations: “par.,” “sec.,” ch.,” “pt.”

E-book

A. Entire E-book in Parenthetical Reference

- MLA Guidelines state that it is preferable to cite an entire work within the text rather than in a parenthetical reference. If you choose to cite parenthetically, put the author's last name in parentheses.

Example in parenthetical citation:

Blanchfield provides tips for dealing with clutter.

B. Chapter in an E-book

- When you cite a source without page numbers, provide the chapter number or other available numbering.

Example with chapter, author is listed in signal phrase:

Julian Hawthorne points out profound differences between his father and Ralph Waldo Emerson but concludes that, in their lives and writing, “together they met the needs of nearly all that is worthy in human nature” (ch.4).

Encyclopedia Article from a Library Database

A. Encyclopedia Article

- Cite an author name if included in the article. If there is no author, note the title in quotation marks. Include fixed page number(s) only if available. Do not use page numbers assigned by the printer.

1. Example with author, no page number:

Fresco is a form of mural painting and dates back to prehistoric times (Weir).

2. Example with title of article, no author or page number:

Early frescoes were painted on limestone walls of caves (“Fresco Painting”).

Journal, Magazine, or Newspaper Article from Library Databases

A. Article in file type PDF (includes page numbers from actual article)

- PDF files of articles usually include page numbers. Since this numbering is fixed, include the page number(s) in the citation.

Example with authors and page number:

The study documents the connection between alcohol use and academic performance (Singleton and Wolfson 355).

B. Article in HTML format (page number not noted in article)

- Articles in HTML format usually do not have fixed numbering. In this case note the author or title in the citation.

Example with author, no page number:

Research suggests that students are at risk for developing anxiety disorders and that vigorous exercise may help (Thompson).

Websites & Webpages

In general, websites are cited just like print resources in references cited in the text. However, there are some exceptions since these type sources often do not include authors or page numbers. Some guidelines for websites appear below. For more information refer to the section ***Additional Guidelines for Electronic Sources***.

- State the author if known. Include paragraph, chapter, screen or line numbers unless you are referring to the entire site.
- If the website or webpage does not have an author or sponsor, use an abbreviated version of the title in quotation marks.
- If you refer to an entire website, place the title of the homepage in italics.

A. Website with Corporate Author

- When giving the name of a corporate author in parentheses, shorten terms that are commonly abbreviated. See MLA Handbook 7.4 for common scholarly abbreviations.

Example with abbreviated corporate author:

Their mission in part “is to improve government decision making and public policy...” (Natl. Research Council).

B. Entire Website

- Cite the main title of the website in italics. No numbers are needed. When an entire site does not have a title, write Home page using regular font.

1. Example with title of entire website, no author or sponsor

The site has biographical information and numerous links to websites dedicated to Twain (*The Official Web Site of Mark Twain*).

2. Example with author of entire website:

Summer flowering bulbs need to be replanted each spring when the ground is warm (Goldstein).

3. Example of website, no title:

Hemingway started his writing career at *The Kansas City Star* (Hemingway Home page).

C. Page from a Website

- If the webpage has no author or sponsor use an abbreviated version of the title in quotation marks.

Example with title of webpage, no author or sponsor:

Amphibian populations are in decline in many areas of the world (“Amphibians”).

D. Personal Website

- Note the author and fixed numbering, if available, unless you are referring to the entire website.

1. Example with author and paragraph number:

One of the guidelines to being an effective teacher is to respect diverse ways of learning (Pritchard par. 1).

2. Example of entire website:

Acai is high in antioxidant content. Studies show that it may be effective as a metabolic stabilizer (Myers).

E. Document on website with paragraph and section numbering, no page number

- If the source has numbered paragraphs, sections, or divisions, use these abbreviations: “par.,” “sec.,” “ch.,” or “pt.”

1. Example of document with paragraph numbers and author in signal phrase:

Chan claims that “Eagleton has belittled the gains of postmodernism” (par. 41).

2. Example of document with section numbers and author in signal phrase:

The Committee on Scholarly Editions provides an annotated bibliography on the theory of textual editing (sec. 4).