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student writing support

quicktips

MLA DOCUMENTATION STYLE: IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Many humanities disciplines use Modern Language Association (MLA) style to cite sources. MLA-style documents include brief in-text citations in combination with a detailed listing of sources in a separate Works Cited page at the end of a document. (**Be sure to see the quicktip about the MLA Works Cited page because the guidelines have recently changed**). MLA does not typically use endnotes or footnotes; however, some scholars make use of the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines in order to include these items. (See the quicktip on Chicago Documentation Style.)

In-text citations appear after quoted or paraphrased information. The in-text citation generally requires the **author's last name** (if available) and the **page number** (if available) from which the cited information comes. **No comma** is placed between the author name and page number, and the **period appears after the citation** (except for long quotes of more than four lines, which are indented—see below for further information).

Basic format (author's last name + page number in parentheses):
The narrator observes that "a fully dressed woman walked out of the water" (Morrison 50).

Format with author's name in signal phrase (page number alone in parentheses):
Groff emphasizes Willie's anxiety through figurative language: "I felt the world around me creak and strain, snapping apart, fiber by fiber, like a rope pulled too tautly" (2).

CITATIONS FOR ALL SORTS OF SOURCES ARE DERIVED FROM THIS BASIC FORMAT. See below for some of the most common variations. For more, visit Purdue OWL's "MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics."

Two or more titles by same author (author's last name + comma + *shortened title* + page number):
Mr. Dursley is introduced as "a big, beefy man with hardly any neck" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 1).

Two authors (first author's last name + and + second author's last name + page number):
Racial formation is defined as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 55).

Three or more authors (first author's last name + et al. + page number):
Their research suggests that "treatment with HCV entry inhibitors in the peri- and post-transplant period may reduce the rate and extend of re-infection" for liver transplant patients (Wong-Staal et al. 1727).

Organization or corporation as author (short version of name + page number):
Further research is needed "to better understand and characterize Zika virus infection and its complications" (WHO 6).

Indirect Sources Use the author of the quote in the signal phrase. Then add in-text citation at the end of the sentence (qtd. in + author of source you consulted + page number):
According to Barthes, disruptive texts function by cutting: "Two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge... and another edge, mobile blank... which is never anything but the site of its effect; the place where the death of language is glimpsed" (qtd. in Davies 191)

NON-PRINT SOURCES (INCLUDING WEBSITES)

Many electronic sources do not have page numbers and do not require paragraph numbers. In these cases, if you name the author in the signal phrase, no parenthetical citation is needed.

> According to the Center for Writing website, "Student Writing Support offers all University of Minnesota students free, individualized writing instruction, both face-to-face and online."

LONG QUOTES, OR BLOCK QUOTATIONS

Block quotations, quotations that take up more than four lines of text, should begin on a new line, and the entire block quotation should be indented five spaces. Block quotations differ from brief in-text quotations in two ways:

1. Block quotations **do not require quotation marks**. The visual setting-off of the passage, along with the parenthetical citation at the end, signal to readers of MLA-style papers that they are reading a quotation, not your own words.
2. The period at the end of a block quotation is **before the parenthetical citation**, not after it.

For example:

> Foucault defends the practice of scholarly critique:
>
> > A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based... showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. (172)
>
> In other words, critique becomes a strategy for destabilizing entrenched relations of power, making it possible to imagine new ways of organizing social relations in less oppressive ways.

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