

MLA In-Text Citations

Citing the work and ideas of others when writing a research paper is a necessary practice that you'll include in two major places in your essay: the works cited page, which appears on its own sheet at the end of your paper, and through in-text citations, which appear throughout the body of your essay.

In-text citations (also called “references,” “parenthetical documentation” or “parenthetical citations”) direct your readers to your works cited page and indicate which work you used and where in the text you found it. In-text citations let your readers know *who* is responsible for the cited information and *where* they can find it for themselves. You need to include an in-text citation *each time* you borrow information or ideas, whether you quote directly or paraphrase or summarize in your own words.

- A typical in-text citation includes the author's last name and page number or page range, separated by only a space. Even when you paraphrase rather than quoting directly, you need to include page numbers to direct your reader to the specific part of the source used.

In medieval art appreciation, the attitude of the observer is of primary importance (Robertson 136).

- If you've already mentioned the author's name in your sentence, simply use the page number in your reference.

Jay Boyar basically points out everything wrong with *The Hurricane* in his review, yet he gives it a good rating solely based on Denzel Washington's performance (4).

- When citing a quotation, be aware of the location of the period *after* the parenthetical citation.

According to Doug Lemov, teachers should be wary of including too many posters on the walls: "The first rule of thumb for walls in the best classrooms is that they should help, not harm" (69).

- A paragraph or section number may be used to reference a work that doesn't have page numbers, such as an electronic source, but is not necessary; in this example, the author's name being used in the sentence is adequate citation. If the source doesn't number the paragraphs, you won't use the paragraph number. Only use a section or paragraph number if the source uses it.

According to critic Robert Taylor, Lee's direction "stands out especially because he takes the Berkowitz story and lets it act as a backdrop to the characters' story" (par. 4).

- When citing an entire work without using any direct quotations or paraphrases, page numbers are not necessary.

One report demonstrates how election-year politics often follow a standard pattern (Johnson and Cruz).

Use this rule of thumb: if you can point to the part of the source you're using, include a page number! If you can't point to it (because you're summing up the central focus of the work), then no page number is required in your in-text citation.

- When a quotation extends for more than four lines of text, indent the entire quotation one-half inch on the left, double spaced¹, with no quotation marks, and include the parenthetical citation after the quotation punctuation. This is called a block quotation.

Bell notes that readers and writers have a specific kind of relationship:

Writers stake out a territory to explore, provide maps designed for discovery, and invite readers to join the expedition. Readers, in turn, survey the invitation and weigh the possibilities for discovery before making a commitment to the journey. The next time you're in a bookstore or library, you can watch these negotiations in action. (1)

Other MLA in-text citation guidelines and examples:

A work by two authors

Include both authors' names each time the source is referenced. (Use both of their full names in the text, if the source provides their full names, the first time you reference them in the text—not the note).

Jacobsen and Waugh note that the death penalty is not warranted because of all the innocent people who have been found on death row (210).

It seems young children may understand biological processes beyond "simply that some things grow or reproduce" (Erickson and Lockhart 405).

A work produced by a group

Use the organization or corporation name as the author.

In 1963, the predictions for Africa fifty years later envisioned an advanced industrial African economy (United Nations 6).

A work by more than two authors

Only list the first author, followed by et al.

The European powers believed they could change the fundamentals of Moslem existence (Bull et al. 395).

A work without an author

Use the title of the work. In the parentheses, use a shortened version of the work title beginning with the first alphabetized word on the works cited page.

Ralph Ellison is "a writer of universal reach" ("Death" A18).

An indirect source

When your source quotes another source, mention the name associated with the original quotation in the text, and then use the abbreviation "qtd. in" in the parentheses before your indirect source information.

Wagner states that myth and history stood before him "with opposing claims" (qtd. in Thomas 65).

Remember, any time you borrow information or ideas, whether you quote directly or summarize or paraphrase in your own words, it is necessary to document your source(s). It can be tricky to determine what is considered "common knowledge," so when in doubt, CITE!

For more detailed information and specific citation rules, please refer to the MLA handbook: *MLA Handbook*. 9th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

¹ (Examples in this worksheet are single-spaced to conserve paper. Remember that your papers in MLA style should be double-spaced.)