How do I write in-text citations?

Whether you're paraphrasing your source or quoting it directly, you need to tell your readers exactly where you got your information. If you don't, you may be accused of plagiarizing your source.

When you're writing a paper in MLA style, you'll use parenthetical in-text citations to ensure that you've given credit to all of your sources. Parenthetical citations usually state the last name of the author (or authors), and the page number where the original quote or idea can be found.

Here's how you can incorporate citations into your writing:

**Paraphrasing with author's name in text:**

According to Smith, students become more confident using MLA style with practice (4-5).

**Paraphrasing with author's name in reference:**

Students become more confident using MLA style with practice (Smith 112-13).

**Quoting with author's name in the reference:**

It is true that "students may encounter difficulties when they attempt to learn MLA for the first time" (Smith 112-13).

**Citing a work with multiple authors:**

Lee and Perez note that well-written citations help readers find earlier research (112-13).

**Citing multiple works in the same sentence:**

MLA style is used across several disciplines, including cultural studies and English (Smith 112; Lee 146).

**Citing a work that's been quoted in your source (a secondary citation):**

A study by Smith finds that "students learn MLA faster than some other styles" (qtd. in Fowler: 53).

**Well-written citations help readers find earlier research (Lee and Perez 112-13).**

**Readers can use citations to locate earlier research (Park et al. 10).**

**MLA Reference Guide**

What is MLA format?

The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) has established formatting and style rules for scholarly papers and citations, with the intention of making papers easier to read and to help writers give credit to their sources clearly and consistently.

This handout will guide you through citing information according to the MLA Handbook, which was published in 2016.

On the next two pages, we'll walk you through creating citations for reference lists and share many examples of citations for different kinds of sources. On the last page, you'll find examples of in-text citations.

The Core Elements

The diagram to the right lists the "core elements" of a citation, the order you'll write them in, and the punctuation you'll use between each element. It doesn't matter what you're citing—a book, a video, or even a Tweet—you'll use the same format. The Handbook gives more examples of this diagram in action on pages 32-36.

How do I get help?

If you have any questions about formatting your paper or writing citations, check with your instructor first. He or she is the final authority on what your paper should look like, especially if the assignment's requirements differ from the guidelines outlined in the MLA manual.

**The Writing Center**

Writing Center consultants can help you develop your topic, organize your ideas, and proofread your paper.

WritingCenter@nu.edu
http://www.nu.edu/OurPrograms/StudentServices/WritingCenter.html

**The Library**

Your librarians can help you find good resources for your assignment.

refdesk@nu.edu
(866) 682-2237 x7900
http://library.nu.edu
If your source isn’t part of a larger work, italicize the title. Use a colon before a subtitle.


If your source is part of a larger work (e.g., an article in a journal, a chapter in a book, an episode in a TV series), then you’ll also include the larger work’s title. Italicize the title of the larger work.


Aside from the authors, your source might list other people who contributed, such as editors, illustrators, or translators. You should normally include them in your citation and note their role:


If there’s more than one version or edition of your source, you’ll need to state which one you’re using.


For one author:


For two authors:

Fink, Joseph, and Jeffrey Cranor. *Welcome to Night Vale*. Harper Perennial, 2015. *(Note: Only the first author’s name is inverted.)*

For three or more authors, list only the first, and then “et al.”


If your source is part of a larger work (e.g., an article in a journal, a chapter in a book, an episode in a TV series), the title will be placed in quotes.


If information about one of the core elements is missing (for example, there is no publication date), you can try to find this information using reliable external resources, and fill it in using square brackets. If you can’t find any reliable information, you can omit the core element from your citation.


If your source is part of a numbered series, include the series number. Journals will normally have a volume number and issue number.

Patton, Declan, and Andrew McIntosh. “Head and Neck Injury Risks in Heavy Metal: Head Bangers Stuck Between Rock and a Hard Bass.” *The BMJ*, vol. 337, no. 7684, 18 December 2008. 10.1136/bmj.a2825

The publisher is the organization primarily responsible for producing or publishing the material. You don’t need to provide a publisher for periodicals or for websites (if the website title and publisher name are the same).


Where available, state the day, month, and year of publication, in that order. Month names longer than four letters will be abbreviated (Jan., Feb., Mar., etc.).


If no date is available, you can omit this element from your citation.

For print works, use page numbers (preceded by a “pp.”) or ranges of page numbers (preceded by a “pp.”).


For ebooks, use the name of the database that hosts the book.


For other online works, use page numbers (if applicable) and the URL or DOI, and omit the period at the end of citation.
