

MLA Format: In-Text Citations



Writing Center

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This handout is based on the *MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers*, Seventh Edition, 2009.

Writers incorporate researched information into papers in 3 ways: **paraphrase**, **summary**, and **quotation**. All three uses require in-text citations to do the following:

- Identify the sources used in the paper.
- Direct the reader to the alphabetical list of Works Cited.
- Clearly distinguish the writer's own ideas from information taken from sources.

General guidelines:

- Name the author either in a signal phrase (Brooks argues...) or in a parenthetical citation (Brooks 35).
- Include a page number in the parentheses whenever possible. The abbreviation "p." is **not** required. If no page numbers are given, do **not** use numbers that result from printing out a document.
- Do **not** use punctuation between the author's name and the page number. Exception: with two or more works by the same author, include a short form of the title (Gilbertson, *Selected Speeches* 38).
- Place the citation as close to the cited material as possible and before punctuation marks that divide the sentence. Exception: block quotes, as illustrated on back page.
- Italicize titles of books, magazines and plays.
- Place quotation marks around titles of articles and short poems.
- For Internet citations, provide enough information to direct the reader to the Works Cited page.
- A direct quotation always requires **both** quotation marks and an in-text citation.

Examples:

- For one to three authors, give name(s) in the text **or** in the parenthetical citation. Give the page number(s) in the parenthetical citation.

According to Basu and Amin, the people of West Bengal and Bangladesh are not limited by political borders; a common language enables them to communicate political and religious difference (765).

The people of West Bengal . . . and religious difference (Basu and Amin 765).

- For more than three authors, you have two choices: either list them all, or give the first author's name followed by *et al.* (the Latin phrase meaning "and others").

Bowers, Griffith, Mariko, and Harue argue that due to similarities in the plot development of each play, both Hamlet and Chushingura could be played by the same set of actors from any given company (182).

Due to similarities in the plot . . . given company (Bowers et al. 182).

- If a source is from a corporation, organized group, government agency, or association, treat the organization as the author. If the name is long, identify it in the text rather than in parentheses.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, successful charter schools "operate with a clear mission, defined intentions, and thoughtful goal setting" (4).

- For a source with an unknown author, cite by mentioning the full title in the signal phrase, or by using an appropriate abbreviated version in the parenthetical citation.

“Lower Enrollment Issues Continue to Haunt District” depicts the difficulty one Michigan school system has with predicting enrollment during the economic downturn.

Like many Michigan school systems, Marlette has trouble predicting enrollment during the economic downturn (“Lower Enrollment Issues”).

- To cite a quotation or paraphrase found in someone else’s work (an indirect source), put “qtd. in” before the author’s name. Include only the source you used (e.g., Healy) in the Works Cited.

When planning to continue his interview process, Kauffman expressed his “degree of apprehension about coming back to Laramie” (qtd. in Healy A1).

- To cite sources for block quotes (quotes longer than four typed lines of verse or five lines of prose):
 - Set the quote apart from the text by indenting the entire quotation one inch from the left margin; maintain double-spacing. (Single-spacing is used here to conserve space.)
 - Use a colon to introduce a block quote unless the grammar of the quotation requires otherwise.
 - Do not use quotation marks around the block quote.
 - Include the parenthetical citation **after** the punctuation. Example from an anthology:

Connie’s intuition directs her to make judgments about Arnold Friend that she wouldn’t have made otherwise: Connie stared at him, another wave of dizziness and fear rising in her so that for a moment he wasn’t even in focus but was just a blur standing there against his gold car, and she had the idea that he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere and that everything about him and even about the music that was so familiar to her was only half real. (2598)

- When referring to an entire work, such as a film or a book, do so in the text of your paper, not inside parentheses. Include the full citation on your Works Cited page.

Jason Reitman’s film *Juno*, starring the free-spirited, sharp-tongued Juno McGuff, provides a look into one teenager’s experience with pregnancy that dispels many stereotypes.

- To cite two or more different sources in-text in the same sentence, include a parenthetical citation after each author’s paraphrased idea or quote. If sources are cited in the same parentheses, use alphabetical order and separate with a semicolon.

Studies have shown that children younger than eight are “unable to critically comprehend televised advertising messages” (“Television Advertising”), and that children between the ages of four and five generally can’t tell the difference between commercials and television programs (Ramsey).

Children who watch more than four hours of television a day are more likely to be obese (Lewis 49; Richards 23).

- When citing Web sites, if no author is given, identify the source by its title, either in the parenthetical citation or in the text of your paper.

SVSU’s students are encouraged to document every source they use in their writings to avoid violating the Student Code of Conduct, which was adopted by the Student Association in 2005 (“Academic Integrity”).

The Academic Integrity page of SVSU’s Web site encourages students to document every source they use in their writings to avoid violating the Student Code of Conduct, which was adopted by the Student Association in 2005.

