Library Quick Guide: Creating MLA In-Text Citations

For more examples of MLA citation practices, see:

- **MLA Handbook**, 8th ed. Available at the Library (Columbus) and the Learning Center (Delaware), under call # 808.027 M6859 2016.
- **MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics** by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab, https://owl.purdue.edu
- **MLA Research Guide** by the Columbus State Library, https://library.csc.edu/mla8

**MLA In-Text Citations:**

- Are used to credit the work of others in the text of your document. In-text citations are sometimes called *parenthetical citations*.

- Are placed in parentheses after a quote or paraphrased passage using an *author-page* format. There is no punctuation mark between the author and page number. Don’t use the initials p. or pp. when giving the page number.

- Are placed *before* the period at the end of the sentence. For block quotes, the in-text citation goes *after* the period.

- Must clearly point to a *specific* entry on the Works Cited page.

  **Tip 1:** It is a good idea to complete the Works Cited list before adding in-text citations to your research paper so that the in-text citation matches the format of the entry on the Works Cited page.

  **Tip 2:** Keep in-text citations brief. Provide just enough information for the reader to identify which source on the Works Cited page is being used.

**Works by one author (signal phrase)**—A signal phrase is a phrase, clause, or sentence that leads into a quote or paraphrase. Generally, a signal phrase includes the author’s last name (not in parentheses). Only the page number, if available, is placed in the in-text citation.

*Ex.* Waithe identifies Hypatia as “an eclectic philosopher with a Cynic’s literary and personal style that may have had as much to do with her risky status as both woman and pagan as with her philosophical affiliation” (534).

**Works by one author (no signal phrase)**—After a quote or paraphrase, add the author’s last name and page number, in parentheses, before the final punctuation mark of the sentence.

*Ex.* As a mathematician, astronomer and scholar, Hypatia “represented learning and science, which the early Christians associated with paganism” (Mendez 216).

**Two authors**—List the authors’ last names in order of their appearance followed by the page number. For example, look at a book’s title page or the byline of a newspaper article to find the correct information and order.

*Ex. 1* The *X-Files* episodes often “manifest as retelling of traditional myths and horror stories” (Irvine and Beattie 33).

*Ex. 2* Irvine and Beattie liken the aliens in *The X-Files* to the “Other onto which the broad conspiracy is projected” (33).

**Three or more authors**—List the first author’s last name, followed by *et al.* (“and others”) (Ex. 1).

*Ex. 1* According to Mooney et al., “[a]nimals living in groups rarely form a truly egalitarian society” (108).

*Ex. 2* Social status may influence a mammal’s psychological and physiological health (Mooney et al. 108).
Multiple works by one author—If using more than one work by the same author, include a shortened version of the title after the author’s last name. Place short works in quotes and italicize longer works. Separate the author’s name and the title with a comma.

Ex. One must look carefully for the beauty in life: “Nature is like one of those line drawings that are puzzles for children” (Dilliard, “Sight into Insight” 979).

Works with no known author—Use the title or a shortened version of the title followed by the page number.

Ex. The solitary man laments, “All is wretchedness in the realm of earth; fate’s work lays low the world under heaven” (“The Wanderer” 120).

Indirect quotations—If the quoted material is originally quoted in another source, add *qtd. in* (“quoted in”) to the beginning of the citation.

Ex. Doctorow warns parents, “Buying an iPad for your kids isn’t a means of jump-starting the realization that the world is yours to take apart and reassemble” (qtd. in Raja 610).

Block quotations—If your quote is longer than four lines in your text, start the quote on a new line and indent half an inch from the left margin. Do not use quotation marks, and keep the quote double-spaced. Place your in-text citation after the final period of your quote.

Ex. Hawksley highlights the tumultuous relationship model Lizzie Siddal had with Dante Rossetti:

> When they were in love and happy, they were deliciously so, not needing anyone else and perfectly content to stay cocooned together in Rosetti’s rooms for days at a time. When one—or both—of them was unhappy, ill, depressed or jealous, they made one another’s lives hellish. Throughout the nine long years of their strange courtship, they tested each other’s patience and trust to the limits. Self-destructive and self-loathing at times, as well as being arrogant about their abilities, both must have been extremely difficult to live with. (29-30)

Online Works—If an online source has no pagination or numbering, do not include a number in the in-text citation (Ex. 1). You can eliminate the need for an in-text citation by using a signal phrase (Ex. 2).

- If a source has explicitly numbered paragraphs, sections, or chapters include the number(s) using the abbreviations *par.* (pars.), *sec.* (secs.) or *ch.* (chs.). Place a comma after the author’s last name (Ex. 3).
- Do not include a URL in your signal phrase unless a link is needed to direct readers to the correct Works Cited entry; if necessary, provide only partial URLs, such as a domain name (Ex. CNN.com or Dispatch.com).

Ex. 1 The Chicago Cubs waited a long time for another World Series win: “The last time the Chicago Cubs won the World Series, the cosmic object known as Pluto was not yet discovered” (Tyson).

Ex. 2 Neil deGrasse Tyson jokes, “If you wished upon that first Star you saw tonight in twilight, then it will not likely come true. You wished on planet Venus.”

Ex. 3 Jonathan fears that he will never escape Dracula’s castle: “The last I saw of Count Dracula was his kissing his hand to me; with a red light of triumph in his eyes, and with a smile that Judas in hell might be proud of” (Stoker, ch. 4).

Time-Based Media—For audio or video recordings, include the time or time range the cited material occurs. Separate the numbers for hours, minutes, and seconds with a colon.

Ex. Sonmi-451 philosophizes, “Our lives are not our own. From womb to tomb, we are bound to others. Past and present. And by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future” (Cloud Atlas 02:33:35-34:06).