

MLA CITATIONS

How to cite sources in the text of your paper

In the MLA system, the sources of all research information must be identified in-text, whether quoted or summarized in your own words. Sources are identified by citations that appear in parentheses in the text of your essay. The citation leads the reader to the corresponding item on the Works Cited page where the full details on each source are given (see handout: **MLA Works Cited: Page Format**).

THE BASICS:

- Put the author's family name and page number(s), with no punctuation between. Use an en dash (-) or a hyphen in the page range.
 - (Martinez 78-79)
 - (Smith 6)
- If you mention the author's name in your essay –fairly close to the citation–don't repeat it. Cite the page number(s) only.
 - ... Aziz defends this view (78).
 - ... Chan argues that it is "grossly unfair" (34).

SPECIAL CASES:

Two Authors with the Same Last Name:

- Add initials.
 - (B. Jones 15) (W. Jones 67)

Two Works by the Same Author:

- Add a key word from each title.
 - (Jones, "Life" 82)
 - (Jones, "Causes" 53)
- Note that commas are needed.

A Work by Two Authors or More:

- If there are two authors, list both family names.
 - (Nguyen and Whitfield 3-5)
- If there are three or more authors, give the first author's family name with the Latin abbreviation "et al." (meaning "and others").
 - (Miller et al. 61-63)

IF THE TITLE COMES FIRST IN THE WORKS CITED ENTRY:

- References for websites, films, and encyclopedia articles will often begin with a title. In many cases, these sources have no page numbers.
 - (History Online)
 - (An Inconvenient Truth)
 - ("Confederation")
- Citations may consist of the title only.
- To keep citations brief, long titles must be shortened.
 - If the source has numbered paragraphs, refer to them instead of page numbers. You may also indicate numbered sections or chapters when possible.
 - ("Symbolism," par. 5)
 - ("Vermeer," sec. 2)
 - (Alchemy, chs. 10-11)
 - Note the use of commas.



MLA CITATIONS

Continued

NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS:

Short Story or Novel:

- If it is already clear who the author is, cite only the page(s)—but when necessary, include the author's surname, or use a key word from the title to distinguish between different works.

(Hemingway 27)
(Poe, "Usher" 5–7)
(Poe, *Gordon Pym* 45)
(15)
(45–46)

Poetry:

- If the poet and the poem are already identified, give the line number(s) only.
- The first time, use the word "line" or "lines" to show that you're citing lines, not pages; after the first time, you've established that you're referring to lines, so you may give just the number(s).

(Poe, "The Raven" lines 5–6)
(line 7)
(Ondaatje 15–16)
(10)

Plays:

- If the playwright is already identified, indicate act, scene, and line numbers only. Separate them with periods.
- When necessary, include the playwright's surname, or include a key word from the title (in italics) to distinguish between different plays.

(Shaw 4.3.25)
(Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3.14–16)
(3.1.56–59)

THE PLACEMENT OF CITATIONS:

When a segment of research information is summarized in your own words, the citation follows it immediately. It comes before a period or comma, as shown below:

The explorers failed to adapt to the severe northern climate (Parker 54–55).

Following a brief quotation, the citation is placed after the closing quotation marks but before a period or comma:

The Franklin Expedition was "doomed from the start" (Johnson 77).

Long quotations (more than four lines) are set off from the text of your essay as 'block quotations.' The entire passage must be doubly indented (two tabs). Quotation marks are not used with block quotations. In this case, the citation comes after the closing punctuation:

Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. Societies throughout the world must learn from this tragic example. (Kaplan 45–46)

For more information, consult the *MLA Handbook* or contact the Academic Skills Centre.