**MLA: Using Sources Correctly**

There are three main ways to uses sources in your research paper. You may quote. You may paraphrase. Or you may summarize. All three require an in-text (parenthetical) citation!

**In-text Citations**

You CANNOT use information from any website or published book unless you give the author (or site) credit--BOTH inside your text and at the end of your paper. In other words, it is NOT enough to simply list the sources you used on a Works Cited Page or References List.

As your instructor reads your essay, he or she should clearly be able to see which sentences, facts, or sections of your essay came from Source A, Source B, or Source C, etc. by looking at your in-text citations.

You can give credit to your sources within your text in two different ways: by using a signal phrase or by simply using an in-text citation.

**Signal phrase:** a signal phrase lets the reader know, right at the beginning of the sentence, that the information he or she is about to read comes from another source.

Example: Your paper might say something like....According to John Smith (2006), author of *Pocahontas Is My Love*, "Native American women value a deep spiritual connection to the environment."

*Notice that since I took a direct quote from John Smith's book, I placed those words in quotation marks. Notice also that I placed the date that the book was published directly after the author's name in parentheses--this is proper APA format. Finally, notice that because I explained WHO wrote the book and WHAT book it comes from, the reader is easily able not only to find the source on his/her own to check my facts, but the reader is also more likely to believe what I have to say now that they know that my information comes from a credible source.*

For Web Sources: If I was using a particular website (instead of John Smith's book), the signal phrase would look exactly the same, but I would say "According to Pocahontasrules.com..."

**In-Text Citation:** Use an in-text citation in situations where you are not quoting someone directly, but rather using information from another source such as a fact, summary, or paraphrase to support your own ideas.

Example: She stated, "Students often had difficulty using APA style," but she did not offer an explanation (Jones, 1998, p. 199).

*Notice that it's clear within this sentence that I'm referring to a certain person's beliefs, but since this person's name does not appear at the beginning of the sentence, I have placed her name, the year that her article was published, and the page number where I retrieved this information in parentheses at the end of the sentence.*

[Information on how to format an in-text citation](http://www.roanestate.edu/owl/MLA-In-Text-Citations.htm)

**Summarizing Sources**

Summarize an article or a larger section of an article whenever you simply want to present the author's general ideas in your essay.

How to Write an Effective Summary: Cover up the original article, it is key that you not quote from the original work. Restate what you've read in your own words, and be sure to give the author credit using an in-text citation.

Example: Congressman Joe Smith (2009) believes that our approach to reforming the healthcare system is backwards and costly. He discusses our rising national debt in "Healthcare: Let's Talk" and lists several statistics to prove that Obama's new plan will only make things worse.

Summaries are most often used to condense larger texts into more manageable chucks. However, as a writer you should be aware that this more manageable chunks and easily become vague and weigh your paper down with fluff.

**Paraphrasing Sources**

Paraphrase your sources whenever you believe that you can make the information from a source shorter and/or clearer for your audience. A paraphrase is NOT an exact copy of the original, simply changing a few words here and there is NOT acceptable.

Take a look at these examples:

The original passage from The Confident Student (6th ed.): “Whatever your age, health and well-being can affect your ability to do well in college. If you don’t eat sensibly, stay physically fit, manage your stress, and avoid harmful substances, then your health and your grades will suffer” (Kanar 158).

A legitimate paraphrase: No matter what condition your body is in, you can pretty much guarantee that poor health habits will lead to a lack of academic success. Students need to take time for their physical and emotional well-being, as well as their studies, during college (Kanar 158).

A **plagiarized** version: No matter how old you are, your well-being and your health can impact your ability to do a good job at school. If you choose not to eat well, exercise, deal with stress, and avoid getting drunk, then your grades will go down (Kanar 158).

***Because the art of paraphrasing is more concise than summarizing, a true paraphrase shows that you as a researcher completely understand the source work.***

**Quoting your sources**

If you need **help incorporating your sources into your essay**, the first thing you'll need to remember is that **quotes cannot stand alone**--they can't be placed in a sentence all by themselves. You need to make each quote a part of your essay by **introducing it beforehand and commenting on it afterward**.

Think of each quote like a sandwich—the quote is the meat on the inside, but before you taste the meat, you must also be introduced to the sandwich by the bread. After you bite down on that meat, you need the other piece of bread to round out the meal.

The top piece of bread will tell us where the quote came from and/or how it fits in with what’s already been discussed in the essay. The bottom piece of bread points out what was important about the quote and elaborates on what was being said.

**Quoting FAQ’s**

**How do I use partial quotations to liven up my writing?**

Be sure to introduce the author from the source work within the sentence itself and use quotation marks. No comma is necessary to introduce the quoted phrase.

Example:

Margaret Reardon points out that today's economy cars are "better equipped" to handle accidents than the smaller cars of the past.

**What are block quotations and how are they handled?**

Block, or indent, quotations longer than four lines of type. When a quotation is indented, the use of quotation marks is not necessary, and the page number is included **outside** the ending punctuation.

Example:

Jordan stated:

Like many people who enjoy a leisurely pace of living with such attendant activities as reading, painting, or gardening, I often long for a simpler time, a time when families amused themselves by telling stories after supper, as opposed to watching Baghdad get bombed. (1)

Block quotes are indented by one inch, and should be used sparingly.

**How do I punctuate shorter quotations?**

For a quotation shorter than four lines, quotation marks are used and the page numbers fall inside the ending punctuation.

Example:

According to DR. Shannon Marcus: "Many of our student's personal decisions will have the inherent dangers of instant gratification, and so will their political decisions," (548).

**Do I use a comma or a colon to introduce a quotation?**

A quotation is usually introduced by a comma or a colon. A colon precedes when a quotation is formally introduced or when the quotation itself is a complete sentence, but either no punctuation or a comma generally precedes when the quotation serves as an integral part of the sentence.

Compare:

Shelley argued thus: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

**but**

She thought poets "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

**or**

"Poets," according to Shelley, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

**or**

Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" concludes: "A sadder and a wiser man, / He rose the morrow morn."

**How do I correctly change a quotation to suit my purpose, such as to identify a pronoun?**

Often, a quotation you wish to use includes a pronoun instead of a name. Since you must copy the quotation verbatim, you should insert the name after the pronoun to clarify who you are talking about. Use brackets (not parenthesis).

Example: "He [Clapton] got the chills when he listened to that material recently."

**What if my quotation contains a mistake?**

Additionally, if your source makes a “mistak”, you copy the mistake because direct quotations are copied verbatim. However, you indicate that the mistake is not yours by using [sic], which means "thus" and tells the reader that the error appears in the original.

Example:

The professor stressed that "if your source makes a mistak [sic], you should copy the mistake because direct quotations are copied verbatim."

**If quotations are verbatim, how do I leave something out of a quotation that I do not need?**

Use ellipsis marks if you wish to leave something out of the middle of a quotation (perhaps it is not needed or will make your quotation too long).

Original Source:

She states that

many of our students' personal decisions will have the inherent dangers of instant gratification, and so will their political decisions. Virtual reality will make it possible for them to program themselves into scenarios we now merely fantasize about. As a result, imagination itself will require a new definition. (1)

Quoted with ellipses:

She states that

many of our students' personal decisions will have the inherent dangers of instant gratification, and so will their political decisions. . . . As a result, imagination itself will require a new definition. (1)

Note 1: There are only three ellipses marks used in this sentence. A period also appears, indicating that one sentence ended before the word "As." If you had only left out a few words in mid-sentence, then you would not need a period.

Note 2: Do not change the meaning of the quotation when you leave out part of it!

Note 3: Notice that now that information has been removed from the middle of the quotation, it is only three lines long. It should no longer be indented.

Use ellipsis marks ( . . . ) at the beginning and end of quotations only if necessary. It is not always necessary to do so, and too many will damage the flow of your essay. Use them sparingly.

**If my source quotes somebody else, how do I indicate this?**

When you have a quotation within a quotation, handle it this way:

Indented original (article by David Fricke appearing in *Rolling Stone*):

Clapton [Eric] got the chills when he listened to that material recently. It was the first time he had done so in over fifteen years. "It got too much for me," he says. "Old memories started coming back; old issues raised their head. I think of the people in that band and what happened to them." (qtd. in Fricke 26)

Notice that this quotation is indented because it is longer than four lines. Therefore, no quotation marks are used at the beginning or the end. The quotation marks that appear at the end are the result of needing quotation marks around Clapton's remark, not because the entire paragraph is a quotation. Notice also that the first line is indented an additional five spaces. That's because it's the first sentence in the paragraph in the original. If you begin a quotation in mid-paragraph, there is no indention.

Clapton's name does not appear on your Works Cited page as he is not your source. Fricke is the source. Therefore, Fricke's name should appear. Since Clapton is speaking, however, use "qtd. in" (quoted in) for clarification.

## MLA In-Text Citations

Any time you refer to, comment on, paraphrase, or quote another writer’s information, you must document this in your essay through the use of a citation. The purpose of an MLA in-text citation, sometimes called a parenthetical reference, is to help readers easily find the sources in the Works Cited page that correspond to your referenced passage. You will want to make this process as easy as possible for the reader, so the citations are always placed at the end of the sentence and should always correspond with the first word of the matching Works Cited page entry. Let’s suppose that this is a sentence from your essay:

The author explains, “Record deals were usually negotiated by elite businessmen” (Hennessey 127).

Your reader should be able to turn to the Works Cited page and easily find the bibliographic information for this source. It might be listed like this:

Hennessey, William. The Making of Records in Memphis. Atlanta: Capital Book Press, 2001.

Notice that the author’s name in the citation corresponds to the first word of the Works Cited entry. This makes it really easy for the reader to find and match up information, which is the purpose of in-text citations.

Two primary elements of a quoted passage should be given to the reader: 1) the author’s last name and 2) the page number where the referenced passage is found. The page number is always included in the citation at the end of the sentence, but the author’s last name can be placed either in the citation or in the sentence. Here are a few items to remember concerning in-text citations:

* No “page” or “pg.” or “p.#” or any other variant is used to indicate the page number.
* End punctuation goes at the end of the citation, not at the end of the passage.
* Author’s name can either be placed in the citation or in the sentence.
* No comma or other punctuation mark is needed to separate the author’s name and the page number.

**Here are a few of the most common in-text citations that you might need to write in your essay:**

**One author:**

Example 1: Louis Armstrong easily reached difficult notes, the F’s and G’s that hindered so many other trumpeters (Bergreen 258).

Example 1a: Bergreen explained, “Louis Armstrong easily reached difficult notes, the F’s and G’s that hindered so many other trumpeters” (258).

* Note: If the work has no page numbers (i.e. website) simply put the author’s last name in parentheses.

**Two or three authors of the same work**:

Example 3: In Metaphors We Live By, Lakoff and Johnson suggest that metaphors “actually structure our perceptions and understanding” (57).

Example 3a: In Metaphors We Live By, the authors suggest that metaphors “actually structure our perceptions and understanding” (Lakoff and Johnson 57).

* Note: If the work had three authors the citation would read (Lakoff, Johnson, and Smith 57). Remember that there is no comma between the names and the page number, and all authors must be listed either in the sentence or in the citation.

**Four or more authors of the same work:**

Example 4: Changes in social regulations are likely to cause new fears among voters (Carber et al. 64).

Example 4a: Carber et al. claim that changes in social regulations are likely to cause new fears among voters (64).

* Note: Only the first author, followed by the term "et al." is listed either in the sentence or in the citation. Don't forget to place a period after "al" since it is an abbreviation of a Latin word, but no period is used after “et.”

**A work with no author (an organization or website):**

Example 5: According to The Center for Contemporary Cultural studies, “There is nothing concrete about hierarchy” (10).

Example 5a: “There is nothing concrete about hierarchy” (Center 10).

* Note: When we don’t have a known author or editor, we can use the book title (in italics), the article title (in quotation marks), or the Web site title (in italics). If we include this title in our sentence, we should write out the entire title. If we include it in our citation, we can shorten it using the first keyword (just be sure that your reader can still find the corresponding entry in your Works Cited page).

**Using literary quotations**

**Use the guidelines below to learn how to use literary quotations.**

**Incorporating Quotations**

* As you choose quotations for a literary analysis, remember the *purpose* of quoting.
* Your paper develops an argument about what the author of the text is doing--how the text "works."
* You use quotations to support this argument; that is, you select, present, and discuss material from the text specifically to "prove" your point--to make your case--in much the same way a lawyer brings evidence before a jury.
* Quoting for any other purpose is counterproductive.

**Punctuating and Indenting Quotations**

For the most part, you must reproduce the spelling, capitalization, and internal punctuation of the original exactly.

The following alterations are acceptable:

**Changing the closing punctuation**

You may alter the closing punctuation of a quotation in order to incorporate it into a sentence of your own:

"Books are not life," Lawrence emphasized.

Commas and periods go inside the closing quotation marks; the other punctuation marks go outside.

Lawrence insisted that books "are not life"; however, he wrote exultantly about the power of the novel.

Why does Lawrence need to point out that "Books are not life"?

**Using the slash when quoting poetry**

When quoting lines of poetry up to three lines long (which are not indented, see [Indenting quotations](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuoLiterature.html#indenting)), separate one line of poetry from another with a slash mark (see examples in [Incorporating Quotations into Sentences](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuoLitIncorporating.html)).

**Using Ellipsis Points for Omitted Material**

If for the sake of brevity you wish to omit material from a quoted passage, use ellipsis points (three spaced periods) to indicate the omission.

(See this [sample paragraph](JavaScript:openPopWin(%22QuoLitSample.html%22,%20620,%20450,%20%22resizable%22,%2025,%2025)). The writer quoted only those portions of the original sentences that related to the point of the analysis.)

**Using Square Brackets when Altering Material**

When quoting, you may alter grammatical forms such as the tense of a verb or the person of a pronoun so that the quotation conforms grammatically to your own prose; indicate these alterations by placing square brackets around the changed form.

In the following quotation "her" replaces the "your" of the original so that the quote fits the point of view of the paper (third person):

When he hears Cordelia's answer, Lear seems surprised, but not dumbfounded. He advises her to "mend [her] speech a little." He had expected her to praise him the most; but compared to her sisters', her remarks seem almost insulting (1.1.95).

**Indenting Quotations**

Prose or verse quotations less than four lines long are not indented. For quotations of this length, use the patterns described above.

Indent "longer" quotations in a block about ten spaces in from the left margin; when a quotation is indented, quotation marks are not used.

The *MLA Handbook* (1995) recommends that indented quotations be double-spaced, but many instructors prefer them single-spaced. The meaning of "longer" varies slightly from one style system to another, but a general rule is to indent quotations that are more than two (or three) lines of verse or three (or four) lines of prose.

Indent dialogue between characters in a play. Place the speaker's name before the speech quoted:

CAESAR: Et tu, Brute! Then, fall, Caesar!

CINNA: Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! (3.1.77-78)

For more information see [Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources - How to Quote a Source](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html).

**Emphasizing Your Ideas**

**What to include in literary analysis**

Take a look at this [sample paragraph](JavaScript:openPopWin(%22QuoLitSample.html%22,%20620,%20450,%20%22resizable%22,%2025,%2025)). It includes 3 basic kinds of materials:

1. statements expressing the student's own ideas about the relationship Woolf is creating;
2. data or evidence from the text in summarized, paraphrased, and quoted form; and
3. discussion of how the data support the writer's interpretation.

The quotations are used in accordance with the writer's purpose, i.e. to show how the development of Mrs. Ramsey's feelings indicates something about her personality.

**Should I quote?**

Quoting is only one of several ways to present textual material as evidence.

You can also refer to textual data, [summarize, and paraphrase](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html). You will often want merely to refer or point to passages (as in the third sentence in the [sample paragraph](JavaScript:openPopWin(%22QuoLitSample.html%22,%20620,%20450,%20%22resizable%22,%2025,%2025))) that contribute to your argument.

In other cases you will want to paraphrase, i.e. "translate" the original into your own words, again instead of quoting. Summarize or paraphrase when it is not so much the language of the text that justifies your position, but the substance or content.

**Quote selectively**

Similarly, after you have decided that you do want to use material in quoted form, quote only the portions of the text specifically relevant to your point.

Think of the text in terms of units--words, phrases, sentences, and groups of sentences (paragraphs, stanzas)--and use only the units you need.

If it is particular words or phrases that "prove" your point, you do not need to quote the sentences they appear in; rather, incorporate the words and phrases into sentences expressing your own ideas.

**Maintaining Clarity and Readability**

**Introduce your quotations**

Introduce a quotation either by indicating what it is intended to show or by naming its source, or both.

For non-narrative poetry, it's customary to attribute quotations to "the speaker"; for a story with a narrator, to "the narrator."

For plays, novels, and other works with characters, identify characters as you quote them.

**Do not use two quotations in a row, without intervening material of your own.**

For further information see [Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources - How to Quote a Source](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html).

**Pay attention to verb tense**

Tense is a tricky issue. It's customary in literary analysis to use the present tense; it is at the present time that you (and your reader) are looking at the text.

But events in a narrative or drama take place in a time sequence. You will often need to use a past tense to refer to events that took place before the moment you are presently discussing:

When he hears Cordelia's answer, Lear seems surprised, but not dumbfounded. He advises her to "mend [her] speech a little." He had expected her to praise him the most; but compared to her sisters', her remarks seem almost insulting (1.1.95).

**Documenting Quotations**

Follow your course instructor's guidelines for documenting sources. If your instructor hasn't told you which system to use to document sources, ask.

Keep in mind that when you are writing a paper about the same text and quoting from the same edition that everyone else in the class is, instructors will often allow you to use informal documentation. In this case just include the page number in parentheses after the quotation or reference to the text. To be sure, though, you should ask your course instructor.

The documentation style used in this pages is that presented in the 1995 *MLA Handbook*, but other style systems are commonly used. The Writing Center has information about the rules of [documentation in general](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Documentation.html) and about a number of the most common systems, such as [APA](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPA.html), [APSA](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html), [CBE](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocCSE.html), [Chicago/Turabian](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocChicago.html), [MLA](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocMLA.html), and [Numbered References](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocNumberedReferences.html).

Using quotes properly in essays (using MLA style)

1. If there is an obvious error in the quoted passage, for example a spelling error, add (sic) (Latin meaning "thus") after the error, e.g., "The theraputic (sic) remarks upset the patient immensely" (Morley 24).

2. To emphasize a passage you may italicize, bold, or underline it, but you must add (italics mine) or (emphasis added) in parentheses after the passage emphasized, e.g., "My job is the ***best job*** (italics mine) there is" (Gates 147). Or, "My job is the best job (emphasis added) there is" (Gates 147). In the [MLA Handbook](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0873529863/ref=nosim/aresearchguid-20), however, Gibaldi finds that it is rarely appropriate to use italics for emphasis in writing research papers (95) and that "In research papers and manuscripts submitted for publication, words that would be italicized in print are best underlined" (94).

3. To quote 1 or 2 lines of verse, poem, or poetry, you may use a back slash (/) to mark the end of the first line, e.g., In "Logan Braes," John Mayne writes: "Revered by friends, and far frae faes, / We'd live in bliss on Logan Braes" (363).

4. To quote 4 or less lines of prose, you can include the passage within quotation marks as part of your text, e.g. Dick Oliver concludes that "all communication industries [. . .] are moving rapidly toward exclusively digital technology" (24).

5. To quote 5 or more lines of prose, or 3 or more lines of verse, begin on a new line, set the quoted passage off from the text of your essay by indenting 1" (2.5 cm) or about 10 spaces from the left margin, double-space between lines, without using quotation marks.

Example:

**In their Introduction to Computer Science with C++, Lambert, Nance, and Naps stress that,:**

**The key to writing a successful program is planning. Good programs do not just happen: they are the**

**result of careful design and patience. [. . .]. Writing a program is like writing an essay: An overall**

**theme is envisioned, an outline of major ideas is developed, each major idea is subdivided into several**

**parts, and each part is developed using individual sentences (15).**

6. To omit part of a quoted passage, you need to indicate the omission by the use of 3 spaced dots enclosed in square brackets, e.g., "The local politicians believe welfare [. . .] should all be paid for through income taxes" (Stewart 1).

7. If your omission is at the end of the sentence, i.e. with an ellipsis at the end, there will be a total of four dots (3 spaced dots enclosed in square brackets followed by a period immediately outside the square brackets, and no period at the end of the parentheses), e.g., "Africa is more than warlords and tyrants [. . .]." (De Villiers and Hirtle 15)

8. If you are quoting 3 or more lines of verse but want to omit one or more full lines, indicate the omission by a single line of spaced dots across the page, enclosed in square brackets, e.g.,

[. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]

9. To add a word or a remark to a quotation, or to replace a word or remark in the quotation, you must place your word or remark in square brackets [ ], e.g., "The child [Adam] was left miserably abandoned" (Price 206).

Choose different signal phrases to add variety

