



MLA Citation Format Adapted from the MLA Handbook, 7th edition

MLA citation format is a method for formatting your paper and documenting the sources of information you use in your paper. The proper use of a citation format such as MLA can help you avoid plagiarism.

Parenthetical citations within the text of your paper let your reader know when you've used information from another source. The parenthetical citation corresponds to a source listed on your works cited page.

You must cite the source within your text any time you use others' work, facts, ideas, statistics, diagrams, charts, drawings, music, or words in your paper. Whether you quote, paraphrase, or summarize a single phrase or a whole chapter, you must acknowledge the original author no matter how much of the source you use or how often you use it.

When you quote from a source, be sure to put quotation marks around the author's exact words, and be sure the quoted material is copied exactly. Even if you use just a few words from an author in a sentence that is mostly your own, you still have to use quotation marks around those apt words and cite your source parenthetically at the end of the sentence.

When you paraphrase, or put information from a source into your own words, you must change not only the words of the original source, but also the sentence structure, and you must cite the source within your text. Even if your whole paragraph is a paraphrase or summary of one source, it is not acceptable to cite only at the end of the paragraph. You must clearly signal where your borrowing begins and cite throughout the paragraph as necessary to make clear to your reader that you are still borrowing from the same source.

The format of your paper should follow these guidelines: double space the entire paper, including the heading and title, quotations, and works cited list; set one-inch margins for all sides of the paper; include a header with your last name and the page number one-half inch from the top of the paper and flush with the right margin. Use a readable, 12-point font.

Examples of Parenthetical Citation

1. One critic complains of the authors, "They're sheep in wolves' clothing who manage to write about bad things and make you feel good" (Bukiet 35).

[Note that both the author and page number are cited in parentheses.]

2. Anna Funder explains that the Stasi "was a bureaucracy metastasised through East German society" (sic) (5).

[Because the author's name is given in the sentence, only the page number is cited in parentheses.

Quotations must be presented exactly as they appear in the original text. The addition of *sic* in parentheses after the quotation lets readers know that the quotation was typed accurately despite the appearance of a mistake or misspelling. (Funder is Australian and uses the British spelling of *metastasized*.)]

3. Herr Bock, a former training professor at the Ministry of State Security, explains that, above all, an informer "needed to be honest, faithful, and trustworthy" (qtd. in Funder 200).
[If you quote or paraphrase text that is itself quoted from another source, you should cite the indirect source—the one that you have accessed and read yourself—not the original one. Begin your parenthetical citation with *qtd. in*, which is short for *quoted in*.]
4. Most of the reports submitted to the Starbucks Business and Ethics Compliance Department address issues in the category of employee relations ("Business Ethics").
[Even if you paraphrase (i.e. put information from the source into your own words), you still must provide a citation at the end of the sentence. If the source does not list an author, use the first word or two of the title in your parenthetical citation. In this example, the source does not have page or paragraph numbers because it is a web site.]
5. Louis Herman and his colleagues used hand and arm signals to communicate with the dolphins: "For instance, a pumping motion of the closed fists meant 'hoop,' and both arms extended overhead (as in jumping jacks) meant 'ball'" (Morell 54).
[You may use a colon after a full sentence to introduce a quotation. When quotation marks are included in the original text, the internal (or original) quotations marks become single.]
6. After his father hits him and then explains why, Sarty experiences a burgeoning sense of hopelessness:
 [It was as if the blow and the following calm, outrageous voice still rang, repercussed, divulging nothing to him save the terrible handicap of being young, the light weight of his few years, just heavy enough to prevent his soaring free of the world as it seemed to be ordered but not heavy enough to keep him footed solid in it, to resist it and try to change the course of its events. (Faulkner 713)
Sarty feels as if he is caught in limbo, old enough to be aware of the complexities in the world around him but still too young to have any control over his life.
[Long quotations are indented one inch from the left margin without quotation marks, and the period is placed before the parenthetical citation. After the blocked quotation, your analysis of the quote should continue at the left margin. The *I* in *It* appears in brackets because it is not capitalized in the original.]
7. In Egypt, "For many low income women . . . voting is less of a political act and more of an informal economic activity" (Blaydes and El Tarouty 371).
[Use an ellipsis—three periods with spaces in between—to show that words were left out of the middle of the quoted sentence. A period followed by an ellipsis indicates material left out between two sentences, rather than in the middle of one.]
8. Boccaccio preferred to read literature that was "cellular" in terms of organization with stories told in "autonomous sequences" instead of one long narrative (Usher xviii).
[Be sure to use quotation marks around key words from your source and cite parenthetically at the end of the sentence.]