MLA In-Text (Parenthetical) Citations

Basic In-Text Citation Rules:

In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done by using what is known as parenthetical citation. This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote, a paraphrase, or a summary.

General Guidelines:

- The source information required in a parenthetical citation depends (1.) upon the source medium (e.g. Print, Web, DVD) and (2.) upon the source's entry on the Works Cited (bibliography) page.
- Any source information that you provide in-text must correspond to the source information on the Works Cited page. More specifically, whatever signal word or phrase you provide to your readers in the text, must be the first thing that appears on the left-hand margin of the corresponding entry in the Works Cited List—most likely, it's the author's last name.

In-Text Citations: Author-Page Style:

MLA format follows the author-page method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear on your Works Cited page. The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence.

Note: if there is no page number, which happens frequently with online or Web sources, make sure you indicate this by putting "n. pag." inside the parentheses. It should look like this: **(n. pag.)**.

For example:

> Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).
>
> **OR**
>
> Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).
>
> Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

Both citations in the examples above, (263) and (Wordsworth 263), tell readers that the information in the sentence can be located on page 263 of a work by an author named Wordsworth. If readers want more information about this source, they can turn to the Works Cited page, where, under the name of Wordsworth, they would find the following information:

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Oxford U.P., 1967. Print.

Citing Sources with Known Author:

For Print sources like books, magazines, scholarly journal articles, and newspapers, provide a signal word or phrase (usually the author's last name) and a page number. If you provide the signal word/phrase in the sentence, you do not need to include it in the parenthetical citation.

For example:

Human beings have been described as "symbol-using animals" (Burke 3).

OR

Human beings have been described by Kenneth Burke as "symbol-using animals" (3).

These examples must correspond to an entry that begins with Burke, which will be the first thing that appears on the left-hand margin of an entry in the Works Cited:

Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966. Print.

Citing Sources with No Known Author:

When a source has no known author, use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name. Place the title in quotation marks if it's a short work (e.g. articles) or italicize it if it's a longer work (e.g. plays, books, television shows, entire websites) and provide a page number.

For example:

We see so many global warming hotspots in North America likely because this region has "more readily accessible climatic data and more comprehensive programs to monitor and study environmental change" ("Impact of Global Warming").

In this example, since the reader does not know the author of the article, an abbreviated title of the article appears in the parenthetical citation which corresponds to the full name of the article which appears first at the left-hand margin of its respective entry in the Works Cited. Thus, the writer includes the title in quotation marks as the signal phrase in the parenthetical citation in order to lead the reader directly to the source on the Works Cited page. The Works Cited entry appears as follows:

"The Impact of Global Warming in North America." *GLOBAL WARMING: Early Signs*. 1999. n. pag. Web. 23 Mar. 2009.

Citing Poems and Plays:

Plays and poems are cited the same way, regardless of if they are Web based or Print based sources. For these sources, you want to include the act, scene, book, canto, stanza, verse, or

line numbers instead of page numbers. Use Arabic numbers in your citations, even if the source uses Roman numerals (6 instead of VI).

<u>Play example;</u>

>Hamlet's existential angst is expressed in his famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be: that is the question" (Shakespeare 3.1.56).

Since this example is a play, we have the author's last name, act number, scene number, and line number.

<u>Poem example:</u>

>The epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, opens with the line, "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit" (Milton 1.1).

Since this example is a poem, we have the author's last name, the stanza number, and the line number.

Citing Authors with Same Last Names:

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which a quotation is taken. For instance, if two or more authors have the same last name, provide both authors' first initials (or even the authors' full name if different authors share initials) in your citation.

<u>For example:</u>

>Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

Citing a Work by Multiple Authors:

For a source with three or fewer authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

<u>For example:</u>

>Smith, Yang, and Moore argue that tougher gun control is not needed in the United States (76).

>**OR**

>The authors state "Tighter gun control in the United States erodes Second Amendment rights" (Smith, Yang, and Moore 76).

For a source with more than three authors, use the work's bibliographic information as a guide for your citation. Provide the first author's last name followed by "et al." or list all the last names in the text, not in the citation.

Legal experts counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (Jones et al. 4).

OR

Jones et al. counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

OR

Jones, Driscoll, Ackerson, and Bell counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

Citing Multiple Works by the Same Author:

If you cite more than one work by the same particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the others.

<u>For example:</u>

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

Additionally, if the author's name is not mentioned in the sentence, you would format your citation with the author's name followed by a comma, followed by a shortened title of the work, followed, when appropriate, by page numbers:

Visual studies, because it is such a new discipline, may be "too easy" (Elkins, "Visual Studies" 63).

Citing Indirect Sources:

Sometimes you may have to use an indirect source. An indirect source is a source cited in another source. For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source you actually consulted.

<u>For example:</u>

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd. in Weisman 259).

Note: In most cases, a responsible researcher will attempt to find the original source, rather than citing an indirect source.

Citing Sources from the Internet:

With more and more scholarly work being posted on the Internet, you may have to cite research you have completed in virtual environments. While many sources on the Internet should not be used for scholarly work, some Web sources are perfectly acceptable for research. When creating in-text citations for electronic, film, or Internet sources, remember that your citation must reference the source in your Works Cited.

Sometimes writers are confused with how to craft parenthetical citations for electronic sources because of the absence of page numbers. For electronic and Internet sources, follow the following guidelines:

- You do not need to give paragraph numbers or page numbers based on your Web browser's print preview function.
- Unless you must list the website name in the signal phrase in order to get the reader to the appropriate entry, do NOT include URLs in-text. Only provide partial URLs such as when the name of the site includes, for example, a domain name, like *CNN.com* or *Forbes.com* as opposed to writing out http://www.cnn.com or http://www.forbes.com.

For example:

"Increasingly more U.S. kids are taking behavioral drugs, according to several studies" (Park n. pag.).

This example is from *CNN.com*, and it does not have page numbers. This is indicated by the use of "n. pag." after the author's last name inside the parentheses.

"Understanding the six basic tenses allows one to re-create much of the reality of time in his writing" ("Verb" n. pag.).

This example is from a website, and the article or page has no author or page number. This is indicated by a shortened version of the title of the page "Verb" and "n. pag." inside the parentheses.

Citing Miscellaneous Non-Print Sources:

For example:

Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* stars Herzog's long-time film partner, Klaus Kinski. During the shooting of *Fitzcarraldo*, Herzog and Kinski were often at odds, but their explosive relationship fostered a memorable and influential film.

During the presentation, Jane Yates stated that invention and pre-writing are areas of rhetoric that need more attention.

In the two examples above "Herzog" from the first entry and "Yates" from the second lead the reader to the first item each citation's respective entry on the Works Cited page:

Herzog, Werner, dir. *Fitzcarraldo*. Perf. Klaus Kinski. Filmverlag der Autoren, 1982. Film.

Yates, Jane. "Invention in Rhetoric and Composition." Gaps Addressed: Future Work in Rhetoric and Composition, CCCC, Palmer House Hilton, 2002. Print.

Citing Electronic Sources:

For example:

> One online film critic stated that *Fitzcarraldo* is "a beautiful and terrifying critique of obsession and colonialism" (Garcia, "Herzog: a Life" n. pag.).

> The *Purdue OWL* is accessed by millions of users every year. Its "MLA Formatting and Style Guide" is one of the most popular resources (Stolley n. pag.).

In the first example, the writer has chosen not to include the author name in-text; however, two entries from the same author appear in the Works Cited. Thus, the writer includes both the author's last name and the article title in the parenthetical citation in order to lead the reader to the appropriate entry on the Works Cited page (see below). Both corresponding Works Cited entries are as follows:

> Garcia, Elizabeth. "Herzog: a Life." *Online Film Critics Corner*. The Film School of New Hampshire, 2 May 2002. n. pag. Web. 8 Jan. 2009.

> Stolley, Karl. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The OWL at Purdue*. 10 May 2006. n. pag. Web. 12 May 2006 .

Multiple Citations:

To cite multiple sources in the same parenthetical reference, separate the citations by a semi-colon:

For example:

> as has been discussed elsewhere (Burke 3; Dewey 21).

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