

quicks tips

MLA DOCUMENTATION STYLE: IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Each academic discipline has its own expectations for style and documentation. Often, these disciplines rely on a broad system of guidelines that are determined by professional organizations in the field. In literature and composition fields, the standard style is MLA (Modern Language Association).

MLA DOCUMENTATION RELIES ON A COMBINATION OF IN-TEXT CITATIONS (AUTHOR AND PAGE NUMBER) AND A WORKS CITED PAGE (FULL BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION). MLA does not typically use endnotes or footnotes; however, some scholars make use of the Chicago Manual guidelines in order to include these items. (For more information, consult the Center for Writing's quicktip on Chicago Documentation Style.) For an example of a works cited page, please see the quicktip by that title.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS APPEAR AFTER QUOTED OR PARAPHRASED INFORMATION. The two key features of an MLA-style in-text citation are the following:

1. The in-text citation generally requires the **author's last name** and the **page number** from which the cited information comes (unless the author's name is clear, in which case a page number is all that is required).
2. **No comma** is placed between the author name and page number, and the **period appears after the citation** (except for long quotes, which are indented—see below for further information).

Beyond these guidelines, adjustments need to be made for internet material (generally doesn't use page numbers; use a title if there is no author), two books by the same author (use the titles), or two authors with the same last name (use a first initial in addition to the last name).

Standard entry (author's last name + page number):

"A fully dressed woman walked out of the water" (Morrison 50).

With author's name in signal phrase (page number alone):

Morrison's narrator tells us that "[a] fully dressed woman walked out of the water" (50).

Internet source, no author (title alone):

"The Center for Writing helps all University of Minnesota undergraduate students who want to improve their writing abilities" (Center for Writing).

Two books by same author (title of work plus page number):

"The things they carried were largely determined by necessity" (*The Things They Carried* 2).

Two authors with same last name (Author's first initial and last name + page number):

"The greatest challenge was getting the right sample materials" (R. Jones 17).

QUOTATIONS OR IDEAS THAT NAME THE AUTHOR IN A SIGNAL PHRASE REQUIRE ONLY THE PAGE NUMBER IN PARENTHESES.

Standard entry: “A fully dressed woman walked out of the water” (Morrison 50).

With name in signal phrase: Morrison’s narrator tells us that “[a] fully dressed woman walked out of the water” (50).

COMMON STRUCTURES FOR SIGNAL PHRASES

Writers can use signal phrases in several ways when they introduce quoted or cited material into their texts. Below are some of the most common:

According to Morrison, “...”

Morrison **suggests** that “...”

As Hacker **points out** in her introduction, “...”

After **observing** that “...,” Vandenberg goes on to **hypothesize** that “...”

Editor David Nadelberg **offers** a tongue-in-cheek explanation of the teen diary phenomenon: “...”

COMMON VERBS FOR SIGNAL PHRASES

acknowledges	confirms	grants	refutes
adds	contends	hypothesizes	rejects
admits	continues	illustrates	replies
argues	declares	implies	reports
asserts	denies	insists	responds
believes	describes	notes	shows
claims	disputes	observes	suggests
comments	emphasizes	points out	writes
compares	endorses	proposes	
concludes	explains	reasons	

Adapted from Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 336.

LONG QUOTES, OR BLOCK QUOTATIONS

Block quotations, or quotations that take up more than four lines of your text, are set off beginning on a new line and indented five spaces. Block quotations differ from brief in-text quotations in two ways:

1. Block quotations **do not require quotation marks**. The visual setting-off of the passage, along with the parenthetical citation at the end, signal to readers of MLA-style papers that they are reading a quotation, not your own words.
2. The parenthetical citation at the end of a block quotation comes **after the period**, not before it.