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 of Style guidelines in order to include these items. (For more information, consult the Center for Writing’s quicktips on Chicago Documentation Style.) For an example of a works cited page, 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** (if available) from which the cited information comes (unless the author’s name is evident from the context, 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).

**Basic format** (author’s last name + page number in citation):

- The narrator observes that “a fully dressed woman walked out of the water” (Morrison 50).

  Willie reflects, “I felt the world around me creak and strain, snapping apart, fiber by fiber, like a rope pulled too tautly” (Groff 2).

**Format with author’s name in signal phrase** (page number alone in citation):

- Morrison’s narrator observes that “a fully dressed woman walked out of the water” (50).

  Groff emphasizes Willie’s anxiety through figurative language: “I felt the world around me creak and strain, snapping apart, fiber by fiber, like a rope pulled too tautly” (2).

**CITATIONS FOR ALL SORTS OF SOURCES ARE DERIVED FROM THIS BASIC FORMAT.** See below for some of the most common variations. For more, visit the “Humanities” section of “Research and Documentation Online 5th edition”: http://bscs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/

**Two or more titles by same author** (author’s last name + comma + shortened version of title + page number):

- Mr. Dursley is introduced as “a big, beefy man with hardly any neck” (Rowling, *Sorcerer’s Stone* 1).
Website with organization or corporation as author (name of corporate author/organization in parentheses, no page number):
“Student Writing Support offers all University of Minnesota students free, individualized writing instruction, both face-to-face and online” (Center for Writing).

Web page with unknown author (title of web page in quotation marks):
One key component of the Birmingham Pledge is the commitment to “treat all people with dignity and respect; and...[to] strive daily to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of my effort” (“The Birmingham Pledge: Mission”).

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.

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

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(Hacker 336)

Works Cited


