

MLA CITATIONS

In a term paper, the sources of all research information must be identified, even though most points are summarized in your own words. In the MLA system, sources are identified by citations placed in parentheses in the text of your essay. These citations *follow* each passage of research information and each direct quotation.

Citations are always based on the first item in the works-cited entry for the corresponding source. That allows the reader to make the connection easily. Citations should remain brief and simple, and should not clutter the text or interrupt its flow any more than necessary.

- *The most common form of citation: author's family name and page number(s), with no punctuation.*

(Smith 6)

(Martinez 78-79)

Special Cases:

If you have two authors with the same last name, add an initial — (B. Jones 15) vs (W. Jones 67).

When citing two works by the same author, add a key word from each title—(Jones, “Causes” 53) vs (Jones, “Life” 82). Note that commas are needed in this case.

- *If you mention the author's name in your essay—fairly close to the citation—don't repeat it. Cite the page number(s) only.*

... Aziz defends this view (78-79). ... Chan argues that it is “grossly unfair” (34).

- *When citing a source by two authors, list both family names. If there are three or more authors, give the first author's family name with the Latin abbreviation “et al.” (meaning “and others”).*

(Nguyen and Whitfield 3-5)

(Miller et al. 61-63)

- *Certain entries in your works-cited list will open with a title rather than a name (e.g. items from Web sites, films, encyclopedia articles). In many cases, these sources have no page numbers. Citations for most of these sources consist of the title only.*

To keep citations brief, long titles must be shortened. Include the quotation marks or italics normally used for that type of title, even if the title is shortened.

(“Confederation”)

(*History Online*)

(*Inconvenient Truth*)

If the source (e.g. an Internet item, an e-book) has numbered paragraphs, refer to them in place of page numbers. (Don't count paragraphs yourself; the numbering must appear in the actual source.) You may also indicate numbered sections or chapters when possible.

Note the use of commas in these citations.

(“Symbolism,” par. 5)

(*Alchemy*, chs. 10-11)

(“Vermeer,” sec. 2)

NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS

- When quoting from a novel or short story in a literary essay, you are expected to include a citation. If it's already clear who the author is, cite only the page(s)—but when necessary, include the author's surname, or use a key word from the title to distinguish between different works.

(15) (45-46) (Hemingway 27) (Poe, "Usher" 5)

- When quoting from a poem, if the poet and the poem are already identified, give the line number(s) only. The first time, use the word line or lines to show that you're citing lines, not pages; after the first time, you've established that you're referring to lines, so you may give just the number(s).

first citation (lines 5-6) or (line 7) after that, (10) (15-16)

When it's necessary to distinguish between different poets or different poems, include the family name of the poet, and/or a key word from the title.

(Poe 4) (Crane 11-12) (Whitman, "Lilacs" 3-4) (Whitman, "Captain" 10)

- When quoting from a play, if the playwright is already identified, indicate act, scene, and line numbers only. Separate them with periods. When necessary, include the playwright's surname, or include a key word from the title (in italics) to distinguish between different plays.

(3.1.56-59) (Shaw 4.3.25) (Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3.14-16)

PLACEMENT OF CITATIONS

When a segment of research information is summarized in your own words, the citation follows it immediately. It comes before a period or comma, as shown below:

The explorers failed to adapt to the severe northern climate (Parker 54-55).

Following a brief direct quotation, the citation is placed after the closing quotation marks but before a period or comma:

The Franklin Expedition was "doomed from the start" (Johnson 77).

Long quotations (more than four lines) are set off from the text of your essay as 'block quotations.' The entire passage must be doubly indented (two tabs). Quotation marks are not used with block quotations. In this case, the citation comes after the closing punctuation:

Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. Societies throughout the world must learn from this tragic example. (Kaplan 45-46)