

# In-Text Citations

## MLA FORMAT

"MLA" stands for "Modern Language Association." There are different conventions for citation in different fields. In the Humanities, we use MLA conventions, but in other fields, your professors may ask you to cite in slightly different ways. One way or the other, though, you always have to cite information that did not come from you!

### WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT IS IN-TEXT CITATION?

In-text citation is, simply put, the way that you show your readers that you got your information from somewhere else and where you got it. So if you are quoting someone or if you are stating facts-- OR AN IDEA--that you did not come up with yourself, you need to give credit to the person who said that thing, researched that thing, or thought of that thing. In school, this is what we call "academic honesty," and you can get in BIG TROUBLE for not citing. This is because if you are not citing-- words, research or ideas-- people may think you are trying to pretend you did that work-- writing, researching or thinking--on your own, when in fact it was someone else's work.

The citation itself will let the reader know where to find the information you're referring to in your own writing. It will come after the quote or information and will be in parenthesis, like this:

In a famous play, a guy named Hamlet looked off into the distance and said, "To be or not to be, that is the question" (Shakespeare 44).



So how do you actually cite? Any time you are quoting someone, or stating facts that you got from someone else's research, or using someone else's idea, you want to make sure your reader knows the author and the page, if possible. You can see in the above example, I have the author and page # in parenthesis. Now, if the author is obvious from the sentence, you do not have to restate their name in the parenthesis (usually.) For example:

In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet looked off into the distance and said, "To be or not to be, that is the question" (44).

However, there will definitely be times when you do not know the page number, for example, if you got the information from a website for which there are no page numbers. In this case, you would only write the author. For example:

The International Grammarians' Society points out that "To be or not to be, that is the question" is "possibly the world's most famous run-on sentence" (Gomez).

And what if you don't know the author?

You cite the title of the article or PARTICULAR webpage, not the entire website! For example:

The International Grammarians' Society points out that "To be or not to be, that is the question" is "possibly the world's most famous run-on sentence" ("Grammar is Whatever you can get Away with").

Remember: "little" titles (short stories, articles, tv episodes, songs, etc) are in quotations; "big" titles (novels, movies, whole runs of tv shows, albums, etc) get italicized. You still write the page number if you know it.

**DON'T WRITE THE WEB ADDRESS UNLESS YOU ARE EXPLICITLY TELLING READERS TO GO TO THAT WEBSITE.**

Another important tidbit: you need both in-text citations and a bibliography. This is so readers can look up information they're interested in from your paper.

### What do I have to cite again?

- Quotations (remember to introduce, summarize and explain them properly. That's totally separate from this!)
- Facts that are not common knowledge-- basically, stuff you had to look up. "The sky is blue" is common knowledge. "Joseph Stalin's childhood nickname was 'Soso'" is not.
- Ideas that you did not come up with yourself. For example, if you're writing about how the foods we eat affect, not only our physical body, but our mood-- and you got that idea from reading an article on the topic, you need to give that article props.

### Okay, and what do I put in the parenthesis?

- If you can, put (Author page#). unless author is already mentioned in a sentence. No comma in between the author and the page#.
- If you don't know page #, as is often the case with websites: (Author).
- If you don't know author: (Title page#).
- If you don't know author OR page# (Title).
- Do not put web address in parenthesis.

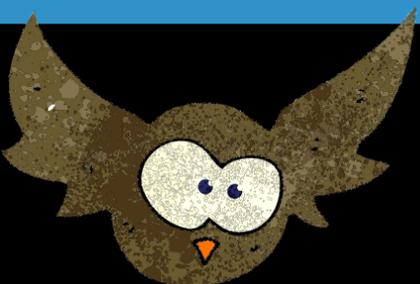
**Remember to always ALSO attach a bibliography!**

LET'S  
REVIEW!



This is just the basics of citation. If you find yourself faced with a more complicated situation, Google it! or better yet, look it up on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) <https://owl.purdue.edu/search.html>

Also remember that [easybib.com](https://www.easybib.com) is a great bibliography generator.



# SO, WHY DO WE CITE OUTSIDE SOURCES?



TO SHOW OUR PROFESSOR WE DID THE READING?

NOPE!



Imagine that you're writing an essay on gun control. People have been arguing about gun control since the ratification of the Second Amendment. If you start talking about the issue without any knowledge of the history of the topic, you won't seem knowledgeable, and nobody is going to want to listen to what you have to say.

And, frankly, this is because you won't BE knowledgeable, even if you have a lot of personal experience with guns or gun violence. To be a part of a conversation, you have to JOIN it, which means you have to know what was said before you. In the words of Richard Miller and Ann Jurecic, "Think of citation as an opportunity to demonstrate what you can DO with the words of others. To cite sources... provides the material for you to carry on a conversation" (119).

What do they mean: "what you can DO with the words of others?" Well, this means you don't have to choose texts you just agree with. You want to choose texts that will teach your readers (and yourself!) something-but also something you can be in conversation with. You can disagree with a text (or agree with part of a text, but disagree with another part.) A text can, in the words of Miller and Jurecic, "provide positions or arguments to grapple with or shift the direction of the conversation." They also point out that they "value citation that brings in a new perspective that questions or rejects the most obvious way of thinking or that turns the issue, question or problem you are working on so that you can see it from another angle" (119).



Remember-Writing is thinking! When you write about someone else's words on a topic that's important to you, you will be in conversation with that person, and you will begin to think about that topic differently. With this in mind, make sure you choose credible sources-that is, authors who are qualified to talk about the topic-people worthy of your time, and your readers' time. We will talk more about credible sources in class, but it is more important to find credible sources (even if they disagree with you) than it is to go on a treasure hunt to find some random guy with a blog on the internet who is saying the exact thing you want to hear.

I mean, who IS that guy?

**"Every time you cite another writer you should ask: What work do I want these words or ideas to do for my readers?" (Miller and Jurecic (20)).**

## Works Cited

- Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. *Habits of the Creative Mind*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.
- Shakespeare, William, et al. *Hamlet*. Penguin Books, 2015.