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 Hamlet, some guy 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.

NEVER EVER EVER 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.

Let's review!

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!

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 is a great bibliography generator.