

The MLA System, 9th Edition (page 1 of 4)

By Dr. Karen Petit

By correctly using the MLA system, a writer can give credit to the person, organization, or website that first created an idea or word(s). When using the MLA system, a writer must clearly indicate the author of each borrowed word(s), sentence, image, sound, or idea. If readers of a paper will not know which words or ideas were written by which author, then the writer should revise the paper for correct use of the MLA system. This handout has **in-text parenthetical citations, indirect quotes, examples of citations, a listing of helpful websites, information about Works Cited pages, and an example of a Works Cited page.** The in-text citations are connected to the entries on its Works Cited page, so this handout shows how the **works** on **Works Cited** pages are connected to in-text parenthetical **citations.**

In-text Parenthetical Citations

The MLA documentation system requires the use of in-text citations that are placed in the body of a paper; each of these citations must be connected to the first word of a Works Cited entry at the end of the paper.

1. **A quotation, a paraphrase, or a summary** has borrowed ideas or words. **An in-text parenthetical citation** “cites” the author’s last name and the page(s) where the borrowed ideas or words were found.
“I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference” (Frost 836).
2. **A lead-in phrase** lets readers know about upcoming **ideas or words that have been borrowed.** A lead-in phrase can also convey added information beyond what is required in the parenthetical citation. If the author’s name is mentioned in the **lead-in phrase,** then just the **page number** is needed in the parenthesis.
Near the end of one of his poems, Robert Frost said, “I took the one less traveled by” (836).
3. Play citations can include act, scene, and line numbers if the original source has this information. If line numbers are included in the original source of a poem, then line numbers can be included in the citation:
“I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference” (Frost, lines 19-20).
4. When no page number is available, a **paragraph number** can be included in the parentheses, but only if the original source has used numbers to identify different paragraphs or sections.

“Plagiarism” is defined by *Dictionary.com* as “an act or instance of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author’s work as one’s own, as by not crediting the original author” (**par. 1**).

Changes in Quotations: Deletions, Additions, and Letters

When a writer changes an original source’s words, an ellipsis (. . .) should be used to indicate deleted words; square brackets indicate additions or show a change in a letter’s capitalization.

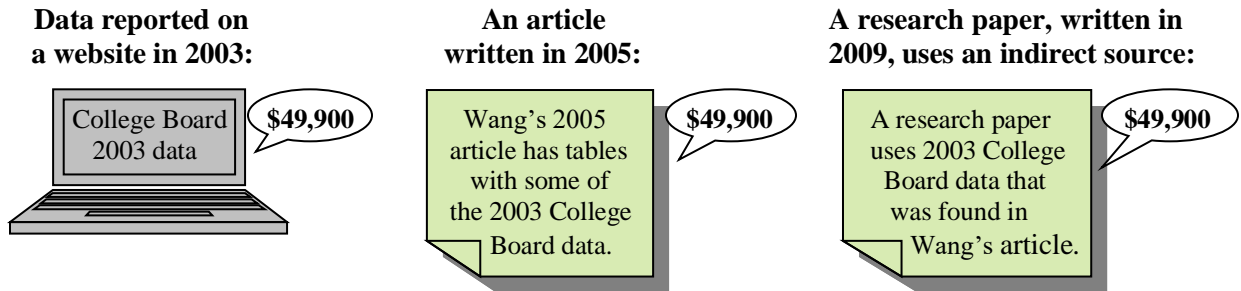
“[A]n act . . . of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author . . . by not crediting [documenting] the original author” is plagiarism (*Dictionary.com*, par. 1).

When an ellipsis appears in an original text, explanation can be added to clarify who authored the ellipsis, as is illustrated by the National Commission on Writing’s report that is cited on this handout’s Works Cited page. If a writer of a paper wants to add his/her ellipsis to a quote that already has an ellipsis used by an original author, then square brackets can also be used around the additional ellipsis to clarify which ellipsis was added by the writer of the paper and which ellipsis was used by the original author.

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An Indirect Quote

Occasionally, the writer of a paper might use an “indirect source,” which quotes, summarizes, or paraphrases information from someone else’s quote, summary, or paraphrase:



When an indirect source is used, the Works Cited page only includes data from the direct source, as page four of this handout illustrates. The in-text citation, on the other hand, includes information about both sources. The sources’ information can be included in the lead-in phrase and/or in the parenthesis with “qtd. in” added.

College Board data stated in Wang’s article shows the “median annual earnings by level of education” is \$49,900 for graduates with a Bachelor’s degree and \$30,800 for high school graduates (49).

The “median annual earnings by level of education” is \$49,900 for graduates with a Bachelor’s degree and \$30,800 for high school graduates (College Board, qtd. in Wang 49).

An Example Paragraph with Multiple Examples of Source Citations

Every paragraph that contains quotations, paraphrases, and/or summaries should be coherently written with a clear organizational structure, logical transitions, clear wording, correct grammar, and correct sentence structures. The following example of a paragraph illustrates how ideas from four sources can be logically connected to the paragraph writer’s own ideas with a topic sentence, organization of supporting details, and the use of transitions. When a source has three or more authors, the first author’s name is used with “et al.”

Writing is an important skill necessary for success both in college and at work. In college courses, writing skills can help participants to learn a course’s content, as well as to communicate effectively and to show a professor how much they have learned. Writing happens “in the cognitive domain. It involves learning, comprehension, application and synthesis of new knowledge” (Defazio et al. 34). Not only is writing important in college courses, but it is also important at work. According to Niobe Way, “Writing is the one skill that’s indispensable in the modern workplace,” (qtd. in Rowh 19). For example, in engineering “As globalization and increased interdisciplinary interaction change the way that engineers work, communication skills become more important to success” (Linsdell and Anagnos 21). Effective writing skills will help someone to get a job, but once an appropriate career position has been attained, a person will most often want to be promoted into an even better position. The National Commission on Writing surveyed 120 large American companies “employing nearly 8 million people”; the survey data shows: “Writing is a ‘threshold skill’ for both employment and promotion, particularly for salaried employees” (3). Thus, effective writing skills are necessary to prepare for, to acquire, and to be promoted within a career position.

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Another Example of a Citation: a Paraphrase or a Summary of a Webpage

A paraphrase or a summary has no quotation marks because only the information or ideas—not the words—have been borrowed. When an author’s ideas are rephrased (a paraphrase) or rephrased and condensed (a summary), a citation and a works-cited entry are still required. Normally, the in-text citation will include the author’s name and a page number. However, in the following example, the author is an organization that is also the publisher, so the in-text citation begins with what comes first on the Works Cited page (the title); also, no page and/or paragraph numbers are included because the webpage (like most webpages) has none listed:

On February 11, 2016, 25.8 % of students at the Community College of Rhode Island were full-time, and 74.2% were part-time (“Spring 2016 Facts at a Glance”).

Helpful Websites

The Community College of Rhode Island’s Writing Center website has many helpful resources for research, writing, reading, literature analysis, and other tasks: <http://www.ccri.edu/writingcenter/resources/>.

The MLA’s website (<https://style.mla.org/>) has research paper examples: <https://style.mla.org/sample-papers/>.

These websites have some helpful resources:

The Modern Language Association’s website: www.mla.org/MLA-Style

Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.purdue.edu/>

Easy.bib.com: <http://www.easybib.com/>

Calvin College’s *KnightCite*: <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite>

Works Cited Pages

A **Works Cited** page lists “**works**” that have been “**cited**” in a paper. These works are alphabetically organized with the first item being the author’s last name or the organization’s name. If there is no name, then the first element on the works cited page will be the title. Each works-cited entry should have all of the necessary core elements, including the author’s name, a partial work’s title in quotation marks (articles, stories, poems, essays, songs, or webpages), a whole work’s title in an italic font (books, magazines, websites, databases, films, paintings, or performances), and information about the container(s) for the source. The “Core Elements” listing in the box on the right has the order and punctuation that should be used for different works-cited items. The 2021 *MLA Handbook* recommends inclusion of info for online works in this preferred order: “the DOI, permalink, or URL [I]n deciding when to include a URL, follow the preferences of your instructor, institution, or publisher” (188).

Core Elements

Author (or authors, company, organization).

Title of Source.

Title of Container,

Other Contributors,

Version,

Number,

Publisher,

Publication Date,

Location (page, DOI, or URL).

Optional element: Date of access.

When a 2nd container is present, also list:

Title of 2nd Container,

Other Contributors, Version,

Number, Publisher, Publication Date,

Location (page, DOI, or URL).

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Alphabetical
order

Double
spacing

Works Cited

3 or more
authors &
optional
access date

Defazio, Joseph, et al. "Academic Literacy: The Importance and Impact of Writing across the Curriculum – a Case Study." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 10, no. 2, June 2010, pp. 34 - 47. *ERIC Institute of Educational Science*, files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ890711.pdf. Accessed 6 June 2016.

Poem from
an anthology

Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken." *An Introduction to Literature*, 15th ed., edited by Sylvan Barnet et al., Pearson Longman, 2008, pp. 835-36.

Online source
with 2 authors
& DOI

Linsdell, Jeanne, and Thalia Anagnos. "Motivating Technical Writing through Study of the Environment." *Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education & Practice*, vol. 137, no. 1, Jan. 2011, pp. 20-27. *Academic Search Complete*. doi:10.1061/(ASCE)EI.1943-5541.0000032.

Organization as
author & publisher

MLA Handbook, 9th ed. The Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

Organization
as author

The National Commission on Writing. *Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . Or a Ticket Out*. (Ellipsis in original). College Board, Sept. 2004, www.writingcommission.org/prod_downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf. Accessed 23 June 2009.

Online
source with
no author

"Plagiarism." *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc., 15 June 2016, www.dictionary.com/browse/plagiarism?s=t. Accessed 15 June 2016.

Library
database
article

Rowh, Mark. "Write Well, GO FAR." *Career World*, vol. 34, no. 4, Jan. 2006, pp. 18-21. *Academic Search Complete*, 0-search.ebscohost.com/helin.uri.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=19262415&site=ehost-live. Accessed 20 June 2016.

Organization as
author & publisher

"Spring 2016 Facts at a Glance: Credit Headcount Enrollments as of February 11, 2016." Community College of Rhode Island Office of Institutional Research, 15 March 2016, www.ccri.edu/irpl/fast_facts.html. Accessed 14 June 2016.

Library
database
article

Wang, Penelope. "Four Myths About College Costs." *Money*, vol. 34, no. 2, Feb. 2005, p. 49. *Academic Search Premier*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=15569368&site=ehost-live. Accessed 9 June 2009.