



An Overview of MLA Style

The three basic ideas behind documenting sources in MLA Style are:

1. Using a **signal phrase** to lead from your words into a quotation or borrowed information
2. Then, use an **in-text citation** to lead from your words into a quotation or borrowed information
3. On the final page, list all the **Works Cited** in your paper.

1. Using a signal phrase

Introduce the quoted or borrowed material with a phrase that includes the author's name.

Example: According to authors **Janice Walker and Todd Taylor**, "The bill prohibits the use of cell phones while driving unless it is equipped with an earpiece or can act like a speaker phone, leaving the driver's hands free" (481).

2. Using an in-text citation

You must give credit to an author or source for any quotation or borrowed information. If you list the source in your signal phrase you only need to give a page reference, as in the example above. However, if you do not identify the source in your signal phrase, **then you must include the author's name and a page number in the citation.**

Example: Most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times cell phones are a factor in accidents; as of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (**Sundeen 17**).

*Notice the punctuation for the sentence comes *after* the in-text citation.

See the following list for other helpful citation tips.

kind of citation	example
summary or paraphrase, author's name in your sentence	Shimabukuro explains the Americanization movement in California schools (140).
summary or paraphrase, author's name in citation	In the decades before World War II, California schools participated in the Americanization movement (Shimabukuro 140-41).
quotation, author's name in your sentence	Shimabukuro argues, "The FPC's [the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee's] relocation of authority, the naming and claiming of a resistant ethos in a time of war, serves as a key part of our legacy as Asian Americans" (146).
author name's in your sentence, general citation to the source	Cronon intertwines economic and environmental history. [There is no need to name the book if you have only one work by Cronon in your list of works cited.]
two sources by the same author in your works-cited list	Frye connects Burgess' <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> to romance tradition (<i>Secular Scripture</i> 110). And while this connection may be surprising given <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> 's themes and content, Frye's unique perspective on the nature of genres sheds light on this unusual combination ("Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres"). [As per the second reference, there is no need for a page number when citing the entire source.]
two sources cited	New webtexts illustrate the rhetorical power and possibilities of converging literacies (Carter and Dunbar-Odom; Yergeau, Wozniak, and Vandenberg).
quotation from a play with page numbers	In <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Walter doesn't hide his disdain for his sister's attitude towards his mother's money: "the line between asking and just accepting when the time comes is big and wide—ain't it!" he levels at Beneatha (Hansberry 37; act 1, scene 1).
quotation from a play with division and line numbers	This is made clear by the Duke's recommendation that the best response to grief is to move on (<i>Othello</i> 1.3.208-209).
quotation from a one-page poem	Amy Quan Barry asks piercingly, "What is it to know the absolute value / of negative grace . . .?" [The backspace symbol "/" is used to indicate a line break.]
quotation from a multi-page poem with line numbers	It is at this point that Eliot first introduces the women in the room "talking of Michelangelo" (line 14). [Don't abbreviate "line" or "lines. In subsequent references to this source, just use the number.]
quotation: found in indirect or secondhand source	The philosopher Alain suggested that "admiration is not pleasure but a kind of attention . . ." (qtd. in Magny 66). [Only the source you read, the secondhand source—in this case, Magny—goes in your list of works cited.]
material found in indirect or secondhand source	Alain's words seem to dissociate admiration from pleasure (in Magny 66).
electronic source that numbers paragraphs	According to Mieszkowski, "some of Derrida's most important contributions on Hegel are in texts that never cite him by name" (par. 2).

3. Listing all Works Cited

Only the sources which have been directly cited in your paper should be listed. They should appear in alphabetical order and having hanging indents. See the example below of what a works cited page could look like. Note the punctuation following each item.

Example:

Works Cited

Aristotle. *The Poetics of Aristotle*. Edited by Stephen Halliwell, University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

Brown, Marshall. "Frankenstein: A Child's Tale." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 36, no. 2, Spring 2003, pp. 145-75. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1346124. Accessed 3 Dec. 2020.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Frankenstein's Fallen Angel." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 3, Mar. 1984, pp. 543-54. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1343306. Accessed 30 Nov. 2020.

Shelly, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Barnes and Noble Books, 2003.

***For more information and specific examples, visit Purdue Owl's website or see the *MLA Handbook*, 8th Edition**