

Help With: MLA In-Text Citations

In the MLA format, you need a Works Cited list at the end of your paper to indicate which books or sources you used to write your paper. In-text citations refer to how you mark the citations themselves within your paper.

You might have seen older books that use small numbers to mark quotations: *One of the problems with obesity is that “doctors can’t legislate exercise.”*² Such formatting uses footnotes at the bottom or endnotes at the end of the paper. Some papers dealing with historical subjects still employ this format, but the MLA guidelines generally require that sources be cited in-text: *“doctors can’t legislate exercise” (Jones 6)*.

The most common way to cite is to list the author’s last name (Jones 6) or names (Jones and Thomson 6). If there is no author, you can list the publication (*Time* 18)—notice the italics because it’s a title—or some “key words” (within quotation marks) from the source which will be recognizable in the Works Cited: (“Binge drinking” 21).

Here are seven common ways to organize a quotation within your text. None is necessarily better or worse; your situation often helps determine which one is best, and it can be monotonous to use the same format over and over.

- Attribution – Quote: *Glick suggests, “no one in the industry is to blame” (8)*.
- Quote – Attribution: *“No one in the industry is to blame,” according to Glick (8)*.
- Quote – Attribution – Quote: *“No one in the industry,” according to Glick, “is to blame” (8)*.

Note again the punctuation. The period goes after the citation, but the comma goes inside the quotation marks. The page number also goes to the end, in parentheses. If you cite a web page without a page number, you may omit the page number: (CNN).

- Straight quote: *Experts can only conclude that “no one in the industry is to blame” (Glick 8)*.

It can be very repetitive to constantly repeat an author’s name, and sometimes this name is not important to the paper. In that case, you can write more efficiently by putting that information in the citation. If you have a series of sentences with quotations from the same author, you might even cite the name only once and then omit it: *Furthermore, the problem is that “efficiency naturally falls over time” (8)*.

- Key-word quote: *Experts can only surmise that “no one” is solely at fault (Glick 8)*.

Key-words quotations work well when you want to credit someone’s ideas without spending too much space on them—or if the grammar or style of the source doesn’t fit your sentence. Advanced writers tend to favor them as they let you pack more information into a smaller space.

- Block quotations. A block quotation is four or more lines of text, double-spaced, and indented one inch from the left margin. Don't overuse block quotations in order to fill space.

Glick makes an important point:

No one in the industry is to blame. There were really no inventors of the modern stock trade system as now used on Wall Street; it is a system which has developed over centuries based on its European, mostly British, ancestors. Rapid expansions and crashes are simply built into the system. (8)

Notice that there are no quotation marks (unless there is a quotation within the quotation), and that the period, mysteriously, goes *before* the parentheses. You will see some older books which single-space block quotations, but generally they are double-spaced nowadays.

- Indirect quotation: *Glick argues that it is foolish to assign blame to any one agent (8).*

You can also paraphrase someone's writing in your own words. But don't cynically replace one or two words and call it an indirect quote: *Analysts believe that no single person in the industry is to blame (Glick 8).* This can be construed in certain cases as plagiarism even if you have cited the author.

Other Questions

- What if I'm quoting a quotation? Let's take as a fictional example a magazine article:

Before taking off, the pontiff told the crowd that he would "pray earnestly" for the families affected by the terrorist attack.

You would cite the pope's speech in this way:

The pope said he would "pray earnestly" for the victims of the attack (qtd. in Newsweek, 34).
The "qtd. in" is short for "quoted in".

- It gets repetitive writing "according to.." over and over. What else can I use?

Try putting the author's name in the citation instead of writing it in the text, or use a different verb. Don't overdo it.

<p>writes, argues, contends, states, notes, relates, describes, remarks, asserts, maintains, implies, suggests, holds, mentions, concludes, announces, declares, insists, observes, discusses, says, relays, finds, surmises, ventures</p>
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