How to Write In-Text Citations, MLA Style

What are they?

In-text citations (also called *parenthetical references*) show the reader the exact page or pages of a source from which an idea or quotation came. They tell the reader not only what kind of information was found in a particular source but also the specific location of that information within the source.

Why are they necessary?

In-text citations are used to acknowledge the sources of the information or ideas used in your paper. They are used along with a list of works cited to thoroughly document the resources you consulted. This documentation allows the reader to verify your sources and further their own knowledge, and also helps to establish your credibility as a writer.

How are they written?

A parenthetical reference usually consists of the author’s last name and a page number, both enclosed in parentheses. This brief reference within the text of your paper will direct the reader to the complete citation for the work, listed on your works cited page. An example for paraphrased information:

The movie *Toy Story* was a huge success, bringing in $30 million on opening weekend (Isaacson 290).

In this example, *Isaacson 290* refers to page 290 of the book by Isaacson. The complete bibliographic data for the book will be found on the works cited list.

You can also include some of the reference in your sentence:

According to Isaacson, *Toy Story* grossed $30 million on opening weekend (290).

Notes:

Be as specific as possible when giving the location of the borrowed information.

- If the source uses page numbers, include the relevant page number(s) in the reference.
- Websites, films, and other sources may not have any kind of reference number. In these cases, you can cite the entire work by its title alone.
- If you are referencing an entire work, it may be best to include the author’s name in a sentence and not use a parenthetical citation at all (e.g. *Leander Kahney has written an entire book on the subject of Mac users.*)
- Be certain that the in-text citation clearly directs the reader to a full citation in the works cited list.

For more information about specific situations, please ask an LMC librarian for help or go to the Purdue Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/
Examples of In-text Citations

(These examples refer to citations on the LMC Library’s Guide to MLA Works Cited handout)

Single author named in parentheses:

Jobs developed his signature style of clothing as a result of his friendship with the designer, Issey Miyake (Isaacson 362).

Author’s name included in text:

Isaacson relates the story of how Jobs developed his signature style of clothing during his friendship with the designer, Issey Miyake (362).

Two authors:

In the 1800s, the British believed “they were more civilized than others” and that this gave them the right to force their way of life on other people (Getz and Clark 105).

Source with no author and no page numbers (if there is no named author, use the first word of the title; if it is a very short title you can use the entire thing):

Supporters of free speech have said that “trying to curtail student speech based on how offensive it may be opens up a can of worms” (“Students’”).

Source found in an anthology or edited collection (use the name of the author of the essay, chapter, or article used, not the name of the editor of the entire work):

“Christians hold the Bible...as the source of moral authority” (Edwards 47).

Website (refer to web sources just like print sources; if there is no numbering on the website, you will have to omit that from your reference):

The TPS program is being abused by illegal immigrants (“Temporary Protected Status”).

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