

MLA Parenthetical Documentation

How to Cite Sources Within the Body of Your Paper

What is a parenthetical citation?

A parenthetical or in-text citation is a marker that directs the reader to the full citation appearing in your works cited page. Usually the in-text citation includes the author's name and a page number within parentheses (Smith 42).

When do I use a parenthetical citation?

A parenthetical or in-text citation lets the reader know that a passage was either paraphrased or quoted directly from one of your sources. The citation lets the reader know that the passage is not your original idea. Parenthetical citations are not necessary for general knowledge information.

Examples of common forms of in-text citations:

1. **Incorporate the author's name into the sentence before the source passage:**

Ex: Branscomb argues that "it's a good idea to lurk (i.e. read all the messages without contributing anything) for a few weeks to ensure that you don't break any of the rules of netiquette (7) when joining a listserv."

2. **Use the author's name in the citation:** there is no comma separating the author's name and page number:

Ex: The modern world requires both the ability to concentrate on one thing and the ability to attend to more than one thing at a time: "Ideally, each individual would cultivate a repertoire of styles of attention, appropriate to different situations, and would learn how to embed activities and types of attention one within another" (Bateson 97).

3. **If no author is identified:** If no author is listed, use the title or an abbreviated title in the text or parenthetical citation. Underline the title if the source is a book; use quotation marks if the source is an article.

Ex: The use of Customer Relationship Management systems has grown substantially over the past five years as companies attempt to adapt to customer needs and to improve profitability ("Making CRM Work").

4. **Page numbers for online resources:** You may use paragraph numbers or screen numbers if no original page numbers are listed. Most electronic sources will have neither of these, therefore omit the page numbers and just list the author's name.

Ex: The Collaborative Virtual Workspace is being used by the Defense Department for crisis management (Davison and Deus).

Information for this page was adapted from the following source:

Kilborn, Judith. "MLA Parenthetical Documentation." *The Write Place*. 5 May 2005
<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html>

