THE MLA STYLE FOR PAPERS IN LITERATURE

The practice required by the Modern Language Association places **citations of sources directly in the text**, in parentheses. These parenthetical citations refer the reader to a list of works cited at the end of the paper.

The basic elements of the citation are the author's last name or a shortened but easily understood form of the title (with, if necessary, the volume number), and the page number of the material used from the source. **Only enough information to guide the reader to the appropriate source** is necessary. In other words, the author's name and the title of the source can be omitted from the parenthetical citation if they are clearly identified outside the parentheses nearby in the text. Further, if only one work by a given author is listed in "**Works Cited**," the work's title can be omitted from the parenthetical citation.

The fact that internal citation is used does not mean that footnotes cannot be added. However, **footnotes should be inserted to make a comment or provide some additional information** and not to designate a critical source. Please use footnotes and not endnotes.

1. IN-TEXT CITATION

The following examples demonstrate how to refer readers to the "Works Cited" section.

1.1 A work by one author:

> *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been called George Orwell's most ferocious propaganda (Vorhees 87). Orwell was quick to admit that he was a propagandist. In fact, in 1940, during a BBC radio broadcast, he said that "every artist is a propagandist in the sense that he is trying, directly or indirectly, to impose a vision of life that seems to him desirable" (*Essays* 2: 41).

In the first sentence, the author is not identified in the text, and his name therefore appears within parentheses. 87 is a page number, and it is separated from the name by one space. A period follows the second parenthesis. In the third sentence, it is clear that Orwell is the author, therefore only the title of his work, the volume number and a page number are provided. Notice that a space separates the title and volume number, and that a colon and a space separate the volume and the page number.

A few variants are as follows:

> *Nineteen Eighty-Four* supports the argument that "every artist is a propagandist" (Orwell, *Essays* 2: 41). As critic Richard Vorhees points out, the novel is Orwell's most ferocious propaganda (87).

Notice that now Orwell must be identified as the author of the direct quotation, and Vorhees, who is named in the actual text, needs no further mention in the citation.

> Oceanians are programmed in the art of doublethink, which the novel defines as "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting both of them" (215).

In this case, it is obvious that the word *novel* refers to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and a page number is sufficient. Therefore, only page numbers need to be cited in research papers which keep referring to one primary text (e.g. the novel that the paper treats critically). Upon the first reference, or when the context is not clear, the title and/or the author's name can also be provided parenthetically:

> The notion of doublethink was first defined as "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (Orwell, *Nineteen* 215).

Note that longer titles can be abbreviated.

1.2 Two or more works by the same author:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

If the author's name does not appear in the main text, the following parenthetical reference can be used:

As she explains, "There is room enough in anyone's bonehouse for too much duplicity" (Laurence, *Jest* 182).

This reference makes it clear that there is more than one book by Laurence in the Works Cited section.

1.3 Reference to websites

If you refer to a website, you need to do the same things as above and provide, as a rule, a name and a page number or a paragraph number parenthetically. For example: (Hamilton 27). If there are no page numbers in the online document that you have accessed, add the abbreviation "no pag. ("no pagination") in your reference. For example: (Johnson no pag.).

1.4 Works with no authors and non-print sources:

An anonymous Wordsworth critic once argued that his poems were too emotional ("Wordsworth Is A Loser" 100).

If the work you are making reference to has no author, use an abbreviated version of the work's title. For non-print sources, such as films, TV series, pictures, or other media, or electronic sources, include the name that begins the entry on the Works Cited page.

1.5 Indirect quotations:

An indirect quotation is a quotation that you found in another source that was quoting from the original. For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source. For example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd. in Weisman 259).

In this case, the original source (e.g. Ravitch) should not appear in the Works Cited section.

1.6 Poetry, drama, and the Bible:

When you refer to poetry, drama, and the Bible, you must often give numbers of lines, acts, and scenes, or of chapters and verses, rather than page numbers. This practice enables a reader to consult an edition other than the one you are using. Nonetheless, your list of works cited should still identify your edition.

Emily Dickinson concludes "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" with a characteristically bittersweet stanza:

> How dreary to be somebody! How
> public, like a frog
> To tell your name the livelong June
> To an admiring bog! (5–8)

Notice that in the above example, the parenthetical citation is placed flush with the last line, and no period follows.

In discussions of drama, act, scene, and line numbers (all Arabic) are separated by periods with no space before or after them. Biblical chapters and verses are treated similarly, and a space follows the names of chapters. In references to both drama and plays, the progression is from larger to smaller units:

> In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare presents the most famous soliloquy in the history of the theatre: "To be or not to be . . ." (3.1.56–89).

> The Old Testament creation story (Gen. 1.1–2.22), told with remarkable economy, culminates in the arrival of Eve.

Notice that names of books of the Bible are neither italicized nor enclosed in quotation marks and that abbreviation is desirable.

1.7 Repeated references to the same source

When referring to a source which is identical with the one used before the present citation, the abbreviated word "ibid." must be used. It means you find the origin of a quoted text in the same place as before. Note that this word refers the reader to a source that precedes it immediately. "Ibid." can also be used if the source is the same, but the page number is different. There is no space to separate the parentheses, the dot or the colon. For example:

> Geoffrey Harpham can therefore claim that "the function of the Conradian sea vastly exceeds the scenic" (72). In his argument, the novelist remains a "seaman writer even in much of the work that is not sea-stuff" (ibid.), because his representations of life at sea always entail "the motif of law that is dominant in his land narratives" (ibid.: 77) as well.

2. ON THE MECHANICS OF QUOTING SOURCES

2.1 Wherever possible, citations should appear just before punctuation in the text of the paper.

2.2 When you have fewer than four lines to quote, enclose them in quotation marks and include them in the main body of the essay. For example:

> Though by the end of the sixteenth century, the Petrarchan worship had decreased somewhat from the time when Ascham commented that "men have in more reverence the *Triumphs* of Petrarch, than the Genesis of Moses" (834), Petrarch was still read and widely admired.

2.3 When you quote more than four lines, you need to indent all lines 2.5 cm (an inch) from the left margin. Two spaces (hit enter once) should separate the quotation from the main text. Do not use quotation marks unless they appear in the original. For example:

This form was later adopted and improved upon by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. W. L. Bullock, for instance, believes that

> the most natural hypothesis for the origin of the English sonnet form is the theory that Surrey gave its final permanent shape by relaxing and simplifying the type which Wyatt had adopted as the one among the various Italian models least foreign to nature and the existing forms of English poetry. (Bullock 743)

It is J. M. Berdan, however, who theorizes as to why, at this time, England was ready for this kind of foreign influence.

Notice the following points about the above examples. Two spaces separate the set-off quotation from the main text at both ends. A period follows the last quoted word, and the source, which is not followed by a period, is given flush with the last line. The sentence following the set-off quotation is not indented, because it continues a particular thought. However, sentences after set-off quotations are to be indented if they start a new unit.

2.4 The American convention (and thus the MLA style) uses double quotation marks for direct quotations, and single ones for quotations within quotations (e. g.: In 1904 Joyce wrote, "I have just finished 'After the Race,' and sent it on to the *Irish Homestead*"), while the British convention is the reverse. Choose one and follow it throughout the essay. In contrast to Hungarian, both the opening and the closing quotation marks are at the top of the line in English.

2.5 Clearly distinguish between hyphen (which is normally used to combine words, as in "well-being"), the longer en dash (which is commonly used to indicate inclusive dates and numbers as in "July 11–August 15", and is typed by pressing CTRL and the – key simultaneously on most keyboards) and the longest em dash (typed by pressing CTRL, ALT and the – key simultaneously on most keyboards, which is usually used to create a strong break within a sentence, as in "The Bible is the best selling book of all time—if you can call it a book"). Note that there is no space between or after hyphen, en dash or em dash.

2.6 Concerning dialogue citation in drama, capitalize the characters' names and indent all lines 2.5 cm (an inch) from the left margin (even if the quotation is shorter than four lines). The name is followed by a colon and the citation. After the quotation insert in brackets the exact textual source, act scene, line number(s). E.g.:

> KING: How fares our cousin Hamlet? HAMLET:
> Excellent, i'faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the
> air, promise-crammed. (2.2.92–94)

If the play's edition you are using contains no indication of scene and\or page number, consider it as prose, and follow the mechanics of prose citation (i.e., insert in parentheses the page number together with the author's name\title).

2.7 When quoting poetry, indent all lines 2.5 cm (an inch) from the left margin (even if the quotation is shorter than four lines). After the quotation insert in brackets the exact textual source with line number(s).

2.8 You can always edit a quotation. If you wish to omit something, you can use three dots to indicate that you have left out something, and if you wish to add something that is not part of the original text but is necessary for clarity, you can place words in brackets. For example:

> As Ralph A. Ranald has observed, "Orwell's *1984* is about religion reversed . . . and above all, language reversed . . . [Orwell converts] all the positives of Western civilization into their negatives" (544–45).

Notice that a space separates all dots from the first and the last words and from each other.

2.9 You may wish to quote something in a language other than English. Whenever possible, a standard English translation should be in the main text, and a footnote should accommodate the original together with the source of the text. If there is no available translation, you may create your own version, and the footnote containing the original text should indicate that you are the translator. However, try to avoid translating an already translated text back into the original (e.g. translating the Hungarian translation of something that was first published in English back into English).

3. **ON FOOTNOTES**

Creating footnotes is an option, you do not necessarily have to have them in your text. Please use footnotes, and not endnotes. Make sure you do not use footnotes to document your sources, since that happens, as explained above, in the text, parenthetically. The function of footnotes is to add some comments that cannot be smoothly incorporated in the main text. Theoretically, a footnote can be placed anywhere in your writing, including the title, a quotation, or any other part.

4. **LIST OF WORKS CITED**

4.1 The list of works cited appears at the end of an essay or thesis, and it includes sources that you have actually used and cited in your paper. Works that you do not refer to but that have contributed to your general literary or historical erudition should not be listed.

4.2 The works cited section is arranged alphabetically by author.

4.3 You need to call this section Works Cited (not Bibliography or something else), and you need to center the phrase Works Cited at the top of the page. Works Cited always starts a new page, and there is no additional space between the Works Cited and the first entry.

4.4 The first line of each entry is flush with the left margin; subsequent lines are indented to leave five spaces (hanging indentation). If you use more than one work by the same author, list the works alphabetically by title. Give the author's name with the first title but substitute three hyphens for the name in subsequent entries. For example:

> Thomas, Lewis. *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher*. New York: Viking, 1975.
> ---. *The Medusa and the Snail: More Notes of a Biology Watcher*. New York: Viking, 1979.

Observe and follow the use of periods, commas, colons and spaces in the above examples.

4.5 Give last names first and provide full first names (as opposed to initials). Include the place of publication, the publisher, and the latest copyright date as shown on the copyright page. Give a shortened form of the publisher's name as long as it is clear.

Some sample bibliographical entries are as follows:

4.6 One author:

> Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

4.7 Two authors:

Barlett, Donald L., and James B. Steele. *Forevermore: Nuclear Waste in America*. New York: Norton, 1985.

4.8 Three authors:

Aiken, Michael, Lewis A. Ferman, and Harold L. Sheppard. *Economic Failure, Alienation and Extremism*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1968.

4.9 More than three authors:

Bailyn, Bernard, et al. *The Great Republic: A History of the American People*. Lexington: Heath, 1977.

4.10 Corporate author:

American Red Cross. *Standard First Aid and Personal Safety*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1979.

4.11 Edition after the first:

Grout, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1980.

4.12 Reprints:

Mulhern, Francis. "English Reading." 1990. Rpt. *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhaba. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. 250–264.

4.13 Editors:

Barnet, Sylvan, Morton Berman, and William Burto, eds. *An Introduction to Literature*. 7th ed. Boston, Little, 1980.

4.14 Multivolume work:

Owen, James. *The Collected Letters of James Owen*. Ed. Richard Dudley. 9 vols. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

4.15 Literary work from an anthology:

Bond, Nelson. "The Voice from the Curious Cube." *100 Great Science Fiction Short Stories*. Ed. Isaac Asimov, Martin Harry Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander. New York: Doubleday, 1978. 172–75.

4.16 Criticism from an anthology:

Kristeva, Julia. "Revolution in Poetic Language." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 89–136.

4.17 Article from a scholarly journal:

Summer, Davis. "Resistant Texts and Incompetent Readers." *Poetics Today* 15 (1994): 523–52.

4.18 Article from an online periodical or other internet sources:

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism." Postmodern Culture 10.3 (2000): 46 pars. 26 June 2002. http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/03-1/html

Internet sources vary but as a rule you need to provide the following data in the following order: author's name, the title of the work, name of the periodical or website, volume number and issue number (if applicable), date of publication (if applicable), the number range or total number of pages, date of access and URL.

As stated before, only clearly academic websites can be used. No longer existing, or only irregularly maintained websites, as well as articles with no authors or with non-academic authors (such as private persons or students) are not acceptable. Thus, texts from such websites as sparknotes.com or wikipedia.org cannot be cited or paraphrased.

4.19 Article retrieved from a full-text online database:

Data are to be provided in the same order as above, however, the name of the database, the name of the library and the town or city where the service was accessed are also to be added. For example:

Smith, Martin. "World Domination for Dummies." *Journal of Despotry* Feb. 2000: 66–72. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Gale Group Databases. Purdue University Libraries, West Lafayette, IN. 19 February 2003. http://www.infotrac.galegroup.com

4.20 Book review:

Wolfe, Alan. "Turning Economies to Dust." Rev. of *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement* by Rose Friedman. *Saturday Review* 2 Feb. 1989: 35–36.

4.21 Article in a Reference Book:

"Mandarin." The Encyclopedia Americana. 1994 ed.

This entry is listed under M and when you refer to it in your text, it appears like this: ("Mandarin"). As you see, no page number is provided.

4.22 Daily paper:

"Study Labels Alcohol Fuel as Threat to Food Supply." *Dallas Times Herald* 16 Mar. 1980, sec. A: 14.

4.23 Weekly magazine or newspaper:

Munro, Julie W. "A New Elitism in China?" *Newsweek* 17 1995: 62–71.

4.24 Unpublished MA thesis or dissertation:

Wong, Lily. "The Function of Animal Imagery in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*." Dissertation (or MA thesis). New York U, 1993.

4.25 Cross-references:

When you refer to several essays in a collection or anthology, you do not need to provide the related publication data every time. For example, if there is a collection of short stories edited by Johnson Oates and Viola Datwan, you need to create a complete entry for the book at the latter "o", and this enables you to cross-reference the anthology in the following way:

Walker, Alice. "Looking for Zora." Oates and Datwan 395–411.

4.26 Non-print sources:

4.26.1 Motion picture:

The Empire Strikes Back. Dir. George Lucas. Twentieth Century Fox, 1980.

4.26.2 Television or radio program:

White, Jim. *At Your Service.* KMOX, St. Louis. 24 May 1985.

4.26.3 Stage play:

Osborne, Paul. *Morning's at Seven.* Dir. Vivian Matalon. Lyceum Theatre, New York. 16 Apr. 1980.

4.27 Lecture or seminar:

Dumas, Annette. "Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery.'" Modern American Literature Series. Mount St. Clare College, Clinton. 15 Feb. 2002.

4.28 Interview or personal communication.

Young, Mary W. Personal interview. 22 Oct. 1997.

4.29 Sources without enough publication-related information:

Wherever some information is missing, you can use the following abbreviations in the bibliographical entry:

n. p. (no place of publication, or no publisher)

n. d. (no date of publication)

no pag. (no pagination)

For further information please consult:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html