

RESEARCH CONCEPTS & PRACTICE

CITING YOUR SOURCES

Why cite your sources?

When writing a research paper you use facts from many sources to answer your research questions and support your own ideas. Books, periodical articles, research reports, documentaries, and Web pages are some examples of sources in which you find relevant facts. Citing these sources of information in your work serves three purposes:

- It gives well-earned credit to the author who provided the facts you are using to support your research
- It allows your audience to identify and retrieve the sources you used (it's like an address!)
- It builds credibility into your work

What do I need to cite?

Cite all outside sources you use in your research paper! Citing is required for sources you quote word-for-word, for sources you paraphrase (rewrite using your own words), and for sources that give you ideas you merely summarize within your work.

- **Example of word-for-word quote.** The quote below appears exactly as it does in Joanna Santa Barbara's article on nonviolent childrearing in the *Encyclopedia of Violence Peace and Conflict*.
"Adjusted data from seven U.S. surveys between 1968 and 1994 show a decline in approval of disciplinary spanking from 94% to 68%, or 26 percentage points in 26 years" (Santa Barbara 243).
- **Example of paraphrase:** This takes the information above and puts it into the student's own words.
Studies show that Americans are becoming more critical of the concept of spanking children. Between 1968 and 1994 the so-called "approval rating" of spanking children dropped from 94% to 68% (Santa Barbara 243).
- **Example of summarizing:** This sentence summarizes and communicates the source's main idea.
Studies show that Americans just doesn't approve of spanking like they used to (Santa Barbara 243).

Where do I cite?

- Within the body of the paper, at the place where you are quoting or paraphrasing the information
- In a comprehensive list of ALL sources you've cited throughout the paper (bibliography).

How do I cite?

That depends on which style manual you are using. Most often your instructor will ask you to utilize a particular style. If not, pick a style and be consistent. Whatever style you use, there are three areas it will affect in your paper:

1. The general format of the paper, including font, line spacing, margins, page number placement, titles, etc.
2. How you cite different types of sources within your bibliography (the comprehensive list of every source you've used in your paper).
3. In-text citation, or how you cite your sources within the body of your paper.

For more information please visit [Cite Your Sources](#) link on the MJC Library web page.

General MLA Formatting

- 12 pt, easily readable font (Times-New Roman is always safe)
- Double-spaced throughout. No exceptions
- One inch margins all around (except for page numbering)
- Page number and last name in upper right corner (0.5" from top)
- Header: Name→Professor→Course Name→Date (dates are always day month year)
- Title centered with major words capitalized. No special formatting!
- Indent at beginning of new paragraphs

Formatting the MLA Works Cited List

- Always its own, separate page.
- Margins should be 1", like the body of your paper.
- Last name and page number "header" continued from paper (e.g. Ennis 9).
- Your page should be titled simply Works Cited. This title is placed 1 inch from the top of the page, is centered, and does NOT include any special formatting such as bolding, italics, underline, etc. Not the first letter of each word is capitalized.
- Like the rest of the paper, your Works Cited is double-spaced with NO EXTRA SPACING between citations.
- All entries begin at the flush-left margin.
- There is a hanging indent on each entry to make the list easier to scan.
- The list is alphabetized. Generally one alphabetized by author's last name. If the work has no author, then alphabetize by title (but ignore articles A, An, and The).

MLA In-Text Citation

Why in-text citation?

Your list of works cited is one way you communicate to your reader the outside sources used in your paper. But the information contained in the Works Cited list is not enough documentation. You must also be prepared to communicate

- Where within your paper you are using outside sources
- Which specific source you used.
- Where in the source you found the information

What is included in the in-text citation?

In-text documentation must point your reader directly to the full citation of the source material in your Works Cited list. There must be a direct relationship between your in-text citation and your Works Cited citation. Your in-text citation must include:

- Author's last name
- OR**
- If the source has no personal author, then use title of source (abbreviation of title is acceptable)

Your in-text documentation must also help your reader identify as accurate as possible exactly where in the source document you found the words/ideas you are incorporating into your work. If your source has page numbers, then identify those within the parenthetical documentation.

Readability

Even though it is essential to acknowledge the use of another's words and/or ideas in your work, it is also important to keep your paper as "readable" as possible. The *MLA Handbook* suggests writers keep the number of parenthetical references "*as brief – and as few— as clarity and accuracy permit.*" They urge writers to provide only the information a reader needs to identify the sources, namely the author (or title if there is no listed author) and the page number. MLA also encourages writers to use an author's name in the text in order to shorten the parenthetical notation.

Example of parenthetical acknowledgment of author vs. using author's name in the text:

Good: People prepare for college in fundamentally different ways (Conley 131).

Better: Conley notes that people prepare for college in fundamentally different ways (131).

Other Readability Issues:

- To avoid interrupting the flow of your paper, try to place parenthesis where pauses would naturally occur.
- If you use an outside source several consecutive times in the same paragraph, MLA offers three different techniques. To see examples of these three techniques, see pages 218 and 219 of the *Handbook*.
 1. Give one parenthetical citation after the last use of the source.
 2. Use the authors name and page number for the first source, then just note different page numbers of subsequent information.
 3. Name your author/title in the text at the beginning of the paragraph, then insert relevant page numbers wherever needed throughout the paragraph.

In-Text Citation: Basic Check List*

1. Did you cite your sources for all direct quotes, paraphrased information, and summarized ideas used?

"Adjusted data from seven U.S. surveys between 1968 and 1994 show a decline in approval of disciplinary spanking from 94% to 68%, or 26 percentage points in 26 years" (Santa Barbara 243).

Studies show that Americans are becoming more critical of the concept of spanking children. Between 1968 and 1994 the so-called "approval rating" of spanking children dropped from 94% to 68% (Santa Barbara 243).

Studies show that Americans just doesn't approve of spanking like they used to (Santa Barbara 243).

2. Did you use the author's last name for your in-text citation whenever available? If there was no author, did you use the "Small Title"?

Global warming will result in increased precipitation in some areas, while other parts of the globe will experience a significant decrease in rainfall (Randolph 377).

Researchers predict global warming will bring about a spate of droughts and flooding as the planet heats up ("Update: Global Warming").

3. Did you place parenthesis at end of sentence, but BEFORE punctuation for "normal" cites?

While Nashville has always been the undisputed capital of country music, Bakersfield began to be referred to as the "second Nashville," and the Bakersfield sound gave its staid eastern sister-city a run for her money with its distinct element of western swing that produced a more up-tempo ethos (Coker 335).

4. Are direct quotes longer than four lines indented an extra inch on the left side, with quotation marks removed, and parenthesis AFTER punctuation?

Haggard says:

East of the Mississippi, country music has its root in gospel and the coal miners. West of the Mississippi (...) it was born and spawned in the bar rooms around the Air Force bases, ship yards, and oil fields. It came from the dancehalls, and it didn't really have much likeness to church music, whereas bluegrass on the other hand was born in the black churches, born out of a different mentality than country music out here. (qtd. in Sterling)

5. Do references in the text directly point reader to sources in the list of works cited?

This is true of sources you integrate into your text -- e.g., According to Jones... - - as well as parenthetical notations --e.g. (Jones 5). For either of these, there better be an entry in your Works Cited that begins with Jones!

6. Did you mention author (or, if no author, title) EITHER in the text OR within a parenthetical citation...and not both!

Right: Ennis claims librarians are the most fascinating of all earthly creatures (5).

Wrong: Ennis claims librarians are the most fascinating of all earthly creatures (Ennis 5).

7. Are your in-text, parenthetical citations clean as a whistle?

Right: (Ennis 5).

Wrong: (Ennis, 5). (Ennis p5). NO COMMAS! No Ps!

*The above guidelines are provided in order to give you a good start with the basics of in-text citation. There are many other elements to consider. For more information on citing your sources within the text of your paper, please refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Ed.*, pages 213-232.