

# MLA CITATIONS

In a term paper, the sources of all research information must be identified, even though most points are summarized in your own words. In the MLA system, sources are identified by citations placed in parentheses in the text of your essay. These citations immediately follow each passage of research information and each direct quotation.

(Some teachers might require footnoting instead of parenthetical citations. This older system is no longer covered in MLA guidelines, but footnoting handouts are still available at the Skills Centre.)

- *The most common form of citation gives the author's last name and the page number(s). Note that no comma is used between name and page(s):*

**(Smith 6)            (Martinez 78-79)**

- *If the author's name is mentioned in your essay—fairly close to the citation—give the page number(s) only:*

**. . . and Martinez defends this view (78-79).**

- *If there are two or three authors, list their last names (using commas as shown below):*

**(Chang and Whitfield 3-5)            (Jones, Aziz, and Renkov 95)**

- *If there are more than three authors, give only the first author's surname with the Latin abbreviation et al. (meaning "and others"):*

**(Miller et al. 61-63)**

- *Most Internet items (as well as films, broadcasts, etc.) have no author's names and no page numbers. For your citation, use whatever appears first in that item's bibliography entry. It might be the title of an Internet document, the name of a Web site, the title of a film, etc. Shorten long titles to keep citations brief and simple:*

**("Aggression in Apes")            (History Online)            (Inconvenient Truth)**

*If an Internet document actually has numbered paragraphs or sections, include that information in place of page numbers. Note that commas are used:*

**("Victorian Writers," sec. 5)            ("Alchemy," par. 10)**

- *For print sources with no author (e.g. an anonymous magazine article, an unsigned encyclopedia item, a pamphlet), use the title or heading. Shorten long phrases when necessary:*

**("Visiting Fiji")            ("Edison, Thomas A.")            (Vermeer Exhibition)**

## FICTION, POETRY, AND DRAMA

- *Following a quotation from a novel or short story, you must cite the source. If the author's identity is clearly established, cite only the page(s). When necessary, include the author's surname:*

(15) (45-46) (Dickens, 116)

- *When quoting from a poem, if the poet and title are clearly established, give the line number(s) only. The first time, use the word line or lines; after that, just the number(s):*

first (lines 5-6) or (line 7) then (10) (15-16)

*If a long poem has numbered divisions, indicate the division, then the line(s):*

(5.27-28) [indicating canto 5 or book 5, lines 27-28]

- *When quoting from a play, if the playwright is clearly identified in the essay, indicate act, scene, and line numbers only. Separate them with periods. If necessary, include the playwright's surname:*

(3.1.56-59) (Shaw 4.3.25)

## PLACEMENT AND PUNCTUATION OF MLA CITATIONS

*When a segment of research information is summarized in your own words, the citation follows it immediately. It comes before the closing punctuation as shown below:*

**The loss of the Franklin Expedition was due to the failure of the English explorers to adapt to the severe northern conditions and to provision their ships properly (Parker 54-55).**

*Following a brief direct quotation, the citation is placed after the closing quotation marks but before the closing punctuation:*

**The expedition was “doomed from the start by the cavalier attitudes characteristic of the British navy in Franklin’s time” (Johnson 77).**

*Long quotations are set off from the text of your essay with the entire passage indented. (Thus quotation marks are not needed.) In this case, the citation follows the closing punctuation:*

**Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. Societies throughout the world must learn from this tragic example. (Anderson 45-46)**

*If you need help with your citations, see your teacher or visit the Academic Skills Centre. You may also consult the librarians or The MLA Handbook in the reference section of the library.*