

MLA Style
Jacobson Center for Writing, Teaching, and Learning
Smith College

When you write papers in the humanities—literature, philosophy, religion, and art history, among other disciplines—you need to follow the reference guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA).

MLA style does not require the use of footnotes or endnotes; MLA style requires an in-text citation, also known as a parenthetical citation, which includes only enough information to allow the reader to identify the source. Ideally you should identify the author in the sentence that introduces the source; this enables you to keep the parenthetical material brief. The full bibliographic detail for that source is listed in a "Works Cited" page.

In-Text Citation

As Austen shrewdly points out, “a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (1).

Works Cited List

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Egerton, 1813.

Formatting Quotations

Short quotations of no more than four lines should be placed in double quotation marks and incorporated into the text. If the material quoted is poetry, indicate the line breaks with a slash mark:

We recognize many familiar lines from Shakespeare, such as “The quality of mercy is not strained,/ It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven” (*The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.184-5).

Note that the parenthetical citation identifies the specific play as well as the act, scene, and line numbers.

If a quotation runs to more than four lines, it should be set off from the text in a free-standing block that is indented one inch from the left hand margin. Subsequent lines should be flush with the first line and double-spaced. Quotation marks are not necessary because the format itself makes clear to the reader that you’re quoting directly. Here’s an example:

Many scholars, including Wilson himself, have commented on the agency's corruption. As he points out,

It has falsified records, assassinated reputations, maligned innocent bystanders, and risked its own people. Reorganization is hopeless; the agency is rotten to the core and needs to be abolished, and the whole question of its purpose should be re-thought. But at this point such a refreshing prospect seems unlikely. Too many people in power have too high a stake in its continuation; too few people who might actually force a confrontation have the will to do so. (422)

The punctuation preceding a block quotation varies. If the sentence preceding the quotation is complete, use a colon. If the sentence is incomplete punctuate as you would if the sentence and the quotation were straight uninterrupted text.

MLA Guide

1. Book with One Author

In-Text Citation Form

Either

Van Horne claims that the biggest problems of Appalachia are ecological (46).

Or

The biggest problems in Appalachia are ecological (Van Horne 46).

Works Cited Form

Van Horne, Robert. *Coal Mines and Floods: A History of Breathitt County, Kentucky*. Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1989.

2. Two or More Books by the Same Author

In-Text Citation Form

Either

In *Coal Mines and Floods*, Van Horne asserts that ecology is Appalachia's biggest problem (46).

Or

Van Horne asserts that ecology is Appalachia's biggest problem (*Coal Mines* 46).

Works Cited Form (arrange alphabetically by title)

Van Horne, Robert. *Coal Mines and Floods: A History of Breathitt County, Kentucky*. Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1989.

- - - . *Feuds of Southeastern Kentucky*. Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1994

3. Book with Two or Three Authors

In-Text Citation Form

Either

Smith and Wesson repeatedly point out that only the researchers know the results (49).

Or

Only the researchers know the results (Smith and Wesson 49).

Works Cited Form

Smith, Peter, and Asa Wesson. *Loaded Guns*. Springfield, MA: Hill, 1988.

4. Book with Four or More Authors

In-Text Citation Form

(Gates et al. 321)

Works Cited Form

Either

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., Anthony P. Griffin, Donald E. Lively, Robert C. Post, William B. Rubenstein, and Nadine Strossen. *Speaking of Race, Speaking of Sex: Hate Speech, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.

Or

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., et al. *Speaking of Race, Speaking of Sex: Hate Speech, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.

5. Work in an Anthology

In-Text Citation Form

(Szwed 425)

Works Cited Form

Szwed, John F. "The Ethnography of Literacy." *Literacy: A Cultural Sourcebook*. Ed. Ellen Cushman. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000. 421-429.

6. Book with an Editor

In-Text Citation Form

(Bryson 22)

Works Cited Form

Bryson, Bill, ed. *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

7. Article in a Scholarly Journal

In-Text Citation Form

(Hayakawa 367)

List of Works Cited Form

Hayakawa, S. I. "Mr. Eliot's Auto Da Fe." *Sewanee Review* 42 (1934): 365-372.

8. Article in a Newspaper

In-Text Citation Form

(Hakim 1)

List of Works Cited Form

Hakim, Danny. "Talking Green vs. Making Green." *New York Times* 28 Mar. 2000, B1+.

9. Citing Electronic Sources

In-Text Citation Form

(Glickman par 5)

List of Works Cited Form

Glickman, Lawrence B. "The Strike in the Temple of Consumption: Consumer Activism and Twentieth-Century American Political Culture." *The Journal of American History* 88.1 (2001): 45 pars. 28 Mar 2002 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/88.1/glickman.html>>.