

To Quote, Paraphrase, or Block Quote? – MLA Style

In the academic world, research plays a strong role in contributing to humanity's collective knowledge. More often than not, new research is built on the foundations of older work. It is important to recognize the contribution made by others, especially if you use the findings of other researchers in your own work.

Failure to give credit to those authors that contributed to your work is known as plagiarism. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual theft. If you are caught plagiarizing, there are serious implications that include: receiving a failing grade in your class or expulsion from your academic institution/program.

Two major components to giving proper recognition, to contributing works in your papers, are the "parenthetical documentation" and "Works Cited" list. There are many different formats for giving proper recognition to works that you cite in your own work. Among the more common forms of citation are the American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA) and Chicago. This document will focus on the MLA style of citation.

There are several ways of citing information in your papers – the quote, paraphrase, and block quotation. All can deliver the same information, but how you decide to employ each form is a matter of personal writing style. You can refer to sections 3.7 and 6.1-5 in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th ed.; *MLA Handbook*) for more information about formatting quotations.

PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION

Immediately following a quote, paraphrase, or block quotation, you will include parenthetical documentation. This is a visual cue to the reader that tells them: information was borrowed from a source, and that they can refer to the "Works Cited" list (that immediately follows the paper's text) for more detailed bibliographic information about the original source.

The parenthetical documentation will be contained between parentheses following the integration of information from other sources. The information will typically include two pieces of information, which are:

1. last name of author[s]
2. page number[s] for documents that have page numbering (use paragraph number if page numbers are not present; use *par.* for a single paragraph, *pars.* for multiple paragraphs – neither is italicized in the parenthetical documentation)
 - a. numbers in parenthetical documentation that accompany passages from drama or poetry refer to the lines in the particular works – not the page numbers

Refer to section 3.7 in the *MLA Handbook* for more examples of what information you need to provide in the parenthetical documentation.

ORIGINAL PASSAGE FROM A BOOK

The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multinational corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products.

NOTE: This passage is scanned from page 3 in the book: *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, by Naomi Klein. Examples 1-5 will demonstrate the different methods that this information can be adapted and integrated into a paper.

SHORT QUOTES

Quoting is the use of another writer's words as they were originally written. The borrowed words must be surrounded by quotation marks and the parenthetical documentation must include the last name of the author[s] and page that it was printed on.

EXAMPLE 1:

Some management theorists suggest, "that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products" (Klein 3).

OR

EXAMPLE 2:

Naomi Klein notes that some management theorists suggest, "that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products" (3).

NOTE: You will notice the second version of the quote does not have the author's last name in the parenthetical documentation. The author's name is mentioned in the narrative leading into the quote, it is therefore redundant to mention the author's name in the parenthetical documentation following the quote.

PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is using someone's work (concepts/ideas or words), but rephrasing it in your own words. Even though you are using your own words, the ideas that are expressed must be referenced and maintain the context that the original author intended. Since the words are your own, no quotation marks are required, but parenthetical documentation is required. The parenthetical documentation must include the name of the author[s], and the page number that the original concept/idea was taken from.

EXAMPLE 3:

Management theories, developed in the mid-1980s, put forth the idea that branding is as important to corporate success as the actual product that is produced (Klein 3).

OR

EXAMPLE 4:

Naomi Klein suggests that management theories, developed in the mid-1980s, put forth the idea that branding is as important to corporate success as the actual product that is produced (3).

BLOCK QUOTATIONS

Block quotations are employed when a quotation exceeds 4 lines in length. Block quotations will be indented an additional one inch from the margin and left justified from that 1-inch indent. Quotation marks are not required, since the indentation has already offset the passage as a block quotation.

EXAMPLE 5:

Naomi Klein, in her book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, writes:

The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multinational corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products. (3)

QUOTING POETRY/VERSE

When quoting poetry, you must try to maintain the printed pattern/style of the text. The parenthetical documentation numbers that accompany the poem or verse will refer to the line number[s] in the verse, not the page numbers. Refer to 3.7.3 of *MLA Handbook* for more information about quoting poetry.

EXAMPLE 6 (2–3 line quotation):

In her poem “My life closed twice before its close –”, Emily Dickinson writes that: “Parting is all we know of heaven, / And all we need of hell” (7-8).

NOTE: You will use a slash (/) to separate the lines. A space will precede and follow the slash.

EXAMPLE 7 (4 or more lines quoted):

In E. E. Cummings’s poem “n w”, the unique presentation of his verse can be clearly seen as

follows:

n w
O
h
S
LoW
h
myGODye
s s (1-8)

NOTES:

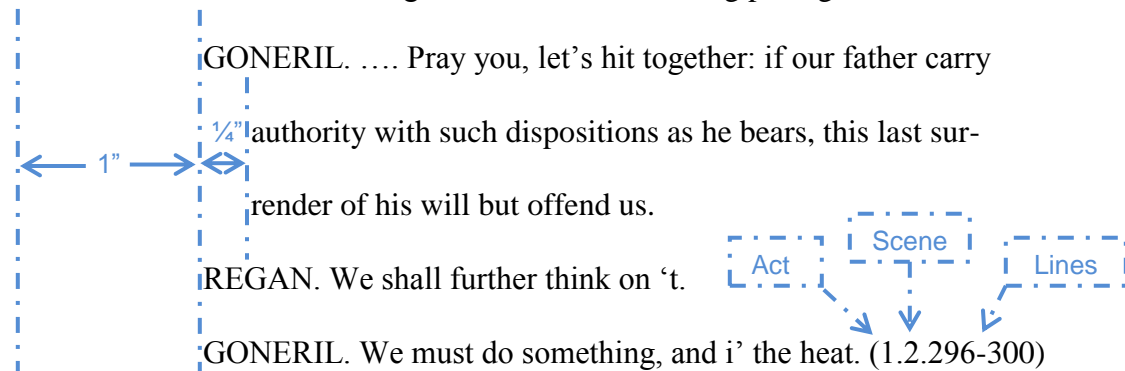
1. Double-space text, unless the original writer has unique specifications for the text spacing. Since *Example 7* is meant to display Cummings’s unique formatting, this poem was not double-spaced.
2. Neither *Example 6* nor *Example 7* has formal titles. In such instances, present the first line of the poem as you would the title – section 3.6.1 of *MLA Manual*.

QUOTING DRAMA

When quoting dialogue between two characters in drama: indent the dialogue one inch from the margin; subsequent lines in a single character's dialogue is indented and additional ¼"; each character's name is capitalized prior to the dialogue they spoke; and the parenthetical documentation should include the act, scene, and line numbers.

EXAMPLE 8 (Dialogue between two characters):

In *King Lear (Lr.)*, Shakespeare has the sisters Goneril and Regan plotting against Cordelia and Lear. Goneril's initial scheming is heard in the following passage:



QUOTING WEB PAGES

There are many different formats on the World Wide Web (WWW). You will need to have some familiarity with the different formats and how to quote each. The two most common formats that you will encounter are HTML and PDF.

Most pages on the Web do not include page numbering (the exception is a PDF document – the equivalent of an electronic photocopy). You will never use the page numbers that are applied to a printed web page, since the copy can vary from computer to computer (unlike a PDF).

If paragraph numbers are present in the web page, use those numbers in place of the page numbers. You will use *par.* (or *pars.* for the pluralism; non-italicized) prior to presenting the number in the parenthetical documentation.

EXAMPLE 9:

Reddall states that, “Yeats warmed to a number of Nietzsche's ideas” (par. 5).

If no paragraph number is present: do not use either the page or paragraph number. In such instances, parenthetical documentation cannot be provided (save for the authors name), but the readers can scan a Web accessible document for them selves to verify the source.

Refer to section 6.4.2 of the *MLA Handbook* for more details.

WORKS CITED LIST

Parenthetical documentation is only half of what is necessary when referencing material. Most citation methods include a "Works Cited" page that follows the text of the paper. The parenthetical documentation points to the works cited page list, where a reader can view more detailed bibliographic information about the work that was cited in the paper. The purpose for doing so is to allow the reader to verify the information that you provided in your paper.

The bibliographic information can be gathered from a publication's title page or the publisher's information page. The library's online catalogue (OPAC) or databases/online periodical indexes will also provide most of the information that is necessary to completing the reference page citation.

EXAMPLES 1-5 (book citation):

Klein, Naomi. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada, 2000.

Print.

EXAMPLE 6 (poem from an edited book):

Dickinson, Emily. "My life closed twice before its close –." *The Complete Poems of Emily*

Dickinson. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Boston: Little, 1960. 702-03. Print.

EXAMPLE 7 (poem from an edited book):

Cummings, E[dward] E[stlin]. "n w." *Another E. E. Cummings*. Ed. Richard Kostelanetz. New

York: Liveright, 1998. 141. Print.

EXAMPLE 8 (play from an edited book):

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. Bernard Lott. London: Longman, 1974. Print. New Swan

Shakespeare Advanced Ser.

EXAMPLE 9 (Web page):

Reddall, David. "The Swooping Godhead of Imagination: A Discussion of William Butler Yeats'

'Leda and the Swan'." *Agora: Online Graduate Humanities Journal* 2.3 (2004): 34 pars.

Web. 5 Jan. 2007. <<http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/agora/>

Articles.cfm?ArticleNo=171>.

Refer to chapter 5 ("Documentation: Preparing the List of Works Cited") in the *MLA Handbook* for more examples of writing works cited page citations for different mediums.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ~ Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. Print. This book is available in the library's Circulation and Reference Collections; its call number is BF 76.7 P83 2009.

- ~ ---. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 2nd ed. New York: MLA, 2008. Print. This book is available in the library's Circulation Collection; its call number is PE 1478 G44 2008.

- ~ <http://www.mlahandbook.org> – This is the official website of the MLA's style handbook. If you purchased a copy, you have the ability to create an account thereby gaining access to a digital copy, sample papers, updates, and more.

- ~ The library's *MLA Style Guide*, *How to Write an Annotated Bibliography*, and *What is Plagiarism?* handouts – all are available in print in the library or online at:
<http://www.mhc.ab.ca/library/howtoguides.html>