

MLA Integrating Quotations

In research paper writing, it is important to allow your own thinking to control the paper. Your thesis should be supported by evidence you have gathered from various sources. Citing sources is not just a mechanical exercise to follow a documentation style – it is a process that affects the rhetoric of your writing.

It is important to document sources for three basic reasons:

1. to assign credit to the author of the facts and ideas you have used in assembling your argument,
2. to help readers understand how you have come to the conclusions you have presented, and
3. to offer an indication of the quality of your sources. Good documentation gives readers evidence of your hard and thorough work, and it helps other researchers.

Because you are the author of your paper, remember that your thinking is the key to the paper's success. Even when a substantial portion of the paper is based on research, you must think carefully and write clearly so that the ideas of others fit into *your* overall argument. The following explanations offer ways to present internal documentation of the thoughts and ideas of others in your paper. Remember, in the MLA style, you must attribute credit to every idea that does not come from your own original thinking and every fact that is not common knowledge. It is not uncommon, therefore, to have citations in or after nearly every sentence in a paragraph. For example:

In *Prints as Visual Communication*, William Ivins speaks of the “tyranny of the engraver’s nets of rationality” (88) and says that the “webbing of lines [was] an incident of manufacture” (168). Under Rubens’ system, all copied artwork – be it oil painting or technical drawing or sculptural copy – came out of the engraver’s shop looking very similar in style, thus the prejudice against the “mechanick” nature of engraving, which made art over in its own image (Ivins 73). Like the dot in a modern half-tone screen, the engraved line is a reductive element that has no capacity for meaning when taken by itself (Eaves, “Machine” 905). The line meant something entirely different to engravers, then, than it did to artists, and the split in line use is

representative of the split in the two professions: artists created art, while engravers merely copied it.

Notice that each idea in this paragraph is cited individually. In the first sentence, the author of the paper attributes the quotations to the author and book she used *in the text of her paper*, which means that the parenthetical citations need only contain the page number. However, the second sentence, although it comes from the same source, needs a separate citation, which can come at the end of the sentence, because there is only one quoted portion of the sentence. Never cite a group of ideas at the end of a paragraph, even if they come from the same page. Each idea must be cited individually. Notice that the second to last sentence, which does not contain any quoted material, is also cited, because the author took the idea from Morris Eaves. Note, too, that she uses a shortened form of the title in the parenthetical citation because, as the paper's Works Cited page would indicate, she has cited from more than one work by this author and his name and a page number would not suffice in attributing the idea to his work. Clearly, there is a direct relation between what you integrate into your text and the ideas of others that support your thinking.

The punctuation inside and around parenthetical citations should be consistent. In the typical MLA parenthetical citation, the author's last name and page number are given without a comma between them. If, however, an abbreviated title is added, the parenthetical citation must include a comma after the author's name and before the abbreviated title. The abbreviated title must be italicized or underlined if it is a book or placed in quotation marks if it is an article. The parenthetical citation is part of the sentence, so the period goes after the end parenthesis.

All styles of documentation have their paradoxes or situations where a rule is modified under certain conditions. For example:

Block quotations:

Block form is used for long quotations (4 or more lines), in which case quotation marks are omitted because the block form substitutes for quotation marks. Block quotations should be double spaced and indented 10 spaces from your left margin. In block quotations, the period at the end of the quotation comes before the parenthetical citation, as in the example below.

Holcombe highlights the conflict faced by women with intellectual aspirations in the Victorian Period:

indifferently or frivolously educated, often empty-headed and limited in outlook, idle and dependent upon men for their livelihood and their status in society, middle class women not unnaturally were considered a

subordinate species altogether, while women of intelligence and ability were frustrated by the narrow, stultifying lives which were their lot. (5)

Paraphrases and summaries must include a page number. For instance, a summary of the literary critic's interpretation of a story must give the page number even if the student writing the paper uses her own words.

One critic contends that the story is a tale of feminism gone wrong (Alberts 234).

However, if it is a general idea that runs throughout the text, a page number is not needed.

You may choose from a variety of different methods for integrating quotations into the text of your paper. Note how signal phrases are used to start the acknowledgement and the parenthesis is used to close the acknowledgement. The examples that follow demonstrate a number of these ways using a quotation from Samuel Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespeare's plays. Johnson claims that "Shakespeare is, above all other writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life."

Whole quotation:

Samuel Johnson claims that "Shakespeare is, above all other writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life" (301).

Part of a quotation (note how the quotation is integrated into the syntax of the sentence):

Samuel Johnson contends that Shakespeare's writing is superior to other poets' because he was "the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life" (301).

In the above example, note the use of the verb "contends," which helps to clarify the context for the quoted material.

Key words:

When two quotations in a sentence come from the same page, the page number appears only after the second quotation.

Samuel Johnson praises Shakespeare for being “the poet of nature,” believing that he surpassed all other poets in his ability to construct “a faithful mirror of manners and of life” (301).

Ellipses (...):

If you want to use most of the words of the quotation, but some seem unnecessary or not useful, you may replace them with an ellipsis.

Johnson claims that “Shakespeare is, above all other writers...the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life” (301).

Making adjustments:

If you want to use most of the words of the quotation or change the capitalization or tense of a word to fit your text, place the letters that change the word in brackets:

Samuel Johnson claimed that “Shakespeare [wa]s above all other writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that h[eld] up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and life” (301).

Importance of Introductory or Signal Phrases:

Signal phrases help to introduce material borrowed from a reference. Signal phrases often incorporate a verb, or a verb phrase. A list of verbs and verb phrases follows to assist you with your own writing; should you use one of these, be sure that it fits the context. From time to time you might want to identify the credentials of a source. For example, a full sentence might be used to introduce a quotation, paraphrase, or summary taken from a science journal as follows:

Dr. Henry Morgan, Yale University professor of biochemistry, found after repeated experimentation that “genetic material could be replicated” (446).

A comment from a literary critic might begin with a phrase such as this:

In a New York Times Book Review article, Hans Smith contended: “Kenney has only a superficial understanding of Herbert’s poetry” (23).

SOME VERBS TO USE IN SIGNAL PHRASES

Acknowledges	Claims	Discloses	Implies	Recounts	Submits
Adds	Comments	Discounts	Indicates	Refers	Suggests
Admits	Compares	Disputes	Insists	Reflects	Supports
Advances	Concludes	Documents	Maintains	Refutes	Theorizes
Affirms	Concurs	Emphasize	Narrates	Reiterates	Writes
Agrees	Confirms	Explains	Negates	Relates	Verifies
Alludes	Contends	Expresses	Notes	Remarks	
Argues	Contrasts	Extrapolates	Observes	Replies	
Asserts	Declares	Grants	Points our	Reports	
Attests	Defines	Highlights	Posits	Responds	
Characterizes	Delineates	Hypothesizes	Purports	Reveals	
Chronicles	Denies	Illustrates	Reasons	States	

SOME VERB PHRASES

Had stated	Is advancing	Should have been disclosed
May be argued	Would relate	Am alluding
Was approved	Does reveal	Has been suggested
Could dispute	Will attest	Might have hypothesized