MLA Citation Guide

Introduction to Citations

In all your courses you will be required to use outside sources in research projects and assignments. In such situations, you would include the words or ideas of other people into your own work. When you do so, you must give credit for the original source of information or the idea. In other words, you must "cite" the source. When you do not properly cite or credit the original source in your work, it comes across as cheating or as a plagiarized work. Your teacher would then give a zero for your assignments!

This citation guide will explain everything you need to know to safely and correctly cite your sources.

First, you will learn the 3 methods of using outside sources: Direct Quoting, Paraphrasing, & Summarizing. Then, you will focus on formatting citations using a wildly used style called "MLA style". Finally, you will put all parts of citing together to understand how and when to use citations.

Methods of Using Outside Sources

You must use and integrate outside sources in a fair and attentive manner. By doing so, you help to demonstrate that you have carefully read and considered the material on your topic. Your teacher and classmates see not only your ideas alone, but also your points contextualized by the ideas of others.

There are 3 methods of using outside sources: Direct Quoting, Paraphrasing, & Summarizing

|	What is it?	When to use it?	How to Cite it?
Direct Quotations	are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source and then used word-for-word in your paper. You must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks.	sparingly and when the original language has a strong impact; with set-up, context, and proper citation; followed by commentary, analysis, or explanation.	as in-text citation with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited Section.
Paraphrasing	expressing the meaning of the original source using different words.	to contextualize the information (who said it, when, and where) ; to restate all the supporting points to develop the main idea of the original text; to share important information from the source while maintaining their own voice.	as in-text citation with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited Section.
Summarizing	involves condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position.	to contextualize the information (who said it, when, and where); by condensing the source to its main ideas and without using quotations or citing specific supporting points of the passage; to support their claims.	as in-text citation with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited Section.

Formatting Citations - MLA Style

We use a standard format to cite. Major formats come from organizations like the **Modern Language Association (MLA)** or the American Psychological Association (APA). You will be using MLA style in all your courses.

Regardless of the style, when you cite, you do two things

- Create **In-Text Citation -** It is indicated in the text of your paper, after the quotation, or paraphrase, or summary. This tells your reader precisely what is borrowed from your source and where to locate that information in the Work Cited Section.
- Create a **Works Cited Section** - It is the list of Works Cited at the end of your paper tells your reader what resources you used to write your paper

In-Text Citation - MLA Style
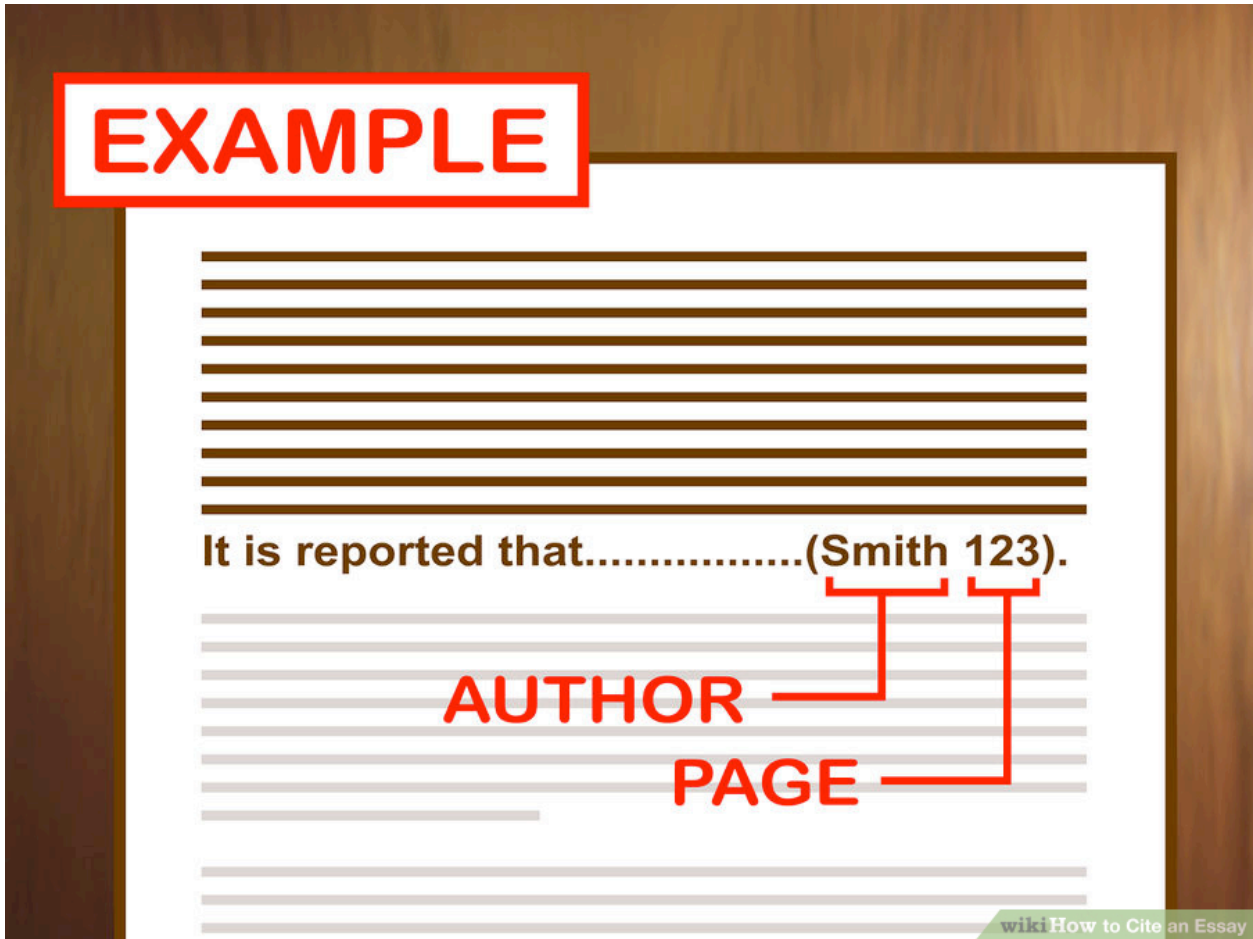
- The in-text citation usually appears in parentheses and corresponds directly to an entry in your list of Works Cited.
- The **author's last name and the page number** are usually enough to indicate the location in the source.
- If the author's name is used in the sentence, do not repeat it in the citation.

Here is the standard correct in-text citation style according to MLA guidelines:

"Quotation" (Author's Last Name Page Number).

Take a moment to carefully consider the placement of the parts and punctuation of this in-text citation. Note that there is no punctuation indicating the end of a sentence inside of the quotation marks—closing punctuation

should instead follow the parentheses. There is also no punctuation between the author's last name and the page number inside of the parentheses. The misplacement of these simple punctuation marks is one of the most common errors students make when crafting in-text citations.

Usually the author and page number are enough for in-text citations, but there are common exceptions. **Take a look at common exceptions and examples here.**

Works Cited Section - MLA Style
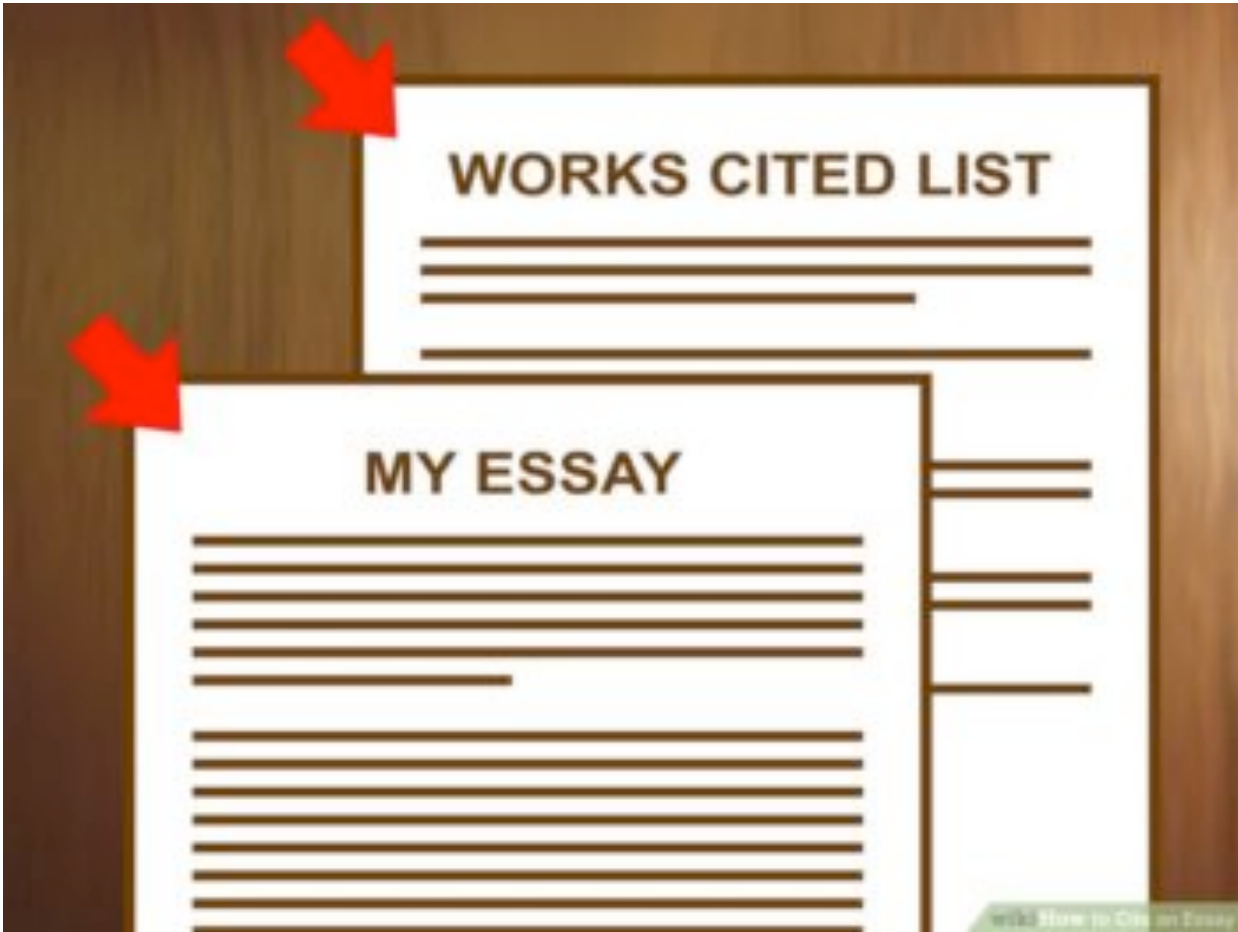
1. **Page numbers**: Just as the rest of your paper, the top of the page should retain the right-justified header with your last name and the page number.
2. **Title**: On the first line, the title of the page—"Works Cited"—should appear centered and not italicized, bolded, or placed in quotation marks.
3. **Alphabetical order**: Starting on the next line after the page title, your references should be listed in alphabetical order by author.
4. **Spacing**: Like the rest of your paper, this page should be double-spaced and have 1-inch margins (don't skip an extra line between citations).
5. **Hanging indents**: Each reference should be formatted with what is called a hanging indent. This means the first line of each reference should be flush with the left margin (i.e., not indented), but the rest of that reference should be indented 0.5 inches further. Any word-processing program will let you format this automatically. (In Microsoft Word, for example, you simply highlight your citations, right-click and choose "Paragraph", and choose "hanging indent" under the "Special" section.)

Here is an example of formatted Work Cited Section:
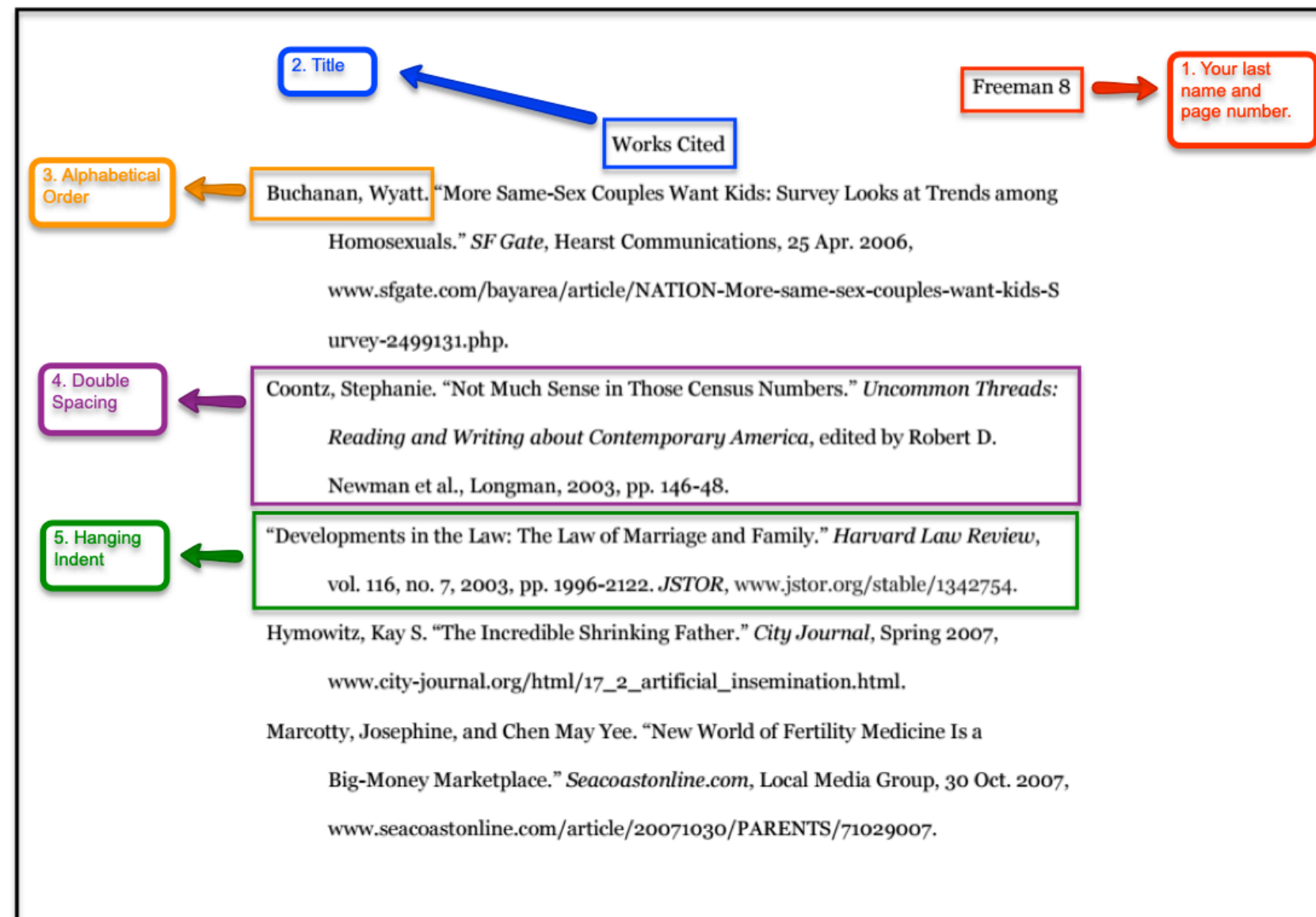
There is a specific Works Cited List format for each type of source. **Take a look at the format and examples here.**
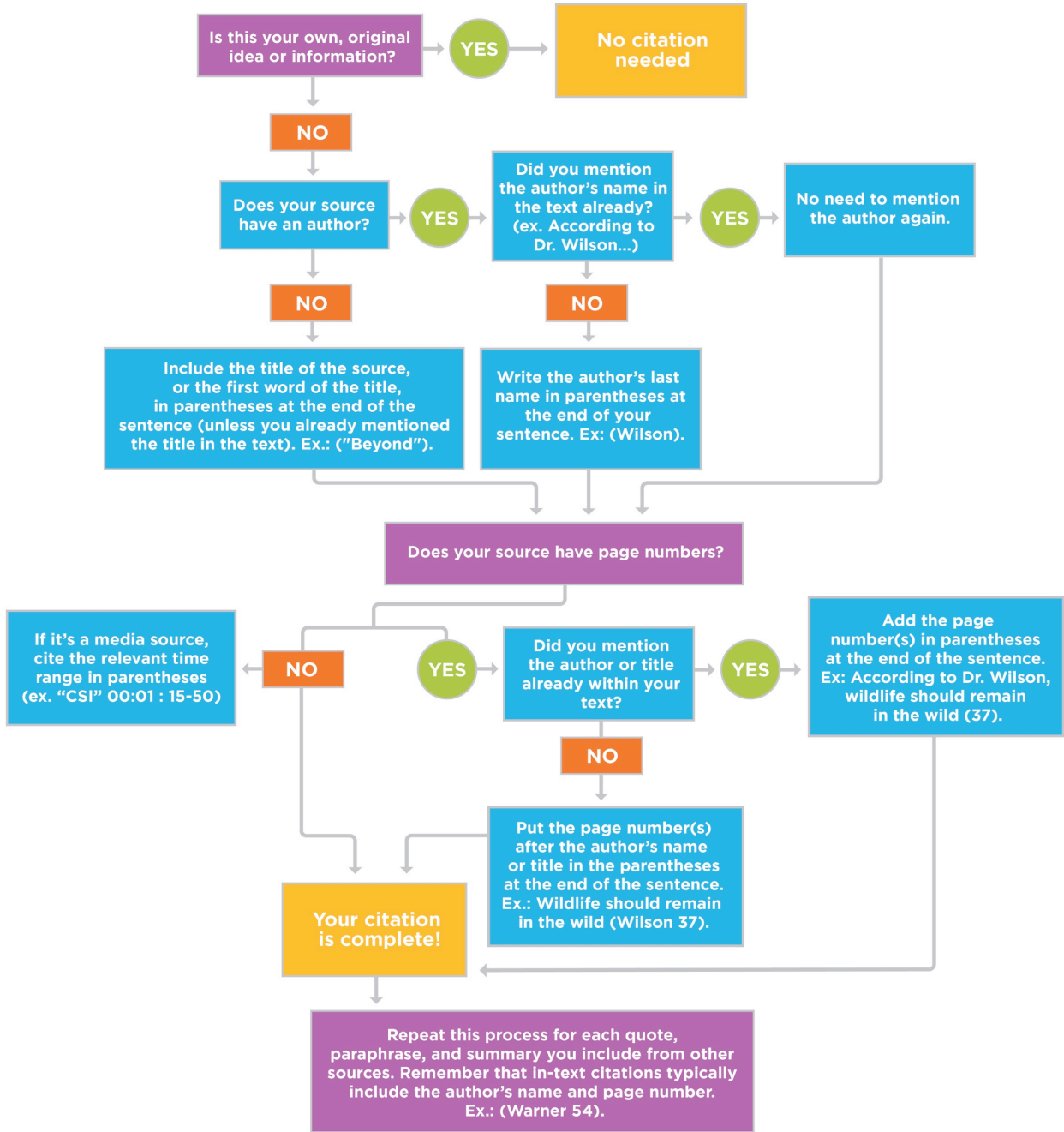
Here are some helpful websites that will generate the citations for your Works Cited List. Make sure to double-check that the citations include the correct information and follow the appropriate format:

1. Citation Machine
2. Bibme
3. Cite This For Me

Let's Put it All Together

Use the following flow-chart to determine when and how to include MLA citations:

When and How to Create MLA In-Text Citations

Is this your own, original idea or information?

YES → No citation needed

NO

Does your source have an author?

YES → Did you mention the author's name in the text already? (ex. According to Dr. Wilson...)

YES → No need to mention the author again.

NO

NO

Include the title of the source, or the first word of the title, in parentheses at the end of the sentence (unless you already mentioned the title in the text). Ex.: ("Beyond").

Write the author's last name in parentheses at the end of your sentence. Ex: (Wilson).

Does your source have page numbers?

If it's a media source, cite the relevant time range in parentheses (ex. "CSI" 00:01 : 15-50)

NO

YES → Did you mention the author or title already within your text?

YES → Add the page number(s) in parentheses at the end of the sentence. Ex: According to Dr. Wilson, wildlife should remain in the wild (37).

NO

Put the page number(s) after the author's name or title in the parentheses at the end of the sentence. Ex.: Wildlife should remain in the wild (Wilson 37).

Your citation is complete!

Repeat this process for each quote, paraphrase, and summary you include from other sources. Remember that in-text citations typically include the author's name and page number. Ex.: (Warner 54).

[Original Source](#)