MLA Citation Guide (English, Languages, Arts, Guidance)

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 you a grade of zero for your assignment!

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

Methods of Using Outside Sources

When using outside sources, it must be done 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 how other people's ideas helped shape your own.

When using information from outside sources, there are 3 methods of presenting the information in your work: Direct Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

	What is it?	When to use it?	How to cite it?
Direct Quotations	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.	Use when the original language has a strong impact; with set-up, context, and proper citation; followed by analysis or explanation of why you included it. This method should be used sparingly; do not overuse this method.	Cite with an in-text citation along with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited list
Paraphrasing	Expressing the meaning of the original source using different words.	Use to put the information into the context of your piece of writing; to restate all the supporting points to develop the main idea of the original text; to share important information from the source while maintaining your own voice.	Cite with an in-text citation along with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited list
Summarizing	Condensing the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position.	Use to put the information into the context of your piece of writing by summarizing the source material to its main ideas to support your own claims.	Cite with an in-text citation along with a corresponding entry in the Works Cited list

Formatting Citations - MLA Style

★ **Vocabulary Reminder**

A Source is the place you found your information. This could be a website, a video, a novel, etc.

A Citation is a way to tell your readers that certain material in your work came from another **source**. It also gives your readers the information necessary to find that source again.

To *"cite your source"* is to create a citation that gives credit to the rightful authors, websites, or businesses for the information you used in your writing that was taken from them. It is an acknowledgement that you used that **source** to obtain information used in a sentence or paragraph or an acknowledgement that you based your sentence or paragraph off of that source's information.

When do I need to use a Citation?

- Anytime that you are using information that is gathered from another source and is NOT common knowledge (the sky is blue, the grass is green, etc.) you need to cite it.

We use a standard format to cite. Major formats come from organizations like the **Modern Language Association (MLA**), **American Psychological Association (APA),** or the **Chicago Style Citation**. **For this course, you will be using the MLA style citation.**

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

- Create **In-Text Citations -** These are indicated in the text of your paper after the quotation, paraphrase, or summary. This tells your reader exactly what is borrowed from your outside source and where to locate that information in the Works Cited list.
- Create a **Works Cited List** - This is the list of citations at the end of your paper that tells your reader what resources you used to write your paper and where they can find them.

In all Grade 11 and 12 courses, **both** in-text citations AND the work cited list must be present in any assignment that requires outside research.

How To Create In-Text Citations - MLA Style
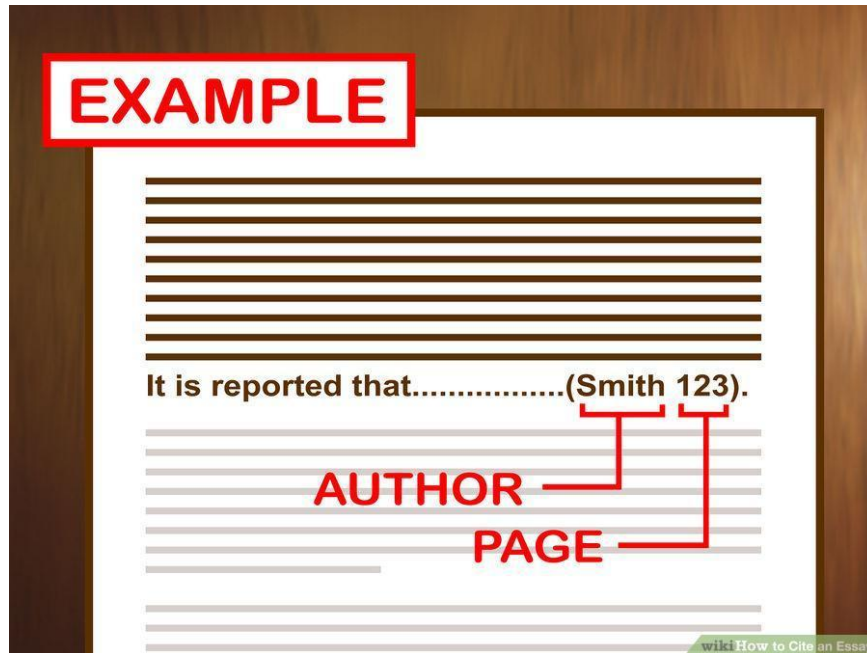
- The in-text citation is a brief reference within the body of your assignment that indicates the source where you got the information.
- The purpose is to allow the reader to quickly find the source of your information in your Works Cited list.
- Every in-text citation used in an assignment must have a corresponding entry in the Works Cited list.
- In-text citations usually appear in parentheses at the end of the sentence where you used the outside information.
- 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.

Standard Structure of a MLA in-text citation:

"Direct quote" or Paraphrase (Author's last name page number).

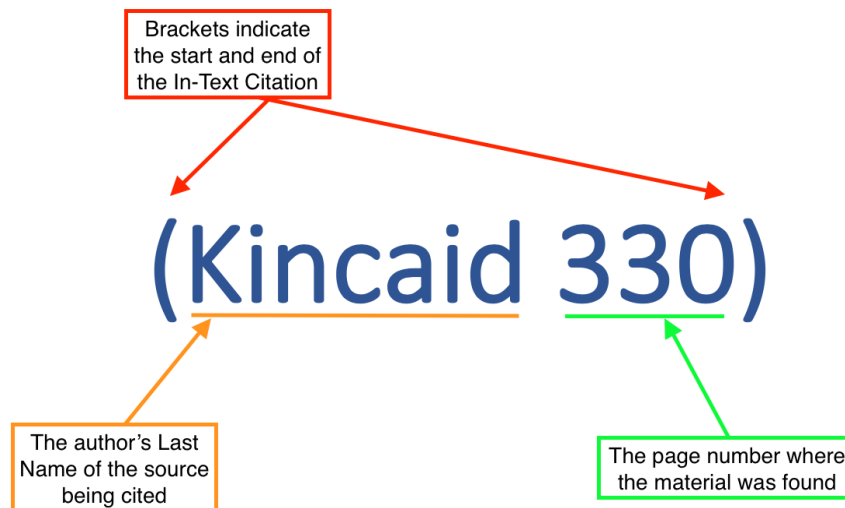*Student example here.*

OR

Author's Last Name states, "Direct Quote" or paraphrase (page number).

Student example here.

Format Review:

Brackets indicate the start and end of the In-Text Citation

(Kincaid 330)

The author's Last Name of the source being cited

The page number where the material was found

Important Notes to Remember

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 brackets.

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, such as if you cannot find the author of the source.

Take a look at common exceptions and examples here. Please download and save this PDF for reference in the future.

How To Create A Works Cited List - MLA Style

- A Works Cited List includes all resources that you used in your assignment and is included at the end of your work.
- Each citation that is used in your paper must be included in the Works Cited List.
- Each citation must be displayed in a certain format and style.

Example of citation format:

Author's last name from In-Text Citation

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories, edited* by Tobias Wolff, Vintage, 1994, pp. 306-07.

Page number from In-Text Citation

How to format each citation in your Works Cited:

- Author (Last Name, First Name)
  - In this case, the authors name is **Jamaica Kincaid**
- Title of Work
  - The title of this work is called "**Girl**"
- Name of "Container"
  - A "container" is where the source is found. A book is a container for the chapters. A Journal is a container for a journal article. This short story is in a container called ***The Vintage Book of Contemporary Short Stories***
- Name of Publisher
  - The publisher is the company that produced the source. The publisher here is "**Vintage**"
- Publication Date
  - The publication date is the date that the source was printed, released, or posted online. The published date here is **1994**
- Location
  - The location of the source is where it can be found. This can be a URL link, page numbers, or physical place. This source location are pages **306-07**

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

Your Works Cited List is the full list of all the citations that you used. In addition to ensuring you have the correct format for each citation, you must also have the correct format for the entire Works Cited List.
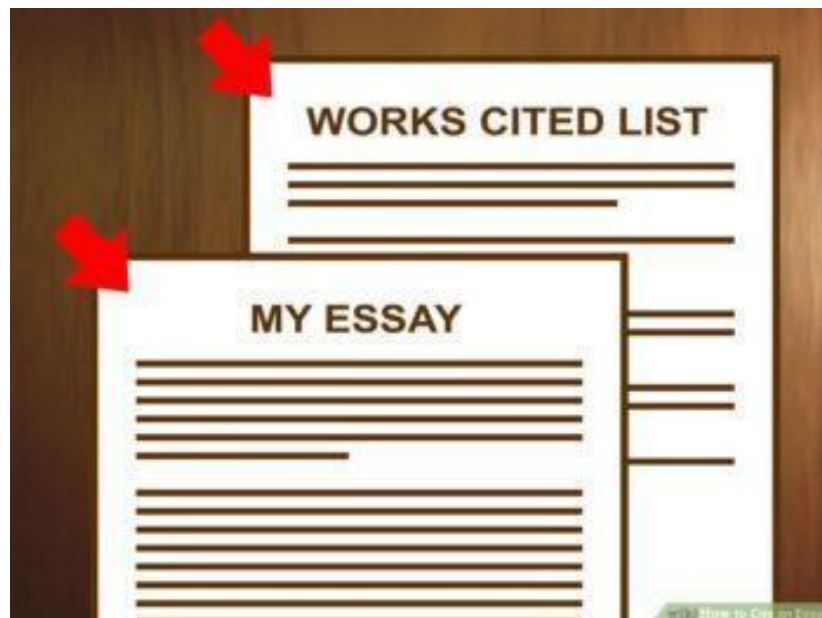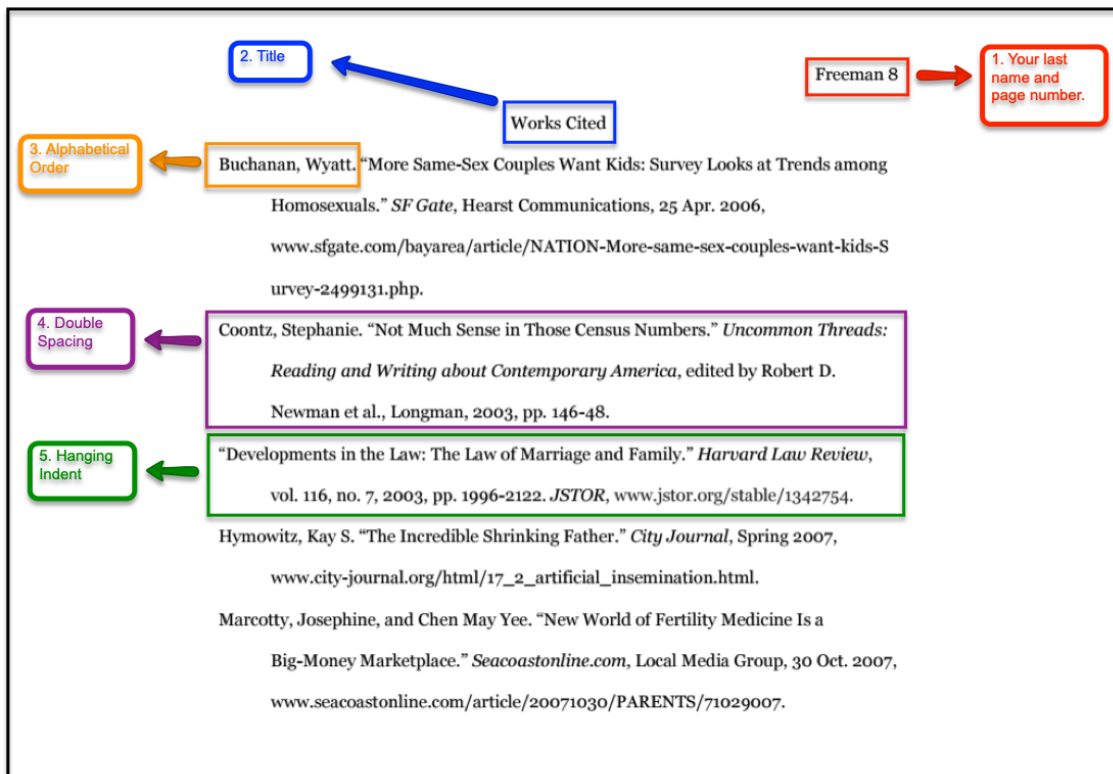

How to Format Your Works Cited List:

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 centred 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 a formatted Works Cited Section:

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
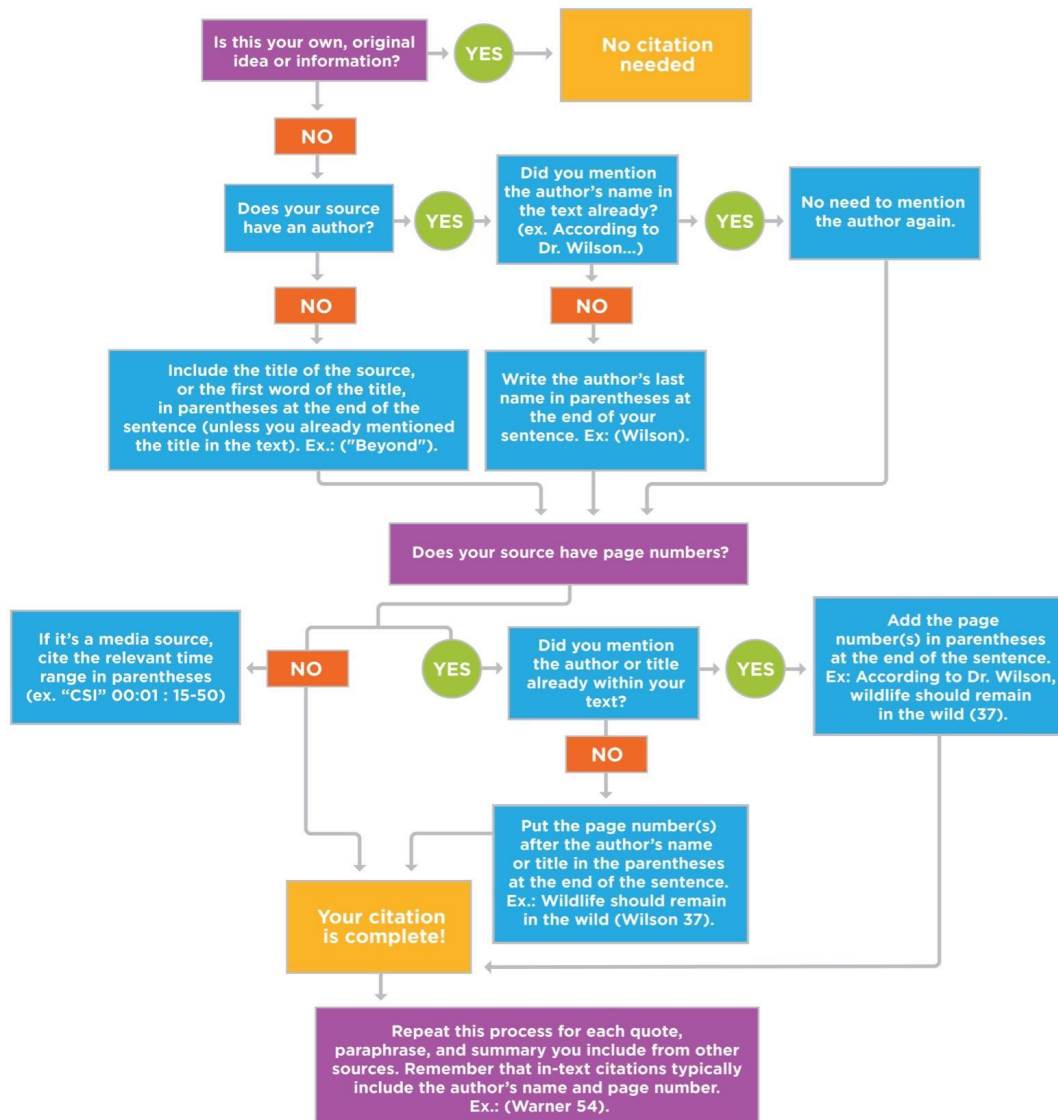
[Original Source](#)

More Information

Now that you understand the importance of citing sources and how to create in-text citations and Works Cited lists, you should have the basics to responsibly use research in your assignments. However, you may find that there are exceptions or variations in citations depending on the type of source. Use the following link to see examples of the most up to date citation format for all types of resources:

MLA Purdue Writing Lab

Final Note

Citations are a crucial part of academic integrity. We use citations from credible sources to support, *not replace*, our own thinking and ideas. An essay or research paper with little or no citations lacks credibility. However, we must also be careful not to use too many citations. The purpose of your assignments is to demonstrate your learning by expressing your own thoughts and ideas and, when needed, back them up with citations. When your teacher is grading your writing, they will consider these questions:

- Does the unique voice of the student come through?
- Does the student share their own ideas and opinions (or do they just repeat the words and ideas from other people)?
- Does the student use enough credible citations to back up their thinking?

It is one thing to follow good citation practices and formatting, but if the entirety of your work is a collection of other people's ideas—even if those ideas are properly cited!—that is still an offence against academic integrity. Ultimately, it is your voice and your ideas that should be heard.