



LEO: Literacy Education Online

## MLA Parenthetical Documentation

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In MLA style, in-text citations, called parenthetical citations, are used to document any external sources used within a document (unless the material cited is considered general knowledge). The parenthetical citations direct readers to the full bibliographic citations listed in the Works Cited, located at the end of the document. In most cases, the parenthetical citations include the author's last name and the specific page number for the information cited. Here are general guidelines for in-text citations, including [use of authors' names](#), [placement of citations](#), and [treatment of electronic sources](#).

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### *Use of Authors' Names*

Always mention the author's name—either in the text itself or in the parenthetical citation—unless no author is provided.

#### **If the author's name is mentioned in the text**

If the author's name is used in the text introducing the source material, then cite the page number(s) in parentheses:

Branscomb argues that "it's a good idea to lurk (i.e., read all the messages without contributing anything) for a few weeks, to ensure that you don't break any of the rules of netiquette" (7) when joining a listserv.

#### **If the author's name is not mentioned in the text**

If the author's name is not used in the sentence introducing the source material, then include the author's last name in the parenthetical citation before the page number(s). Note that no comma appears between the author's name and the page number(s).

The modern world requires both the ability to concentrate on one thing and the ability to attend to more than one thing at a time: "Ideally, each individual would cultivate a repertoire of styles of attention, appropriate to different situations, and would learn how to embed activities and types of attention one within another" (Bateson 97).

### **If there is more than one work by the same author**

If a document uses more than one work by an individual author, include an abbreviated form of the title of the work in addition to the author's name and relevant page number(s). Separate the author's name and the title with a comma:

Hypertextuality makes text borderless as it "redefines not only beginning and endings of the text but also its borders—its sides, as it were" (Landow, Hypertext 2.0 79).

### **If two authors have the same last name**

If the document uses two sources by authors with the same last name, include the author's first name in the text or the parenthetical citation:

Tom Peters talks about a company that facilitates employees' renewal by shutting down its factory for several hours per week while teams work through readings on current business topics (57).

### **If there are two or three authors**

If a source has two or three authors, place all of the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

A team can be defined as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (Katzenbach and Smith 45).

### **If there are four or more authors**

If a source has four or more authors, include the first author's last name followed by et al. (Latin for and others), either in the text or in the parenthetical citation. You can also name all of the authors:

Cogdill et al. argue that "making backchannel overtly available for study would require making its presence and content visible and its content persist, affecting the nature of the backchannel and raising social and ethical issues" (109).

### **If the source has a corporate author**

If a source has a corporate author, include the author's name and the page(s). If the corporate author's name is long, it should be included in the text rather than the parentheses:

According to the Centre for Development and Population Activities, interest in

gender roles and responsibilities over the past decade has been "driven by the realization that women often do not benefit from development activities and in some cases become even poorer and more marginalized" (3).

### If no author is identified

If a source does not include an author's name, substitute for the author's name the title or an abbreviated title in the text or parenthetical citation. Underline the title if the source is a book; if the source is an article, use quotation marks:

The use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems has grown substantially over the past five years as companies attempt to adapt to customer needs and to improve their profitability ("Making CRM Work").

[Go to the top of the page](#)

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## *Placement of Citations*

- Place a citation as close to the quoted or paraphrased material as possible without disrupting the sentence.
- When material from one source and the same page numbers is used throughout a paragraph, use one citation at the end of the paragraph rather than a citation at the end of each sentence.
- Parenthetical citations usually appear after the final quotation mark and before the period. An exception occurs, however, in quotes of four or more lines since these quotes are presented as block quotes: that is, they are indented and use no quotation marks. In such cases, the parenthetical citation goes after the period, as the following example shows:

Bolles argues that the most effective job hunting method is what he calls the creative job hunting approach:

figuring out your best skills, and favorite knowledges, and then researching any employer that interests you, before approaching that organization and arranging, through your contacts, to see the

person there who has the power to hire you for the position you are interested in. This method, faithfully followed, leads to a job for 86 out of every 100 job-hunters who try it. (57)

[Go to the top of the page](#)

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## ***Treatment of Electronic Sources***

In-text citations for electronic sources are treated in most respects as print texts are. The only real difference occurs because electronic texts do not have page numbers (unless the source is in PDF format or otherwise mimics a print version of the source). Sometimes, numbered paragraphs appear on an electronic source. In such cases, use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. The paragraph number should appear in your citation following the abbreviation par. If an electronic source includes section numbers or screen numbers, use those numbers after the word section or screen. Most often, however, the source will have no paragraph, section, or screen numbers. In such instances, include no number in the parentheses, as shown below:

The Collaborative Virtual Workspace (CVW) prototype is being used by the Defense Department for crisis management (Davidson and Deus).

[Go to the top of the page](#)

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These guidelines are taken from two books by Joseph Gibaldi: *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Sixth Edition, New York: Modern Language Association, 2003) and the *MLA Style Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (Second Edition, New York: Modern Language Association, 1998).

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For questions and suggestions, please e-mail us at [leolink@tigger.stcloudstate.edu](mailto:leolink@tigger.stcloudstate.edu).

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URL: <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html>

Updated: 16 March 2004

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