

Citing Sources: A Beginner's Guide to MLA

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What is MLA?

No, it's not designed to make you crazy.

It's a system to make sure that writers are given the credit they deserve for coming up with the words and ideas they thought of first.

Wouldn't you want credit for your original ideas?



What's the system?

In-text citations

Appear after every quotation, paraphrase, and summary

Give two pieces of information: the author and the page number the information is on within the original article

Works Cited page

Is so important that it gets its own page

Gives ALL information about EVERY source

Entries are alphabetized by author's last name



What if I only use a Works Cited page?

If you only use a Works Cited page and you don't provide in-text citations, then you're not giving credit to the writers whose ideas you're borrowing. Remember, every time you paraphrase, summarize, or quote, you must provide an in-text citation!

Not to provide in-text citations is a form of plagiarism.



What if I only use in-text citations?

If you only use in-text citations and you don't provide a Works Cited page, then you're not giving the audience any information about the sources you claim to have used. Every source you use must be listed on the Works Cited page.

Not to list it is another form of plagiarism.



How do I know where to put an in-text citation?

AVOID PLAGIARISM by using a citation EVERY TIME!

Use an in-text citation every time you use someone else's words or ideas.

Every time, regardless of whether it's a paraphrase, a summary, or a quotation, provide an in-text citation.



I'm shaking in my boots; where do I turn for help with this stuff?

QA is a faithful ally.

<http://citationmachine.net/> can get you off on the right foot for just Works Cited pages.

<http://www.easybib.com/> can make your Works Cited page for you AND can build your in-text citations, too!



What if I'm supposed to use APA or Chicago in another class?

Learn one style and you've learned all you need to know to understand the basic thinking behind citing sources – respect writers by giving them credit for their ideas!

QA covers APA, too.

<http://citationmachine.net/> can help you with your References pages.



And if I get stuck?

Learning Center tutors are familiar with citation styles (some styles are more popular than others – Chicago, for example, is only used by a few professors on our campus).

Your instructor wants to help – ask him or her for advice.

Be your own advocate – sometimes your instructor won't know that you're not an expert already.

