

MLA In-Text Citations for Written Sources (Print and Electronic)

Handout by Angela Gulick, Parkland College Writing Lab, July 2016

Citing and Citation: To “cite” a source is to tell where you found the information you are borrowing, such as in a book, a magazine, a newspaper, a website, a PDF file, or a blog. A **citation** is the collection of details about where you found your information. The details of a print-source citation include **1) a signal phrase, 2) an action verb, and 3) a parenthetical citation.**

- 1. Signal Phrase:** A signal phrase is a formal way you alert your reader to the source of your borrowed information. The signal phrase is also an opportunity to give credibility to your source, by providing details such as the source’s title, the professional credentials of your author, the journal the source appeared in, or any other details that would show your source’s expertise. However, some instructors do not expect or want this extra information in the signal phrase; ask your instructors what they prefer. Two common details to include in a signal phrase are author and the source’s title.
 - **The full name(s) of the authors** the first time the source is cited. After the first time, just the author(s) last name(s) is/are needed. Note that sometimes, an author is an organization, association, school, government agency, or business.
 - **The full title of the source** the first time you cite a source if there is no clearly named author (person or group) to which you can attribute the source.
- 2. An action verb** such as writes, states, comments, questions, argues, claims, mentions. Another option is to begin your signal phrase with **According to...**
- 3. A parenthetical citation:** A parenthetical citation gives information that is not included in the signal phrase such as a page, paragraph, section, or chapter number. Note: This part may not be necessary if the document doesn’t have a pre-printed page, paragraph, section, or chapter number. Parenthetical citations generally appear at the end of a cited passage. Many (though not all) sources provide page or paragraph numbers.
 - A **page number** at the end of the borrowed information if a page number is clearly printed on your original source (such as a book, magazine, journal, or newspaper). >>> (16). If cited information starts on page 16 and continues to page 17, provide both pages >>> (16-17).
 - A **paragraph number** at the end of the borrowed information if there is a paragraph number clearly printed on your source (such as some websites or online journal articles). >>> (par. 24). If cited information starts in paragraph 24 and continues to paragraph 25, provide both paragraph numbers >>> (pars. 24-25).
 - **Note:** According to the *MLA Manual* (8th edition), if your source provides specifically pre-printed parts (paragraph numbers, section numbers, chapters) in place of page numbers, provide an appropriate abbreviation and number such as par. (paragraph), pars. (paragraphs), sec. (section), secs. (sections), ch. (chapter) or chs. (chapters). If your source has no pre-printed page, paragraph, section, or chapter numbers, “no number should be given in a parenthetical citation. Do not count numbered paragraphs or other parts” (56).

Now Let’s Look at Some Examples

Example One – Source with One Author

First time you cite source: Elizabeth Somer, Director of the Wellness Center at Wilcox University and author of “Women’s Health in the New Millennium,” writes, “The body requires a constant supply of all essential nutrients and has developed a complex system for storing nutrients for later use” (1). or (par. 4).

Each additional time you cite source: Somer also comments there are six factors in a woman’s life that affect her physical stamina: sleep, exercise, water intake, calcium intake, vitamin K intake, and oxygen (5). or (par. 14).

Example Two – Source with Two Authors

First time you cite source: Clint C. Wilson and Felix Gutierrez, advertisement executives at Tate Advertising Consultants and authors of “Advertising and People of Color,” claim that while more flattering representations of Blacks and Latinos have recently found their way into the marketplace, the same cannot be said for Asians and Native Americans (5). or (par. 19).

Each additional time you cite source: Wilson and Gutierrez also write, “The history of advertising in the U.S. is replete with characterizations that reinforced the pre-conceived image that many White Americans had of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans” (6). or (par. 23).

Example Three – Source with Three or More Authors

For a source written by three or more authors, provide the first listed author’s name and the words “et al.” which stand for “and others.” Then provide source title and end with the page number or paragraph number. This is a change from previous MLA which required “et al.” for sources with **four** or more authors.

First time you cite source: Margaret Opper et al., authors of “Practical Gardening Tips for the Summer,” write that hostas require evenly moist soil that is rich in minerals. The plants also need filtered sunshine and protection from heat (3). or (par. 9).

Each additional time you cite source: Opper et al. also state, “When bulb seedlings appear, containers need to be moved to sunny places and watered regularly” (5). or (par. 18).

Example Four – Source with Association, Business, Educational, or Government Author

For a source with an association, business, educational, or government author, use the agency’s name as the author and end with the page number or paragraph number.

First time you cite source: The United States Department of Labor, author of “Nursing,” asserts, “If patients are to be protected from unethical practitioners, health care professionals, including nurses, need to speak out about their concerns” (6). or (par. 12).

Each additional time you cite source: The United States Department of Labor points out that the act of whistle-blowing, the reporting of unethical behavior in the workplace, can often have physical, emotional, and even legal consequences for the whistleblower (3). or (par. 5).

Example Five – Source with No Clearly Named Author (Person or Organization)

For a source with no clearly named author, use the source's title. Then end by providing the page number or paragraph number.

First time you cite source: “**In the Deep Midwinter: A Troubling Look at the Elderly**” claims, “The high cost of oil and gasoline for heating bills is extremely dangerous for the elderly, who often have to choose between heating their homes or paying for prescription medications” **(4). or (par. 11).**

Each additional time you cite source: “**In the Deep Midwinter**”* also discusses the emergence of an increasing problem in this country: the elderly have become victims of con games and scams that often take away entire life savings **(2). or (par. 7).**

*Note: If the source's title is long, write it out in full the first time. Then, shorthand the source title by providing the first three or four words.

Example Six – Two or More Sources by the Same Author

For two sources written by the same author, provide the author's full name and article title the first time each source is cited, just as you would for any print or electronic source. For each additional citation, put the first word of the source's title in with the page or paragraph number to distinguish which source you are citing.

For example, Katie Henderson has written two magazine articles titled, 1) “Charity in the Workplace” and 2) “Political Realities in a More Diverse America.”

First time you cite source: **Katie Henderson**, author of “Charity in the Workplace,” writes ... **(1). or (par. 5).**

Each additional time you cite source: **Henderson** states ... (“Charity” **2).** or (“Charity” **par. 8).**
or

First time you cite source: **Katie Henderson**, author of “Political Realities in a More Diverse America,” argues ... **(5). or (par. 13).**

Each additional time you cite source: **Henderson** also claims ... (“Political” **4).** or (“Political” **par. 9).**

Example Seven – A Person Quoted in Another Author's Source

If you have a source written by one person that contains a direct quote from someone else, put the name of the person being quoted in the sentence and put (article author's last name page or paragraph number) at the end of the quote. You may also want to include any details about who is being quoted to provide context for your readers.

In this example, the person being quoted is Luke Danes and the source's author is Rory Gilmore:

In “**The Dark Side of Texting,**” **Luke Danes**, owner of Luke's Diner, stated, “The number of thumb injuries related to text messaging is double what it was when I first opened my diner over 16 years ago” **(Gilmore 5).** or **(Gilmore, par. 11).** << **Note comma is needed if you have a source with a paragraph number.**