

A Brief Primer to Citing Sources in MLA Style

There are two kinds of source citing that you must do in a paper: **in-text citations** and **last-page references**. Let's cover them one at a time:

In-Text Citations

Whether you use an author's exact words (quotation) or put the information in your own words (summary), you must provide an **in-text citation** to indicate where the information or words came from.

In-Text Citation for a Direct Quote

Original Text: (from Rachel Adele, The Media Against Women, 1999)

"Deaths from colon cancer occur twice as often in women as in men, but the media have made it seem that breast cancer is the number one cancer killer of women."

Direct Quote Used in Your Paper:

(MLA Style)

According to Adele, "Deaths from colon cancer occur twice as often in women as in men, but the media have made it seem that breast cancer is the number one cancer killer of women" (12).

Please notice three things:

1. A signal phrase like "According to ..." is used to introduce a direct quote.
2. The author's last name refers to the source listed alphabetically on the last page of your paper ("Works Cited" page).
3. The page number is required for quotations.

In-Text Citation for a Summary (Your Own Words)

Original Text: (from Rachel Adele, The Media Against Women, 1999)

"Deaths from colon cancer occur twice as often in women as in men, but the media has made it seem that breast cancer is the number one killer of women."

Your Words in Your Paper:

(MLA Style)

Although twice as many women die from colon cancer as men, the media choose to focus on breast cancer as the main cancer threat to women (Adele 1999).

No Book? Not a Problem

The example in-text citations above are for a book. Increasingly, today's research papers include more electronic sources than print ones. No problem. The same principles apply.

No Author? Not a Problem

If the source you are using does not list an author, use the title of the source. If the title is more than five words, abbreviate it.

Last Page References

Since you're using MLA, this last page of your paper is called "Works Cited"--a phrase which is centered on the last page.

Citation machines and other software automatically produce the format for in-text citations and for entries on the "Works Cited" page. But you must know the kind of source you used (book, web site, magazine). After using the citation machine, be sure to check your citation for accuracy against the model formats in the MLA section of your handbook.

Automatic MLA Citations

Some of the software that will automatically format sources for in-text citations and your Works Cited page is free:

<http://www.citationmachine.net>

(Note: If your source is from a school's online library, choose "Work from a subscription service" format).

<http://www.peakwriting.com/VIDS/CiteMachMLA/CiteMachMLA.html>

(I have created a short instructional video on using the citationmachine.net)

Other free citation machines include:

http://www.studentabc.com/citation_machine

(Note: If your is from a school's online library, choose "Article from a database or subscription" format).

<http://webapps.calvin.edu/knightcite/index.php>

(Note: If your is from a school's online library, select "yes" to the question "Was the resource found using a database?")

Sample MLA Papers

<http://dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Daly-MLA.pdf>

(Note: This is a pdf download and requires [Adobe Reader](#).)

http://wps.ablongman.com/long_faigley_penguinhb_1/0,7325,506868-,00.html

(Note: Has audio commentary.)