**MLA documentation style**

MLA documentation style. As a college writer, you'll read sources to learn what has been written about your topic and to support or counter the points you make in your paper or project. These sources might provide a surprising statistic, challenge your assumptions, or offer expert opinion for your argument.

As an academic writer, you will cite your sources for two reasons. First, to tell readers where the information comes from, so they can judge if it seems reliable, and so they can find the source on their own if they're interested in reading more. And second, to give credit to the writers of any words or ideas you have borrowed.

In MLA style, you cite sources in the text of your paper and at the end of the paper, on a works cited page, you give all the information your readers need to find the sources for themselves.

Think of in-text citation as a guide for your readers, a way to say, here is information taken from a source. Here is the author, and if the source appeared in print, here is the page where the information can be found. In this example, David Resnik is the author. The words in quotation marks are Resnik's exact words, and the number 31 in parentheses refers to the page number where the words appear in Resnik's article. The page number, if there is one, appears in the parentheses. The punctuation mark goes after the closed parentheses.

Usually, you will include the author's name in a signal phrase such as, “bioethicist David Resnik emphasizes,” but occasionally it isn't necessary to identify the author in a signal phrase. In that case, you can put both the author's name and the page number in the parentheses following the information from the source. The author's name in the in-text citation points readers to the author's name in the works cited list, which gives the complete source information. Here, readers have full publication information--the author, title, publication, and date--so they can find the source for themselves.

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