MLA Citation

Giving proper credit to sources used
The purpose of citation is to give credit to sources for information taken from those sources and to show that you have done your research as a writer.
MLA Citation

- Must properly cite a source every time you use information (not just word for word) from that source.
- Because many people mistakenly think that citation is only for quotes, it is best to get into the mindset that we cite ideas, not words.
MLA Citation

- MLA style citation is a two-part process
- These two parts cannot exist without each other—each contains specific information to help the reader understand which source is being cited and where.
MLA Citation

- **Works Cited page**
  - The purpose of the entries on the Works Cited page is to list what sources were used in writing your essay.
  - This makes a Works Cited a specific type of *Bibliography*.
  - Different than most bibliographies, however, as it only lists cited items, not everything you looked at while researching your essay.
MLA Citation

- Format of the Works Cited page and entries all geared toward ease of use by the reader
  - Hanging indent puts authors’ last names at the left margin for ease of location
  - All entries based on the basic form of Author. Title. Publication info. With periods marking the breaks between these “chunks” of information
MLA Citation

- In-text citation lets the reader know which source on the Works Cited page goes with what information in the essay.
- If a print source, also lets reader know the specific page number in the source that information is from.
MLA Citation

- Two types of in-text citation—signal phrase and parenthetical
- Parenthetical citation, the most basic, gives author’s last name and page number in parenthesis after the cited information
- Basic form—(Author last name page number) Note: there is usually no punctuation between the name and page number, so if you were citing something on page 8 of a book by Stanley Fish, the citation would be (Fish 8)
MLA Citation

- Parenthetical citation
  - Many times sources, such as web pages or other electronic media, don’t have page numbers, so the parenthetical citation would only be the Author’s last name
  - Rarely a source may not have an author listed, in which case the title would be the parenthetical citation (as it would be the piece of info on the left margin in the Works Cited entry)
MLA Citation

• Signal phrase
  • Another way to cite sources in-text is to give the author’s name as an introduction to cited material
    • Works best when citing an author for the first time, as you can give full name and any other relevant information
    • Exp: As Garrison Fisher, a researcher at the National Language Institute, sees it, “Language is perhaps the first betrayal of one’s culture” (45).
  • If a citation is from a print source, then a page number in parenthesis is still necessary.
The two most important things for a college level writer to do are to memorize the basics of citation, and always keep a handbook (such as the one for this course) on-hand for the particulars of a citation situation.

No one can memorize the specifics of every possible citation, as there are too many possible variations and combinations. Even English professors have to look-up how to cite things all the time.
Want more info?

- In addition to the reading from this unit, if you would like more information about MLA style citation, see: