

ENG 101: USING DIRECT QUOTES and MLA FORMAT

Academic papers require the use of outside sources to support the ideas of the writer (that's you!) and to show that you have done good credible research, which helps establish a tone of authority in your essay. It is easy to have an opinion about a topic; we all have them. But once you embark on writing an essay—for example, on a controversial topic such as “the broken foster care system” or “health care reform”—you add your own voice to the continuing public discourse on the topic. When you find credible sources on your topic and integrate their ideas into your essay, you are doing solid academic work and creating a new slant on the topic—yours!

The MLA-style in-text citation is a highly compressed format, designed to preserve the smooth flow of your own ideas (without letting the outside material take over your whole paper). A proper MLA inline citation uses just the author's last name and the page number, separated by a space (not a comma) (Jerz).

Example:

One engineer who figures prominently in all accounts of the 1986 Challenger accident says NASA was “absolutely relentless and Machiavellian” about following procedures to the letter” (Vaughn 221).

(The quoted material above came from *The Challenger Launch Decision*, a book written by Boston University professor of psychology Diana Vaughn.)

Or you could use a signal phrase and state the author's name and credentials to introduce the quote:

Diane Vaughn, professor of psychology at Boston College states in her book *The Challenger Launch Decision*, that an engineer who figures prominently in all accounts of the disaster believes NASA was “absolutely relentless and Machiavellian” about following procedures to the letter (221).

(Material adapted from Dennis Jertz Weblog)

Note: Too much introductory information can take away from your ideas and the meaning of the quote. However, sometimes it is a good idea to introduce a source and/or his or her credentials and/or the title of the article/book, particularly if you are relying heavily on the source in your paper. Often, you need little more than this:

Human beings have been described by Kenneth Burke as “symbol-using animals” (3).

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Another way of introducing source is:

Human beings have been described as “symbol-using animals” (Burke 3).

IMPORTANT: The author or title that appears in the signal phrase OR at the end in the parenthetical citation will correspond to your entry in the Works Cited page at the end of your paper:

Works Cited

Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966. Print.
(from OWL Purdue)

Note: Remember, the first time you introduce a source, use first and last name, then simply the last name—no Ms. or first names!

Tips:

- Use direct quotes sparingly and when the idea is stated in particularly striking language.
- Remember that direct quotes are used to support your ideas, not the other way around.
- Remember not to let the quote do the work for you. You need to include your analysis of its meaning and significance to the ideas you are presenting in your paper.
- When you use a signal phrase (Smith states...) you don't need to include his/her name in parenthetical citation, just the page number, if it's a printed text or database article (37). If it is an internet source, you do not use a page number.
- With an internet source, you can either introduce the author in a signal phrase or at end of quote/paraphrase (Smith) with no page # OR if there is no author, simply introduce the title of the article: (Global Warming is a Myth" discusses the different theories...) OR at end of quote or paraphrase in citation: "...” (“Global Warming”).
- Don't underestimate the help a sample paper can provide in understanding how to integrate quotes. You can find sample papers online and in our grammar text (see below).
- Remember to use brackets “[t]o change a word or letter to fit smoothly into your sentence” and ellipses (...) to signal omitted phrases or words. Examples: King states that “[he is] not afraid of the word tension...” (). The original phrase is “I am not...”.
King argues that “[he is] cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states...Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (3).

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Helpful Links:

OWL Purdue: "Intext Citations: The Basics"

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>

"MLA Sample Undergraduate Paper"

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/16/>

"Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing"

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>

Leo St. Cloud: "Using Quotations"

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/usingquotes.html>

Diana Hacker: "Documenting Sources"

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_o.html

"Sample Papers":http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_s5.html

The Bedford Researcher: "How Do I Integrate Quotes?"

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/bedfordresearcher/tutorials/Chapter13/index.html>