

MLA Documentation of Sources by Margaret Floeter

Documenting Sources and Citation

In writing a research paper, you must document everything that you borrow--not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas. Of course, common sense as well as ethics should determine what you document. For example, you rarely need to give sources for familiar proverbs ("You can't judge a book by its cover"), well-known quotations ("We shall overcome"), or common knowledge ("George Washington was the first president of the United States"). But you must indicate the source of any appropriated material that readers might otherwise mistake for your own.

The list of works cited at the end of your research paper plays an important role in your acknowledgment of sources, but it does not in itself provide sufficiently detailed and precise documentation. You must indicate exactly what you have derived from each source and exactly where in that work you found the material. The most practical way to supply this information is to insert brief parenthetical acknowledgments in your paper wherever you incorporate another's words, facts, or ideas. Usually the author's last name and a page reference are enough to identify the source and the specific location from which you have borrowed material.

Ancient writers attributed the invention of the monochord to Pythagoras in the sixth century BC (Marcuse 197).

(The parenthetical reference indicates that the information on the monochord comes from page 197 of the book by Marcuse included in the alphabetically arranged list of works cited that follows the text. Thus, it enables the reader to find complete publication information for the source):

Marcuse, Sibyl. A Survey of Musical Instruments. New York: Harper, 1975.

Some examples of parenthetical documentation:

AUTHOR'S NAME IN TEXT:

**Frye has argued this point before (178-85).
Others, like Wellek and Warren (31-40), hold an opposite point of view.**

AUTHOR'S NAME IN REFERENCE:

**This point has be argued before (Frye 178-85).
Others hold an opposite point of view (Wellek and Warren 31-40).**

To avoid interrupting the flow of your writing, place the parenthetical reference where a pause would naturally occur (preferably at the end of a sentence), as near as possible to the material it documents. The parenthetical reference precedes the punctuation mark that concludes the sentence, clause, or phrase containing the borrowed material.

Quotations

While quotations are common and often effective in papers, use them selectively. Quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are particularly interesting, vivid, unusual, or apt, and keep all quotations as brief as possible. Quotations should correspond exactly to its source in spelling, capitalization, and interior punctuation.

QUOTING PROSE:

For Charles Dickens the eighteenth century was both “the best of times” and “the worst of times” (35).

If a quotation runs to more than four typed lines, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting ten spaces from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way, though sometimes the context may require a different mark of punctuation, or none at all. If you are quoting only a single paragraph, or part of one, do not indent the first line more than the rest. When adding a parenthetical reference to a prose quotation set off from the text, skip two spaces after the quotation and give the reference.

At the conclusion of Lord of the Flies, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence (186).

In quoting two or more paragraphs, indent the first line of each paragraph an additional three spaces. If, however, the first sentence quoted does not begin a paragraph in the source, do not indent it the additional three spaces. Indent only the first lines of the successive paragraphs.

QUOTING POETRY:

If you quote a single line of verse, or part of a line, put it in quotation marks within your text. You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side (/) to separate them. (In the following example, note that verse plays are cited by division and line rather than by page numbers; *Julius Caesar* 5.5.74, for instance, refers to act 5, scene 5, line 74 of the play.)

“Friends, Romans, countrymen,” begins Antony’s famous speech, “lend me your ears; / I come to buy Caesar, not to praise him” (3.2.80-81).

Verse quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line. Unless the quotation involves unusual spacing, indent each line ten spaces from the left margin and double-space between lines, adding no quotation marks that do not appear in the original.

Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room” is rich in evocative detail:

**It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines. (6-10)**

QUOTATIONS USING ELLIPSIS:

When you wish to omit a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph from a quoted passage, you should be guided by two principles: (1) fairness to the author quoted and (2) the grammatical integrity of your own writing. If you quote only a word or a phrase, it will be obvious that you have left out some of the original sentence, but if omitting material from the original leaves a quotation that appears to be a sentence, or a series of sentences, you must use ellipsis points, or spaced periods, to indicate that your quotation does not completely reproduce the original. (For an ellipsis *within* a sentence, use three periods with a space before and after each one (. . .).

In seeking causes for plagues in the Middle Ages, as Barbara W. Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking . . . stressed air as the communicator of disease, ignoring sanitation or visible carriers” (101-102).

ELLIPSIS AT THE END...

In seeking causes for plagues in the Middle Ages, a Barbara W. Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking, trapped in the theory of astral influences, stressed air as the communicator of disease . . .” (101-102).

(Four periods can also indicate the omission of a whole sentence or more, or even a paragraph or more. Remember, however, that grammatically complete sentences must both precede and follow the four periods.)

OTHER ALTERATIONS OF SOURCES

A comment or explanation that goes inside the quotation must appear within square brackets, not parenthesis.

The title of the student's paper was "My Interpretation of 'Imitations of Immorality' [sic]."

Similarly, if a pronoun seems unclear in a quotation, you may add an identification in square brackets.

**Why, she would hang on him [Hamlet's father]
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on. . . .**

An explanation in parentheses--for example, an indication that you have underlined words for emphasis--immediately follows the closing quotation mark.

Lincoln specifically advocated a government "for the people" (emphasis added).

Without the parenthetical addition, readers would assume that the word underlined in the quotation is italicized in the original. Or you may need to add *sic* (Latin for "thus" or "so") in parentheses to assure readers that the quotation is accurate even though the spelling or logic might lead them to think otherwise.

The student referred to "Imitations of Immorality" (sic) as one of Wordsworth's famous poems.

Citation of Works

An entry in a list of works cited characteristically has three main divisions--author, title, and publication information--each followed by a period and two spaces.

Lobdell, Jared. England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.

In citing books, normally arrange the information in the following order(often, only the author's name, the book title, the place of publication, and the date of publication will be needed):

1. Author's name
2. Title of a part of the book (in quotation marks) (if necessary)
3. Title of the book (underlined)
4. Name of the editor, translator, or compiler (if necessary)
5. Edition used (if necessary)
6. Number(s) of the volume(s) used (if necessary)
7. Name of the series (if necessary)
8. Place of publication, name of the publisher, and date of publication
9. Page numbers (if necessary)

10. Supplementary bibliographic information and annotation (if necessary)

TWO OR MORE BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

In citing two or more books by the same person, give the name in the first entry only. thereafter, in place of the name, type three hyphens and a period, skip two spaces, and give the title.

Borroff, Marie. Language and the Past: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979.

---, trans. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. New York: Norton, 1967.

---, ed. Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1963.

In citing a book by two or three persons, give their names in the order in which they appear on the title page--not necessarily in alphabetical order. Reverse only the name of the first author, add a comma, and give the other name(s) in normal order.

Berry, Jason, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones. Up from the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music since World War II. Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1986.

If there are more than three authors, you may name only the first and add *et al.* ("and others").

Edens, Walter, et al., eds. Teaching Shakespeare. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

In general, if the writer of the document is not known, cite the government agency as the author--that is, state the name of the government first, followed by the name of the agency, using an abbreviation if the context makes it clear.

United States. Cong. House. Cong. Rec. 7 Feb. 1973: 3831-51.

---. ---. **Senate. Subcommittee on the Constitutional Amendments of the Committee on the Judiciary.** Hearings on the "Equal Rights" Amendment. 91st Cong., 2nd sess. S. Res. 61. Washington: GPO, 1970.

---. ---. The Constitution of the United States of America. Article II. Section 1.
Washington: GPO, 1790.

Citing Articles in Periodicals

An entry for an article in a periodical has three main divisions: author, title of article, and publication information. Sometimes, however, additional information is required. Citations normally give the information in the following order:

1. **Author's name**
2. **Title of the Article**
3. **Name of the Periodical**
4. **Series Number or Name**
5. **Volume number (for a scholarly journal)**
6. **Date of Publication**
7. **Page Numbers**

Wheeler, David L. "Artificial-Intelligence Researchers Develop Electronic 'Tutors' to Aid Learning Process." Chronicle of Higher Education 20 May 1987: 6-8.

Zimmerman, Jerry L. "Why Vultures Make good Neighbors." National Wildlife June-July 1987: 16-20.

A Letter to the Editor

Floeter, Margaret. Letter. The Oklahoma Daily 46 (1992): 6.

Information from a Computer Service

Treat material obtained from a computer service such as CompuServe, Prodigy, or America Online like any other printed material, but add a reference to the service at the end of the entry. Give the publication information as provided by the service, the name of the service, and the accession or identifying numbers within the service.

Light, Brian. "You, too, Can Edit Sounds Using Your Macintosh CD-ROM."
America Online. Mac Music Forum. Software Library. Text File. 11/93.

Recordings

In an entry for a commercially available recording, the person cited first will depend on the emphasis. List the title of the tape or CD (and/or the title of the work included), the artist(s), the manufacturer, the catalog number, and the year of issue. Commas follow the manufacturer and the number; periods follow other items. In general, underline

record (CD) titles, and put the names of individual works (song titles) in quotation marks.

Pink Floyd. "Comfortably Numb." The Wall. RCA, 25764, 1986.

Television and Radio Programs

The information for an entry for a television or radio program usually appears in the following order: the title of the program, underlined; the network (PBS); the local station on which you saw or heard the program and the city (KOCO, Oklahoma City); and the broadcast date. Where appropriate, the title of the episode, in quotation marks, should precede the title of the program, and the title of the series, neither underlined nor enclosed in quotation marks, should appear after the program. Use a comma between the station and the city, periods after all other items. (Other pertinent information such as the director, narrator, producer may also be included in the citation>)

"Agnes, the Indomitable de Mille." Narr. Agnes de Mille. Prod. Judy Kinberg. Dir. Merrill Brockway. Dance in America. Exec. prod. Jac Venza. Great Performances. PBS. WGBH, Boston. 8 May 1987.

Interviews

The citation form for interviews depends on whether they were (1) published or recorded, (2) broadcast on radio or television, or (3) conducted by the researcher. Begin with the name of the person interviewed. If the interview is part of a publication, recording, or program, put the title, if any, in quotation marks; if the interview is the entire work, underline the title. If the interview is untitled, use the descriptive label Interview, neither underlined nor enclosed in quotation marks. (The interviewer's name may be included if known and pertinent.) conclude with the usual bibliographic information required for the entry.

Fellini, Federico. "The Long Interview." Juliet of the Spirits. Ed. Tullio Kezich. Trans. Howard Greenfield. New York: Ballantine, 1966. 17-64.

Morrison, Toni. Interview. All Things Considered. Natl. Public Radio. WNYC, New York. 16 Feb. 1986.

In citing a personally conducted interview, give the name of the interviewee, the kind of interview (personal interview, telephone interview, etc.), and the date.

Layne, Robert K. Personal interview. 27 July 1993.

Floeter, Margaret O. Telephone interview. 15 Feb 1994.