AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The Definition of Plagiarism:

According to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, plagiarism is the act of "using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source" (26). Thus, the most logical way to avoid plagiarism is to give the author credit for the information cited in your paper. You must give credit regardless of whether or not you decide to summarize, paraphrase, or copy directly—the three ways to use your sources. Be sure to have a balance between quotations and paraphrases.

The Three Ways to Use Sources:
1. You summarize—that is, give a general overview in your own words of the main point of the entire source.
2. You paraphrase—that is, explain specifics from a particular paragraph or section of the source in your own words. When paraphrasing, try to avoid simply following the structure of the original source and then using a synonym for each word in the original. You should put the entire idea which the sentence or paragraph gets across in your own words. If you cannot do so effectively, it is best to quote directly from your source.
3. You directly quote from your source—that is, you copy word for word, punctuation mark for punctuation mark, etc. from the source.

When you begin writing your paper, you will have to be selective in choosing your material, and you will have to give credit to the source of the material—whether summarized, paraphrased, or quoted. Giving credit in the text of your paper is called documentation.

In order to be an honest and responsible researcher, you must give parenthetical references (also known as in-text citations) in the text of your paper when you use any idea or quotation from a source other than your own. Following is a list of the primary steps to follow in documenting materials using the MLA Style sheet. They have been updated to reflect the recent changes made in the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, which was published in 2008.

How often do I have to give parenthetical references?

As stated above credit must given when you quote directly from and place the sentence or phrase in quotation marks. Technically, you own each word which you do not put in quotation marks. Thus, in addition to using parenthetical references after a direct quotation, you must give credit to your source each time your sentence expresses an idea which is not your own.

EXCEPTION: When you elaborate on the ideas in one source for several sentences, you need not have a page number in parenthesis at the end of each sentence—especially if
the context makes it clear that all of the information came from the same source or even the same page. In this case, place a page number in parenthesis at the end of a sentence in which you first mention the material you are paraphrasing or summarizing. If the rest of the material is on the same page, and the reader knows that all the information within the paragraph came from the same source, you will need only one more parenthetical reference to the source; this reference will be at the end of the last sentence in which you give information from this source.

Example:
An analysis of the three ways of looking at a blackbird can be found in a study by Erin Gray. First, there is the most obvious: as a bird which is black (Gray 22). Second, the same critic claims, the bird can be seen as a messenger. Third, there is the association of the bird with ancient mythology, including the connection with the demon lover (Gray 22).

How do I document material from books, articles, or essays?

As a rule, you will probably have three kinds of sources: (1) books, (2) articles in a magazine, (3) articles/essays in a journal. The journal is a scholarly periodical such as Afro-American Literary Studies; the magazine is a popular periodical such as Time, Newsweek, and the like.

There are four ways to give credit to a book, article, or essay in the body of your paper.

1. At the end of your sentence, place in parenthesis the last name of the author, followed by the page number. Example: Studies have shown that the number of unwanted pregnancies has quadrupled in the last decade (Simon 133).

2. You may also name your source’s author in the sentence. In that case, all you need to do is put the page number in parenthesis. Example: Simon indicates that many studies have shown that the number of teenage pregnancies has quadrupled in the last decade (133).

3. If you have more than one source by the same author, you will have to abbreviate the title of the source which you are using in your parenthetical citation. For books or articles, use the first key/significant word(s) in the title—that is, do not use an article (“a,” “an,” or “the”) or a preposition (“in,” “to,” etc.) as part of your abbreviation. All words are considered key except articles and prepositions. The complete title of the book or article will be found only in the List of Works Cited.

4. If you have two authors with the same last name, you will have to help your reader distinguish between them. The easiest solution is to use the first initial of each author and follow it by a period. If the names of both authors begin with the same letter, you will have to write out the full name of each author whenever you cite that person’s work.

NOTE: Occasionally, you may want to use the ideas of more than one source in a particular sentence. You should not, however, do so too often. If you are using three or four
different sources and wish to put information from all of them in the same sentence, you should write the last name of each author and the page number and separate them with semicolons.

**Example:** Of the reasons for choosing abortion, the most frequently cited is unwanted pregnancy (Smith 125; Goodwin 66; James 89).

If you use information from more than three or four sources in one sentence, you are probably not writing as effectively as you should.

**How do I cite electronic sources in the body of my paper?**

If your works cited entry looks like this:

Stark, Susan. “His Naked Villainy: Sir Ian McKellen Is No Garden-Variety Richard III.”


then the parenthetical reference in the body of the paper should look like this:

Fueled by a renewed interest in Shakespeare resulting from Kenneth Branagh’s success in bringing the playwright to the big screen (Stark), the film sparked a controversy concerning Loncraine’s choice of setting.

**Here are more guidelines for citing electronic sources:**

In parenthetical references, works on the World Wide Web are cited just like printed works—that is, if your source has no author, then you cite the title of the work in your parenthetical reference. If your source lacks numbering, omit numbers from your parenthetical references. If your source includes section numbering (such as numbering of paragraphs), cite the relevant numbers. Give the appropriate abbreviation before the numbers. **Example:** (Moulthrop Pars. 19-20). (For a document on the Web, the page numbers of a printout should normally not be cited, because the pagination may vary in different printouts.)

**EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION**

**A Book or Article with One Author:**
The number of unwanted pregnancies has quadrupled in the last decade (Simon 133).

**A Book or Article with Two Authors:**
Working primarily with a collaborator, McClintock discovered that many were wrong about chromosomes and genes (Vare and Hoffman 236).

**A Book with More than Three Authors:**
The three most important factors are personality, attitude, and progress (Jameson et al. 33). **NOTE:** You will put only the last name of the first author listed on the title page of a book or article.
Two Sources Written by the SAME Person:
The three most important factors are personality, attitude, and progress (Jameson, *Teaching* 22).

Also contributing to teaching excellence is expertise in the subject area (Jameson, “Classroom” 67).

In the above examples, the first key/significant word in the title is listed. If you do not have more than one source by the same person, you do not need to put an abbreviation of the title.

Two or More Sources by People with the SAME Last Name:
Teaching for non-native speakers can be achieved best through avoiding subjects on which there is considerable disagreement from culture to culture (J. Garcia 45).

The most controversial subjects are religion and politics, but even such seemingly harmless issues such as the roles of men and women have been found to cause unnecessary conflict in the classroom (M. Garcia 86).

**NOTE**: If the authors have the same first initial, type out their full first names.

Indirect Sources:
Whenever you can, take material from the original source, not a secondhand one. Sometimes, however, only an indirect source is available. If what you quote or paraphrase is itself a quotation, put the abbreviation *qtd. in* (“quoted in”) before the indirect source you cite in your parenthetical reference.

**Example**: Samuel Johnson admitted that Edmund Burke was an “extraordinary man” (*qtd. in* Boswell 2: 450).

The works cited entry for this parenthetical reference would be as follows:

LIST OF WORKS CITED

For all term papers, you must have a bibliography—that is, a list of the sources you used in writing the paper. The MLA Style sheet calls this the List of Works Cited. In compiling your list, make sure that everything in the list of Works Cited is mentioned in the body of the paper. More importantly, remember to include an entry for every source you use in your paper.

The sources will be arranged in alphabetical order according to the last name of the author. The last name should be listed first in each entry; it should be followed by a comma and the author's first name. When there is no author given, the entry is alphabetized according to the first word of the title, not counting articles ("a," “an,” and “the”). If the particular source requires more than one line to give the reader all the information required, you will indent by five spaces (or one half-inch on the computer) the second and subsequent lines. You should also remember to double space between each line and between entries.

EXAMPLES OF WORKS CITED

BOOKS:

A Book with One Author:


A Book with Two or Three Authors:


[Note: You should list the authors in the order in which they are named on the title page.]

A Book with More than Three Authors:


[Note: You can also write out all of the authors’ names in the order that they appear on the title page.]

Two or More Books by the Same Author:

Mormonism and the Call of God. Salt Lake City: Mormon, 1870. Print.

A Book with an Editor (or Editors):


[Note: You use the abbreviation eds. when there is more than one editor.]

A Book with an Author and an Editor:


An Anthology:


[Note: You use ed. in place of comp. if an editor is listed. If a contributor has more than one role, list them in the order they appear on the title page (e.g., trans. and ed.).]

A Work in an Anthology (or a Chapter in an Edited Book):


Two or More Short Works from One Anthology or Collection:

Johnson, Hall. “Notes on the Negro Spiritual.” Southern 268-75.


[Note: You should create an entry for the anthology as a whole and entries for each short work that you cite in your paper. The entries for the short works should contain ONLY the author, title of the selection, editor, and page numbers. Each entry should be place in proper alphabetical order, of course.]
An Edition Other than the First:


A Translation:


The Bible (or Another Religious Text):


ARTICLES:

Signed Article in a Reference Work:


Unsigned Article in a Reference Work:


[Note: When you are citing well-known reference works, such as general encyclopedias and dictionaries, you can omit the place of publication and publisher.]


[Note: If you are citing a specific definition among several, add the abbreviation Def. (“Definition”) and an appropriate designation (e.g., number, letter).]

An Article in a Scholarly Journal:


[Note: In this example, 10 is the volume number, and 1 is the issue number.]
An Article from a Monthly or Bimonthly Periodical:

An Article from a Weekly or Biweekly Periodical:

A Signed Article from a Daily Newspaper:

An Unsigned Article from a Daily Newspaper:

Review:
Editorial:


[Note: In this example, A stands for the section.]

Letter to the Editor:


Previously Published Scholarly Article in a Collection


[Note: “Rpt. in” stands for “Reprinted in.”]

OTHER TYPES OF SOURCES:

Computer Software:

If you are citing computer software in the body of your paper, list the title, version, publisher, and date in the body or in an explanatory note. Do not create an entry for your Works Cited page.

Lecture:


Interview:


[Note: If the interview is done by phone or email, use *Phone interview* or *E-mail interview.*]

Pamphlets and Bulletins:


Government Publication:

[Note: If the document also has an author, follow the title of the document with By (or Ed. or Comp.])]

**Film, Videotape, or DVD:**


**Radio or Television Program:**


**Stage Play or Concert:**


**Recording:**

McKennitt, Loreena. *An Ancient Muse*. Quinlan Road, 2007. CD.

[Note: Use Audiocassette, Audiotape, or LP if it is not a CD.]

**Entire Book on CD-ROM or DVD:**


**Periodically Published Database on a CD-ROM or DVD:**


**Material on CD-ROM with No Print Version or Analogue:**

A Publication on Diskette:

A Publication on Magnetic Tape:

INTERNET SOURCES:

**NOTE:** Only include the URL in your citations if your reader may not be able to find the source you are citing without help.

**Entire Web Site:**

[Note: N.p. indicates that there is no publisher or sponsor.]

**E-Mail Message:**
Franke, Norman. “SoundApp 2.0.2.” Message to Rita Martinez. 29 April 1996. E-mail.

**Listserv Message:**

**Newsgroup Message:**

**Online Newspaper Article:**

**Professional or Personal Web Site:**
Poem:

Encyclopedia Article Online:

Entire Encyclopedia Online:

Article in an Online Journal/Periodical/Scholarly Journal:

Homepage for a Course:

A Part of an Online Book:

Online Government Publication:

E-Reserve:
[Note: E-reserve articles are cited as any scholarly article journal article, since that is what they were previously.]

A Periodical Publication in an Online Database:


[Note: In the above examples, *Health Reference Center* and *Academic Universe: Medical* are the names of the databases.]

YouTube:


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**E-book downloaded for Electronic Book Reader**

Cite the source like a print version, but when listing the medium, name the digital format, followed by the word *file*. See example below: