In-Text Citation Essentials

In-text citations are brief references that appear within the text of your paper. Their purpose is to direct your reader to the source on the Works Cited page that contains the information you’re citing. MLA provides two basic ways to cite sources within your work:

**Option 1: Author and page number in parenthesis**
In-text citations typically place the author’s last name and the page number in parenthesis to identify the source and location of the information. Example:
It’s known that “there are over 600 flowering plants on the endangered species list” (Smith 72).

**Option 2: Author in text and page number in parenthesis**
You can also mention the author’s name in your sentence while quoting or paraphrasing. In these cases, it is only necessary to include the page number in parenthesis. Example:
Smith states that “there are over 600 flowering plants on the endangered species list” (72).

**No page number?**
For websites or other sources that do not have page numbers, provide the author in parenthesis. If possible, include a location such as a chapter or section title.

**No Author?**
For sources that do not have an author listed, begin the in-text citation with a shortened title of the source.

Common Examples

**Source by one author:**

This in-text citation shows a direct quote from page 8 of the above book:
Senator Fulbright became “an ardent proponent of collective security and the United Nations” during his first term in office (Fry 8).

**Source by two authors:**

This in-text citation shows a paraphrase from page 512 of the above book:
When visiting Thailand, it’s important to never touch anyone, even children, on the head as this part of the body is seen as very important (Morrison and Conaway 512).
More Common Examples

Source by three or more authors:

This in-text citation shows direct quote from the above article:
One study of indoor tanners found that “a greater proportion of men rarely or never used sunscreen” (Julian et al. 284).

Source by corporate author (organization, association, government agency, etc.)

List the full author in the same way it is listed in the Works Cited entry:
Statistics show that the “employment of athletic trainers is projected to grow 21 percent from 2014 to 2024” which is “much faster than the average for all occupations” (United States, Dept. of Labor).

Source without page numbers:

This in-text citation shows a direct quote the above website:
Census statistics show that in the Pittsburgh area, “Beechview has the largest percentage of Latinos in the region at 6 percent” (Deto).

Special Circumstances

When the Works Cited page has multiple sources with same or similar author names:


To identify a specific work, include a short form of the title in your citation.
Senator Fulbright became “an ardent proponent of collective security and the United Nations” during his first term in office (Fry, “Debating” 8).

Repeated use of a source:
If the source you’re citing immediately follows another citation to that same source, the in-text citation can be abbreviated. Omit the author if a page number is available. This example cites the Debating Vietnam source:
Some politicians, including Senator Fulbright, questioned the “U.S. depiction of China as peculiarly aggressive and deserving of international outcast status” (37).