

MLA Documentation: Parenthetical & narrative citations

Documentation in MLA has two main parts: a Works Cited page and in-text citations. **In-text citations take two forms, which we'll call parenthetical and narrative citations.** (*MLA doesn't use these terms, but they work best to describe the two forms.*)

What are "in-text citations"?

"In-text citations" are so called **because they are placed in the text**—that is, right in the sentences you write. They're like a code: they tell the reader, "Source material is being used!" and "Here's which source it is."

MLA documentation is an "author/page" system; those two pieces of information are included in a citation:

A basic MLA citation	
includes two pieces of information : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the author(s)' last name(s) the page number in the source where the information is located 	—and has two forms : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parenthetical narrative

Parenthetical citations

In a **parenthetical citation**, both pieces of information are **enclosed in parentheses, with no comma separating them.**

Examples: (Carson 136) (Westerfeldt and Holland 1099) (Garcia et al. 78)

Placement:

- Put the citation **after the use of the material** (often at the end of a sentence).
- Put citations *inside* (that is, *before*) the period at the end of a sentence.

Here's an example of MLA parenthetical citations in action:

accompanied the decrease in rural populations, as farmers who "preferred trade, transportation, or 'tinkering'" to the tasks of tending to crops and animals found great opportunities in the city (**Danhof 7**). Trade and transportation thus began to influence farming life significantly. Before 1820, the rural community accounted for eighty percent of consumption of farmers' goods (**Hurt 127**). With the

Narrative citations

In a **narrative citation**, the writer “introduces” the source by name *as part of the sentence*. (In MLA, this is sometimes called a “signal phrase” and may be referred to as “attribution.”)

Important notes:

- Because **the author’s name** is in the sentence, it **is not repeated** in the parentheses.
- The **author(s)’ names are used grammatically**, usually followed by a verb or as part of a phrase; **verbs are in present tense**.
- MLA narrative citations **use authors’ full name (and sometimes an identifier) in the first reference to the source only**; any subsequent narrative citations of that source use the last name only.
- The **page number in parentheses comes at the end of the source material used**.

Examples:

First use: Evan Fitzman, in his book *Examining the Child Mind*, says that younger children...

Subsequent uses: In other versions of the workshop, Fitzman explains, there was no overlap ...

Placement:

- Use author(s) name(s) **logically within the sentence**; use **present tense verb**.
- Put the page number in parenthesis **at the end of the source material used**; if the end of a sentence, put it **before the period**.

Here’s an example of MLA narrative citations in action:

library’s physical collection is more sustainable than digital content. However, **Qi Kang et al. suggest** that “libraries lend reading materials and e-reading devices and offer digital and printed information services and facilities” **(9)**. Academic libraries are positioned to champion sustainable collections so long as they encourage patrons to use their services to avoid purchases.

More help with citations

For more help with...	...see this Writing Guide:
... how to format citations with more than one author →	“MLA Documentation: Author’s names”
... how to use narrative citations →	“Documentation: Narrative citations are your friends!”
... how to cite when drawing from the same source for several sentences →	“Documentation: Using running attribution”