Rules for Citing Primary Sources (MLA Style)

WHAT TO CITE

1. All facts, statistics, and pieces of information unless they are common knowledge accessible in many sources.
2. Exact words from your source, enclosed in quotation marks.
3. Somebody else’s ideas and opinions, even if you restate them in your own words in a summary or paraphrase.
4. Each sentence in a long paraphrase (if it is not clear that all the sentences paraphrase the same original source).

INTRODUCING SOURCE MATERIAL

When you provide a summary, paraphrase, or quotation, set up the context. Don’t drop in the information as if it came from nowhere. Vary your introduction of citing sources. It avoids redundancy and adds spice to your writing.

X has pointed out that according to X
X has made it clear that As X insists
X explains that In 2005, X, the vice president of the corporation, declared
X suggests that

Other introductory words: acknowledge, agree, argue, ask, assert, believe, claim, comment, contend, deny, emphasize, note, observe, propose, speculate, suggest.

QUOTING PART OF A SENTENCE

When it is obvious that parts of the quoted sentence have been omitted, you do not need to use ellipsis dots.

Ex: Reporter Amelia Newcomb wonders about the influence of “ridiculously crude and gory films.”

OMITTING WORDS IN THE MIDDLE OF A QUOTATION

If you omit words in the middle of a sentence for any reason, MLA style signals the omission with ellipsis marks, three dots within brackets to indicate the ellipsis is not part of the original quotation. This can be used to omit irrelevant information.

Ex. According to Newcomb, a high school teacher asked students to write about a “mysterious person [...] who had a ‘shocking’ secret in his past.”

Note the spacing around the brackets.
**OMITTING WORDS AT THE END OF A QUOTATION**

Without Page Citation

Ex. With resignation, Newcomb concedes that “such debacles happen [...]”

With Page Citation

Ex. With resignation, Newcomb concedes that “such debacles happen [...]”(13).

*Note location of periods in each example.*

**QUOTING LONGER PASSAGES (BLOCK QUOTES)**

Newcomb lays much of the blame for the gore in our high school essays on today’s teachers, stating:

> It seems like a teachable moment that engendered a hard-line response. And such debacles happen across the country. Why no open discussion of what is acceptable? Or specifics: a horror story, children, but no guns or chain saws allowed. Or show me the difference between horror and tension. (13)

After a long indented quotation, put the period before the parenthetical citation.

**PARENTHEtical CitAtions (AuTHor’S NAME AND/OR PAGE NuMBER)**

If you are using a single source, the instructor may only require the page number.

Ex. “By 1745 there were approximately 45,000 German speakers in the colonies, and by 1790 there were some 200,000, nine per cent of the population” (12).

If you are using both primary and secondary sources, use the author’s last name and page number. This should appear as it will on your Works Cited page.

Ex. “By 1745 there were approximately 45,000 German speakers in the colonies, and by 1790 there were some 200,000, nine per cent of the population (Jones 12).

*Note: There is NO COMMA between the author and page number in MLA style.*

The period goes OUTSIDE the parenthetical citation. *(Except in block quotes)*

The Rio Grande Writing Center