

Citing sources using in-text parenthetical referencing

References must be cited in MLA formatting.

You must use in-text parenthetical citations in your Personal Project report.

In-text parenthetical citations are a way to let people know exactly where your information comes from. You must indicate to your readers exactly what information you took from each source and exactly from where you took it whenever you quote or paraphrase. The citation needs to refer directly to an entry in your bibliography.

Example

Medieval Europe was a place both of “raids, pillages, slavery and extortion” and of “traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if not cities and active markets in grain” (Townsend 10).

The parenthetical reference indicates that the quotes came from page 10 of a work by Townsend. The reader should be able to locate this work in the bibliography.

Bibliography:

Townsend, Robert M. The Medieval Village Economy. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

What information do I put into a parenthetical reference?

Usually the author's last name and page number of the work. If you are citing text from a general website, there is no page number; just use the author's last name in parenthesis.

How do I format my parenthetical reference?

Use the author's last name and type the page number with no punctuation in between. The punctuation from your sentence comes *after* the closed parenthesis. For example, if you are ending your sentence after the parenthetical reference, the period goes *outside* the parenthesis.

Why should I tell where my information comes from?

- It lets your reader know that you want to make clear to them which are your ideas / words / pictures etc. and which belong to someone else. If you do not cite your sources, you are committing plagiarism.
- It gives your work a lot more credibility because you obviously did not just make up what you are claiming. You did your research!
- Your reader can check the original source for accuracy if they want to challenge you or if they want to do some follow up research.

When don't you have to cite? © 2010 The College Board

1. Common Knowledge

Information that is basic factual knowledge does not need to be cited:

Thelonious Monk, acclaimed jazz pianist and composer, wrote the classic tune, "Round Midnight."

2. Your Own Ideas

You also don't have to give a citation for facts or ideas that you, yourself, have established. However, it's always a good idea to make the origin of such material clear, as shown in the example below:

After conducting a survey of sophomore engineering majors, I found that 72 percent cite the potential for high salaries after graduation as an important factor in their choice of major.

Is paraphrasing plagiarism?

Paraphrasing is putting information and ideas into other words for the sake of clarity or brevity. Used properly, paraphrasing can be a powerful tool for both explaining ideas and making persuasive arguments. But what constitutes proper and improper use of the paraphrase?

Take the following example of an original text:

"The lost-wax casting process (also called cire perdue, the French term) has been used for many centuries. It probably started in Egypt. By 200 BCE the technique was known in China and ancient Mesopotamia and was soon after used by the Benin peoples in Africa. It spread to ancient Greece sometime in the sixth century BCE and was widespread in Europe until the eighteenth century, when a piece-mold process came to predominate."

--Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History, Volume Two* (New York, Prentice Hall, Inc. and Harry Abrams, Inc., 1995), 31.

And here is a paraphrase, with an in-text parenthetical citation:

The lost-wax casting process is an ancient method for making metal sculpture. While the ancient Egyptians appear to have been its first practitioners, other cultures around the world also developed or imported the technique. Introduced to Europe by the ancient Greeks in the sixth century BCE, lost-wax casting remained an important artistic method up to the eighteenth century (Stokstad, 31).

Rather than simply restating the text, the author of the paraphrase changes the text to draw out a particular idea and leaves out the details that aren't relevant to the point she's making. Moreover, she adds some clarity by including a short definition of the lost-wax method in her opening sentence. Most importantly, the author has cited her source by author and page number, even though she did not quote the author directly.

A Note on Notes

If you are not careful in your note-taking process, it's very easy to closely paraphrase or even copy a source unintentionally. When in doubt, copy out the exact words of the original quote in your notes, put it in quotation marks, and include the citation information. You can later decide whether to quote or paraphrase, according to your reason for citing the text.

Avoid Plagiarism in Oral Presentations

It is very easy to use other people's words in a speech without realizing it. Do your best to make it clear when you are borrowing. For example, you can say, "As the Roman playwright Terence observed, 'While there's life, there's hope.'" Keep a written list of citations you can use as a reference if you are asked about your quotes.

Plagiarism can be a risk if you depend too heavily on outside sources. But if you rely on your own ideas, are conscientious about citing your sources, and are careful about how you paraphrase, you can steer clear of it, and write better papers or speeches in the process.

Help with in-text parenthetical citations and your bibliography

If you would like more guidance about in-text citations and/or arranging your bibliography, please contact our librarian, Ms. Perron, or your English teacher. You may also access EasyBib.com for help with your bibliography.