

A Short Guide to MLA Page Citation

In all of your papers for college, you should show the source of any material you quote. Depending on your major field of study, you might indicate your sources with one of several documentation systems. If your professor does not ask you to use a particular system, you might want to learn and use the system most commonly used in academic journals in your major field. In a course where everyone reads the same texts, the following brief guide to the MLA system may be sufficient. This is a very basic version of the system found in the Sixth Edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, published in 2003.

The MLA format always requires a page number in parentheses, and sometimes also requires the author's name. This format does *not* include the word "page" or its abbreviation. Here are the most basic guidelines:

1. If your sentence includes a quotation from an author you have named within the last few sentences, give only the page number at the end, in parentheses, before the period:

Robert Scholes believes that readers make use of a "storehouse of cultural information" when they interpret a text (480).

2. If you haven't named the author within the last few sentences, or if you have been talking about more than one author in your paragraph, give the author's last name and the page number within the parentheses:

While Barnlund concentrates on barriers to communication, Rosaldo says that social customs are "busy intersections" where a lot of communication takes place (Rosaldo 389).

3. If your sentence ends with a quotation, put the parentheses after the last quotation mark and before the period:

According to Heath, the community's "literacy activities are public and social" (234).

4. If you are using quotations from two different authors, you may include two sets of parentheses to make each source clear to your reader (in most other cases, citation information goes at the end of the sentence):

Rosaldo's view of social customs as "busy intersections" (389) appears in marked contrast to Barnlund's sense of the enormous difficulty in understanding the "assumptive world" of another culture (49).

5. If your quotation is more than four lines long, quote it as a block quotation. Indent a block quotation 10 spaces, without quotation marks, and place the parentheses two spaces after the final period. Like the rest of your paper, the block quotation should be double-spaced. Use long quotations sparingly, only when they are really needed to advance your argument.

Seidler believes that it is difficult for many men to overcome their upbringing and share their emotions:

In the middle class, men have often grown up to be reticent, even scared, of sharing emotions and feelings, lest they threaten the control which sustains our very sense of masculinity. [. . .] We fear that others will see us as weak and unmasculine. (635)

This strong but buried sense of masculine fear plays a very important role in

Things Fall Apart.

A sample MLA "Works Cited" page is included on the next handout. If you need to use other parts of the MLA system, please consult the relevant sections in Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 4th edition or the most recent version of the *MLA Handbook*.