In-Text Citation Basics

When writing a paper with multiple outside sources, it is important to properly cite each one in your paper to avoid being charged with plagiarism. The parenthetical citations should provide the reader with the information they need to be able to locate the source in the Works Cited page. For MLA, we rely on the last name of the author to let us know which source is being referenced and the page number to let us know where the evidence is in the source. When quoting, remember that the period always goes after the entire in-text citation.

**Example:** During the Romantic Period, a literary era mid to late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, poetry was seen as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

If the introduction to the quote states who the author is, then we only need to include the page number.

**Example:** Wordsworth best described Romantic poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

If you’re citing a source with no known author, then the title of the source will be placed in the parenthesis where the last name would usually be.

**Example:** North America has “more readily accessible climatic data and more comprehensive programs to monitor and study environmental change . . .” ("Impact of Global Warming" 6).

If you’re using sources where the authors have the same last name, then you can include the first initial of the author in order to identify which author you’re citing.

**Example:** Although some people argue that stem cell research is unethical (R. Miller 12), scientists argue that the advantage for medical advancement outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

When using a source will multiple authors, if there are three or fewer authors, then list them in the text or parenthetical citation.

**Example:** Gifford, Griffith, and Gabrielyan state that “not everyone is qualified to teach without proper preparation” (14).

or

The authors state that “not everyone is qualified to teach without proper preparation” (Gifford, Griffith, and Gabrielyan 14).

If there are more than three authors, then the in-text citation will only include the last name of the first author followed by “et al.” as a placeholder for the rest of the authors’ names.

**Example:** Claudio et al. show that “global warming is killing polar bears” (4).

or

The authors state that “global warming is killing polar bears” (Claudio et al. 4).