Parenthetical Citations in MLA Style

Paraphrasing
When you put the author’s information into your own words, give the author’s last name and appropriate page number(s) in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

A well-known contemporary writer claims that accounts of major life events told retrospectively often demonstrate a belief in destiny; in contrast, accounts told immediately after or during an experience often indicate a belief in chance (Oates 7).

Citing More Than One Source at a Time
Use a semicolon to separate references.

To help patients interpret their dreams more successfully, dream therapy analysts usually suggest that patients record their dreams in writing (Bosnak 13-16; Delaney 19-22).

Citing an Entire Chapter or Work

A more current summary of bibliographical networks is also available (Katz ch. 8)

Quoting
(1) Quoting an entire sentence:
When quoting an entire sentence, you may punctuate it like dialogue. Note that when you use the author’s name to introduce the quote, you need not use the name again in the parentheses. Note also that the quote within a quote (the word “destined”) has single rather than double quotation marks.

Nobel Prize nominee Joyce Carol Oates claims, “In retrospect, our lives appear to pass through certain ‘destined’ tracks, as if deliberately mapped: thus we speak confidently of Destiny” (7).
(2) Quoting part of a sentence:
When quoting only a fragment of a sentence, add to it so that together your words and the quoted words make a complete sentence.

New experiences modify old ones. Thus, our life stories are “continually astonishing us, continually revising themselves” (Oates 7).

(3) Quoting one to four lines of prose (i.e., not poetry):
When quoting up to four lines of prose, incorporate them into your own sentences or paragraphs. Note that the quotation retains the question mark even though a final period must be added after the parentheses. The quotation would also retain an exclamation mark. Other marks of punctuation (e.g., commas, periods) generally are dropped.

Considering how many violent phrases we “innocently” use on a daily basis as we tackle this issue, take a stab at that one, or be hanged if we’ll bother ourselves over some other one, we might well ask along with Richard Lederer, “If language is truly a window to the world and if words and expressions we use truly affect the way we think, can we ever really stamp out violence?” (105).

(4) Quoting one to three lines of poetry:
When quoting up to three lines of poetry, incorporate them into your own sentences and paragraphs. Use a space followed by a slash followed by a space to indicate line breaks. With poetry, the numbers in parentheses are line numbers rather than page numbers.

In the poem “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home,” the telephone is described humorously: “If the ghost cries, they carry it / to their lips and soothe it to sleep / with sounds” (Raine 21-23).
(5) Quoting from verse plays:
Treat a quote from a verse play like you would treat poetry quotes, but precede the line numbers in parentheses with act and scene numbers. In the example to the right, the numbers in parentheses mean act 1, scene 4, line 1.

Shakespeare frequently uses characters’ observations about whether to reveal their mental states and to presage upcoming events. For instance, Hamlet’s comment that the “air bites shrewdly; it is very cold” (1.4.1) reveals his general apprehension and also augments the biting emotional climate that perpetuates and worsens throughout the play.

(6) Quoting from plays without line numbers:
When quoting from plays that have no line numbering, you may, as with prose, reference the quote with a page number only. However, you may include the act and scene numbers in your own commentary. Example: In act two of A Doll’s House, Anne-Marie discloses what it was like leaving her daughter with strangers (875-76).

In the final act of A Doll’s House Torvald accuses Nora of immaturity: “Oh, you think and talk like a silly child” (905). Nevertheless, Nora recognizes and accepts the futility of the childish dynamics that have stymied their relationship; Torvald, on the other hand, childishly clings to these dynamics, which have torn his marriage apart.

(7) Quoting from the Bible:
Include chapter and verse numbers along with the book. You may abbreviate book names: for example, Gen. for Genesis, Ps. for Psalms, etc. The citation here means the book of Matthew, chapter 19, verse 14.

Jesus exemplified his high regard for children when herebuked his disciples for forbidding the children to come to him: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19.14).
(8) Using prose block quotes: When quoting more than four lines of prose, indent the entire quote one inch (two tabs) from the left margin. Maintain double spacing. If the quote begins a paragraph in your original source, indent the first line an additional one-quarter inch (or five spaces). Note that with indented quotations no quotation marks are used, and periods and other punctuation marks precede rather than follow the parentheses. Also note that this example prefaces the quote with a colon. It is possible to introduce the block quote with a comma, but the sentence introducing it and the quote itself must form a grammatically correct sentence to do so.

Therefore, blank pages at the end of most printed books are unavoidable if the story takes up an odd number of pages:

In conventional offset printing, large sheets of paper are folded into “signatures” of usually 16 or 32 pages (sometimes 8, or even 48) that are bound together and trimmed to make a book. For this reason, books have a page count that is a multiple of at least 8, and usually 16. (CMOS Online)

(9) Using poetry block quotes: When quoting more than three lines of poetry, indent one inch (or ten spaces). Do not add quotation marks. Include only such quotation marks as already exist in the original source. Note the spacing within the ellipses. Also note the extra return between stanzas.

Emily Dickinson is a master at giving abstract concepts, like hope or disappointment, a concrete form:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all […]

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest Sea—
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me. (1-4, .12)
### Citing a Work by Two or Three Authors
Include each author’s last name, as well as any relevant page or chapter numbers.

> One thing is certain: “As social and practical entities, disciplines cannot be equated with the knowledge—the discourse, the statements, the facts—they produce, or with the domain they study” (Shumway and Dionne 5).

### Citing a Work by Four or More Authors
Include the last name of the first author, along with the abbreviated Latin phrase *et al* (“and others”). Do not separate them with a comma.

> The study was extended for two years, and only after results were duplicated on both coasts did the authors publish their results (Doe et al. 137).

### Citing Two or More Works by One Author
Follow the author’s last name by a comma and add an abbreviated version of the title you are citing at the moment. Title words that are in italics or quotation marks on the Works Cited page should also be in italics or quotes in the parenthetical citation.

> Although the baby chimpanzee lived only for a few hours, Washoe signed to it before it died (Davis, *Eloquent* 42).

### Citing Two or More Authors with the Same Last Name
Include the author’s first initial in the parenthetical references. (If shared initials too, use first name.)

> Both Lucy and Koko have been reported to lie (A. Desmond 102).
Citing an Anonymous Work
Use the title or an abbreviated form of the title in place of an author name. When shortening a title, begin it with the same word by which it is alphabetized on the Works Cited page.

Would you have thought that “Nightmare” and “Green Demon” are names of alcoholic beverages? (Mr. Boston 103, 139).

-or-

In California, fish and game officials estimate that since 1972 lion numbers have increased from 2,400 to at least 6,000 (“Lion” A21).

Citing a Corporate Author
You may cite your source as a in the example on the right. However, to avoid long parenthetical references—which disrupt the flow of your text—incorporate long parenthetical names into your text. Then the parentheses would include only the page number.

The local community college offers a number of televised courses for students whose schedules preclude trips to campus (Tarrant County College 14-17).

Quoting an Indirect Source
When a writer’s or speaker’s quoted words appear in a source written by someone else, begin the citation with the abbreviation “qtd. in.”

“When lion sightings become common,” says Fjelline, “trouble often follows” (qtd. in Robinson 30).