

Writing in-text citations

EXAMPLE

Here is a sample citation from a Works Cited page:

"Hauptmann trial." American History. 2008. ABC-CLIO. 14 Feb. 2008 <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.

An in-text citation for the article might look like this:

...the end of your sentence ("Hauptmann Trial").

Note: This is not the only way to write an in-text citation. Read the additional rules below to be sure you are writing your reference correctly.

WHAT IS AN IN-TEXT CITATION?

An in-text citation is a reference within the body of your paper to one of the sources from your bibliography. It indicates to your reader exactly what you borrowed from the source, and specifically where they can find it. You need to write a parenthetical, or "in-text" citation, whether you quote the material directly from the source, paraphrase it in your own words, or refer to an idea derived from the material.

WHAT TYPICALLY GOES IN AN MLA-STYLE IN-TEXT CITATION?

The information that you need to include depends on what type of source the material comes from. For material from a print source, you normally only need to include the **author(s)** (or **title** if there is no author) and **page number(s)** in your reference. For multi-volume works like encyclopedias, you may also need to include a **volume number**. For Internet sources, sometimes **paragraph numbers** are provided.

The information described above can be either included in the sentence that you write, or added in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

WHAT OTHER RULES DO I NEED TO KNOW TO WRITE AN IN-TEXT CITATION?

Rule 1: Placement

The parentheses are usually placed at the end of a sentence, between the last word and the period. If the end of your sentence is part of a quote, the parentheses should go between the closing quotation mark and the period:

"The chicken came before the egg" (Smith 21).

Rule 2: Sentence vs. parentheses

Only information that is not already contained in your sentence is necessary in the in-text citation. For example, in the following example the author's last name, Smith, is already stated, so only the page numbers are necessary within the parentheses:

Smith theorizes that the chicken came before the egg (21-23).

Rule 3: When author names are similar or the same

Information you provide in the in-text citation should distinguish exactly which work in your source list you are referring to. Add a first initial or whole first name if the last name is not unique in your source list, or add the title of the work if there is more than one work by the same author. For example:

It has been proven that the chicken came before the egg (**J. Smith** 21).
It has been proven that the chicken came before the egg (**John Smith** 21).
It has been proven that the chicken came before the egg (**Smith, Eggs** 21).

Rule 4: When there is no author

If the work is listed in your source list by its title (no author), then you should refer to it in the in-text citation by its title as well. The title may be shortened to just the first word (not including articles like "The" and "A"), and should be quoted or underlined if it is quoted or underlined in your source list. For example:

Experts believe that the chicken came before the egg (**Chicken** 21-23).
Experts believe that the chicken came before the egg ("**Egg**" 2).

If you have two entries with the same author (or no author) and title, find a publication fact that distinguishes the works and add it to their in-text citations. For a nonperiodical print source, use the date of publication if possible. For an article in a periodical, use the title of the periodical. For a Web page, use the title of the overall Web site. For example:

Experts believe that the chicken came before the egg (Smith, **2006**).
Experts believe that the chicken came before the egg ("Egg," **Student Resource Center**).

Rule 5: When there are no page numbers

For some of our online database sources, there are no page numbers. In that case, include only the author's name or the title of the article (when there is no author) in the in-text citation.

Experts believe that the chicken came before the egg (**Smith**).
At least one poet has asked, "How do we know, which came first?" ("**Egg Poem**").

On the other hand, some of our online newspaper sources, such as Proquest Historical Newspapers, provide an image of the original newspaper, sometimes making it possible to determine exactly which page the cited material appears on. In that case, include the author's name or the title of the article (when there is no author), followed by the page number, as shown in Rules 3 and 4 above.

Rule 6: Quoting or paraphrasing a quotation

If what you quote or paraphrase in your paper is itself a quotation in the source, add the phrase "qtd. in" to the in-text citation as shown here:

"I have proven that the chicken came before the egg" (**qtd. in** J. Smith 21).