Using MLA Format to Incorporate Source Materials

Why do I need to use sources?

Incorporating sources into your essays shows that you are aware of other ideas and opinions regarding the topic.

Backing up your opinion with evidence from scholarly sources makes your explanation, evaluation, or argument more convincing.

How many sources should I use?

Your instructor may assign a specific number of sources to use, but if not, a general rule is that your paper should be mostly your own ideas supported by source information.

Quotes, paraphrases, and summaries from your sources should be used only to assist you in proving your points. You do not want a source-driven essay--source after source after source with few thoughts of your own.

How do I decide when to use a source?

Use a source only when it makes your argument stronger. Never use a source as "filler."

Below is an example of a statistic that is effectively used to back up the writer's point:

"Environment is at least as important as genetics in determining success. For example, identical twins separated at birth are 72% more likely to graduate from high school if they had a supportive home life and parents who were involved in their education (Smith 153). It is clear that even when genes are exactly the same, environment does have an influence."

What is MLA format?

MLA format is the format for documentation established by the Modern Language Association. It is most often used in essays for humanities classes such as English, history, and foreign language.
Why is documenting sources required?

Keeping your in-text citations (telling your source within the paper) and works cited page (the page at the end that lists all sources used) in a simple, consistent format lets the reader know where information is located and establishes source credibility.

Why is following the format so important? (or Why is my instructor so picky?)

Many careers demand attention to detail, so it's good practice. Formatting documents by established guidelines is also common in the "real world." It's also likely you'll need to write documented essays in many classes here at FGCU.

You can incorporate evidence from sources several ways:

- Paraphrasing
- Brief quotes
- Lengthy quotes
- Summarizing

Paraphrasing

"Paraphrasing" is putting the author's idea in your own words. You must still give the author credit for the idea, however.

It is sometimes difficult to think of a different way to word an idea. Here are a few helpful hints:

- Use synonyms (different words that mean the same). Make use of the thesaurus function included in most word processing programs. Be sure to choose a word you would use.
- Keeping the same point(s), change the order of the ideas.

Example paraphrase

Original:
"Kenya's population growth rate, over 4 percent, is perhaps the highest in the world."

Paraphrase:
The population increase in Kenya is likely the most dramatic anywhere--more than 4 percent (Rosenblum and Williamson 231).

Why take the time to paraphrase (reword the original)?

- So you are not overquoting.
- So you can show that you understand the ideas and can explain them in your own
words.
• To summarize lengthy lists or paragraphs.

**Why do I need to give credit to the author if I put the idea in my own words?**

Because you are using the AUTHOR'S IDEA, not your own, and you always must give credit.

**Quoting**

So you are not over-quoting, save quotes for when an author has worded a point especially well.

Quotation marks (" ") indicate *these are the author's EXACT words*. Double-check quotes for accuracy after typing them and note the author and page in the paper immediately [(Smith 133)]. Copy publication information for the works cited page.

If you need to change any words or word endings to integrate the quote grammatically, you must show the change by putting it in brackets [ ]. If you leave a word out, show that with ellipses points ( . . . )

Indicate that a word or phrase has been omitted from a quote with ellipses points (three spaced periods), for example: According to Smith, "Sherwood Anderson's use of the grotesque emphasizes the main character's . . . isolation" (24).

Indicate that a sentence or more has been omitted from a quote by placing four spaced periods: Mark Twain edited The Buffalo Express newspaper. . . . He was later asked to become editor of several other newspapers, but he declined.

**Brief quote format**

Use the following format if the quote is *less than 4* typed, double spaced lines.

Incorporate into your sentence using a *tag or signal phrase*. For example, *Rosenblum and Williamson argue that "..."* (346).

End punctuation AFTER the page number.

**Example with authors named in signal phrase**

Rosenblum and Williamson point out that "the problem is not too many people. It is too little economic growth to sustain them" (231).

**Long quote format**

• Use when the quote is *4 or more* typed, double spaced lines.
Introduce with a signal phrase and a colon.
Indent 10 spaces instead of using quotation marks.
Double space.
End punctuation BEFORE page number.

Example of Long Quote (double space in your paper)

Rosenblum and Williamson offer a unique perspective:

> The problem is not too many people. It is too little economic growth to sustain them... unless sudden massive strides are made in development, burgeoning populations in Africa translate to human misery. (231)

Format for works cited page

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last name   page #

Works Cited

Last, First. "Article title." Book, journal, or magazine title. Then list the specific publication info--see subsequent examples.
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Example, Book format, works cited page

**Book With One Author**

Last, First. Book title. City published in (If multiple cities are listed, list the first one.) Colon (: ) Publisher, Year.

**Book With One or More Authors**

Same format, except list the first author listed beginning with their last name. Next, list subsequent authors' names first then last:


**Book With Author and Editor**

List the author of the chapter or work first, then the editor (Ed.). Following this is the city: publisher, year.


**Article or Chapter in an Anthology (collection of essays or stories)**

Double space. The entire title of the book, including the subtitle, is written out and underlined. The inclusive page numbers of the essay *in the book* are noted.

**Article in a Weekly Magazine (Time, Newsweek, etc.)**


Double space. Notice that the magazine is underlined and that there is no punctuation between the magazine title and the date. Be sure to place a colon between the year and the page numbers.

**Article in a Newspaper**


**Article in a Journal**


Notice the volume and issue number (79.1), the year in parentheses and the inclusive page numbers. (As a rule, always list all the page numbers of the article RATHER THAN just the pages you've quoted or paraphrased from.)

**Web Site**


Notice: just like other sources, author is listed last name first. If no author can be found for the website article, begin with the article title (alphabetical order by the first word in the website—not including and, the, etc.) The first date is the date the website was published. The date in parentheses is the date the site was accessed.

**Other Citation Formats**

This presentation included the most common types of sources used; when you have further questions, see:


Chapter 50 lists additional types of sources, and Chapter 51 includes a sample essay (including Works Cited page) in MLA format.