

FAQs for MLA In-text Citations

What is an in-text citation?

In the simplest terms, an in-text citation is you giving an author credit within your essay whenever you mention his or her work.

Why do I need them?

Most importantly, in-text citations will prevent you from being accused of plagiarism. They give credit to the authors of the works that you use, and they help your reader to recognize and find your research.

When do I need them?

You'll need an in-text citation any time you mention or depend on someone else's writing or research in your own writing. They should usually be present in every sentence that utilizes a secondary source. Remember, just because you don't have a quote in a sentence doesn't mean that you don't need an in-text citation.

What needs to be included in them?

Every format has its own rules for in-text citations. In MLA, an in-text citation should include the author's last name and the page number of the material that you quote or reference. It will usually be in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

How do I do them?

Ah. Here's the big question. In-text citations are pretty easy once you have the hang of them, but they can be confusing when you're first starting out. Let's look at some examples on the next page.

How to Do In-text Citations in MLA

How to create the in-text citation will depend on how you are using the secondary source within a particular sentence and on the structure of that sentence. Let's look at a few example sentences using this article:

Ellis, Anthony. "Joyce Carol Oates' 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?': The Identity of Ellie Oscar, Reconsidered." *Short Story* 10.2 (2002): 55-61. Print.

Example 1: Ellis argues that the characters Ellie and Eddie in Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going?, Where Have You Been?" are actually the same person (56).

Note: Since I mention the author's name in the sentence, I only need the page number in the parentheses at the end of the sentence. Punctuation marks, in this case a period, always go *after* the close of the parentheses.

Example 2: One scholar has even argued that Ellie and Eddie are actually the same person (Ellis 56).

Note: Since I do *not* include the author's name in the sentence, I must include both the name and page number in the parentheses.

Example 3: Ellis argues that "Ellie and Eddie—his near-namesake whom Connie spends three hours with early in the story—are one and the same person" (56).

Note: Sentences that include a quote follow the same rules of citation mentioned above. Just make sure that your parenthetical citation comes *after* the quotation marks but *before* the closing punctuation.

Example 4: If it is true that Ellie and Eddie "are one and the same person" (Ellis 56), then Ellie is perhaps far more important to the story than scholars have previously thought.

Note: Usually, your parenthetical citation will go at the end of the sentence, but sometimes it can go in the middle of the sentence if there is a naturally occurring pause and if putting it at the end of the sentence would move it farther away from the documented material. Since the first part of this sentence contains my documented material, and the second part contains my own idea, I put the parenthetical citation after the naturally occurring pause at the end of the "If" statement. Notice that the punctuation, a comma, still comes after the close of the parentheses.