MLA Examples

Avoiding Plagiarism:
Using Sources Responsibly and Effectively
5 Methods for Using Information and Ideas

The first four ways to work with others’ information must be acknowledged via in-text citations and Works Cited page entries.

1. **Direct Quotations**: placing another’s words in quotation marks.
2. **Paraphrase**: putting another’s ideas or information in your own words.
3. **Summary**: retelling or condensing work done by another in your own words.
4. **Specific Knowledge**: an idea or information attributable to a writer or work.

The 5th type of information does not need to be acknowledged.

5. **General Knowledge**: information found in at least three sources, or generally known (such as the sun rising in the east).
Unique Situations

Occasionally, you will encounter unique situations or times you need to manipulate your quote to fit your paper’s needs.

- **Quote within a quote**: the entire passage is placed within “quotation marks” and the internal quote has ‘single’ quotation marks
- **Ellipsis**: the three dots with spaces ( . . . ) are used at the beginning or end of a quote, if the quote is not the author’s complete sentence.
- **Editorial changes**: whenever you make a change in a direct quote, indicate the change with [square brackets]
- **“Quoted in”**: when quoting a source that is already being quoted by the author of the source, give credit in the tag phrase to the person who actually spoke the words; then, in your parenthetical citation, add the phrase “qtd. in” to show where you got this quote (as it’s not from the original source).
- **Long/Block quotes**: used when quoting more than 4 lines of typed prose; more than 3 of poetry.
In-text Citations Match Works Cited Entries

The author’s last name (or a title) in the parenthetical reference (in-text citation) always corresponds with the item as it is listed.

Text of research paper
As McGlynn asserts, “[t]he monarch was expected to employ whatever violence necessary in pursuit of social stability and safety of his subjects” (54).

Works Cited Entry
Throughout the whole medieval period there was popular demand for malefactors to receive punishment that was both harsh and purposefully terrifying. This reflected people’s investment in the social order and their anxiety at any perceived threat to it. […] Legitimate, judicial violence was deemed essential in the fight to suppress illegitimate, random violence. The monarch, in his role as the supreme judge, was expected to employ whatever violence was necessary in pursuit of social stability and safety for his subjects. Mutilations sent out a message of warning and deterrence; executions offered the ultimate guarantee against repeat offenders.
Direct Quotations

**Dialogue-Style Tag**
Use a “who” and a strong action verb—followed by a comma, with the quoted passage beginning with a capitalization.

Example:
As one historian notes, “The monarch... was expected to employ whatever violence was necessary in pursuit of social stability and safety for his subjects” (McGlynn 54).

**Blended Sentence**
Borrow just a word or phrase and you build your sentence around the quoted material; punctuate and capitalize based on the sentence structure.

Example:
Medieval rulers often used “whatever violence was necessary” to maintain order in the realm (McGlynn 54).

**Full-Sentence Tag**
Utilize your complete sentence to set up the main idea in the quoted passage, followed by a colon with the first word of the quoted text capitalized. The page number follows the quote.

Example:
Historian Sean McGlynn explains how medieval monarchs were expected to maintain order: “The monarch... was expected to employ violence was necessary in pursuit of social stability and safety for his subjects” (54).
**Paraphrase**

**Paraphrases** are written entirely in your own words. Therefore, there is no explicitly quoted information and thus no quotation marks.

**Example** (based on previous passage):

McGlynn notes that a medieval ruler used dreadful punishments to protect his subjects and keep them in line, and his subjects accepted this policy (54).

-OR-

A medieval ruler used dreadful punishments to protect his subjects and keep them in line, and his subjects accepted this policy (McGlyyn 54).
Summary

**Summaries** are used to re-tell or condense work done by another, in your own words; requires a lead-in passage and a parenthetical citation.

**Example** (based on previous passage):

One historian notes that medieval rulers punished criminals in violent, frightening ways to fight crime and maintain order. The rulers’ subjects expected and supported this kind of justice (McGlynn 54).
Specific knowledge is no different than a direct quote, except it is often just a few words or a short phrase attributed to a specific author or work.

Example (based on previous passage):

Trial by “water ordeal,” which operated on the premise that the innocent would sink while the guilty would float, is a practice that was legally established as far back as the late 12th century (McGlynn 55-56).
General knowledge is information that is found in more than one source and is seen as commonly known—use this sparingly when writing papers. No citation necessary.

Example (based on previous passage):

Medieval European life was grim and barbaric by today’s standards. Frequent wars, widespread disease, and institutionalized cruelty were just a few of the problems medieval societies faced.
Quote Within a Quote

Quote within a quote occurs when a quotation you would like to include in your paper has quoted material within it. In this case, the entire passage is placed within “quotation marks”, and the internal quote has ‘single’ quotation marks.

Example:

Horace Mann’s article notes, “He coined the phrase ‘the great equalizer’ when discussing the merits of education” (123).

[In the original source, Horace Mann uses quotation marks around “the great equalizer.”]
Ellipsis points (three dots with spaces) are used at the beginning or end of a quote, if the quote is not the author’s complete sentence. Always use an ellipsis when breaking a quote or skipping words when using a blended sentence.

Examples:

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “... men are created equal.”

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “All men are created . . .”

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “All . . . are created equal.”
Whenever you make a change to a direct quote, indicate the change with [square brackets].

**Examples:**

**Adding Clarification**- Sources reveal, “He [Michael Moore] is an award-winning filmmaker” (Jones 12).

**Noting Errors**- “The playwright [sic]…” [sic is italicized because it is Latin for “thus”]

**Changing Uppercase to Lowercase**- Sources show, “[T]wenty-five percent is the maximum amount of research to include in a paper” (Milecki 87). (Here, the original source was “twenty-five”).
“Quoted in” is used when quoting a source that is already being quoted by the author of the source, give credit in the tag phrase to the person who actually spoke the words; then, in your parenthetical citation, add the phrase “qtd. in” to show where you got this quote (as it’s not from the original source).

**Example:**

Thomas Paine claims, “We have it in our power to begin the world all over again” (qtd. in D’Souza 769).

[D’Souza quotes Paine in this selection; this item would be found on the Works Cited page under D’Souza, not Paine.]
Long/Block Quotes

**Long or Block quotes** occur when your quote more than 4 typed lines of text.

MLA format requires:
- the entire quote is indented 1/2 inch
- set the quote off from your signal phrase
- do not use “quotation marks”
- put the end punctuation before the citation (instead of after).

**Example:**

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)