

citing sources

a brief review

GEN 110
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overview

Many college writing assignments require the integration of one or more books, articles, or other published sources. When completing such assignments, *it is essential that you properly cite your sources*, both to add credibility to your writing and to avoid plagiarism.

Instructors at Medaille generally use the Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) citation systems. Regardless of which system you use, you must cite not only *direct quotations* (whether whole paragraphs, individual sentences, or shorter clauses as “borrowed language”), but also *original ideas obtained from your sources, including summarized or paraphrased passages*. Note that you need not cite well known “common knowledge;” see Hacker sections 29 and 35 if you have questions about these sorts of issues.

In both the MLA and APA systems, proper documentation is a two-step procedure that combines *in-text citations* with a full *bibliographic listing* at the end of the paper. (This bibliography is entitled “Works Cited” in the MLA system and “References” in the APA system.)

MLA in-text citations

The MLA in-text citation typically begins with the author’s name as an introductory signal phrase, then the cited material, then the parenthetical page reference, as follows:

As Neil Postman argues, “The telegraph made a three-pronged attack on typography’s definition of discourse, introducing on a large scale irrelevance, impotence, and incoherence” (65).

The MLA system also allows in-text citations *without* a signal phrase if the author’s last name appears in parentheses, before the page reference:

“The telegraph made a three-pronged attack on typography’s definition of discourse, introducing on a large scale irrelevance, impotence, and incoherence” (Postman 65).

See Hacker section 32a for information on other forms of MLA in-text citations.

APA in-text citations

A typical APA in-text citation begins with a signal phrase that combines the last name(s) of the author(s) with the date of publication in parentheses. After the signal phrase comes the cited material, then the parenthetical page reference, as follows:

As Postman (1985) argues, “The telegraph made a three-pronged attack on typography’s definition of discourse, introducing on a large scale irrelevance, impotence, and incoherence” (p. 65).

The APA system also allows in-text citations *without* a signal phrase if the author’s last name and date of publication appear in parentheses, before the page reference:

“The telegraph made a three-pronged attack on typography’s definition of discourse, introducing on a large scale irrelevance, impotence, and incoherence” (Postman, 1985, p. 65).

See Hacker section 37a for information on other forms of APA in-text citations.

* The MLA system is especially popular in writing, literature, and other humanities fields, while the APA system is most common in the social sciences and education.

MLA Works Cited

In the MLA system, an alphabetized Works Cited list provides publication details for every source cited in the paper. Formats for individual entries on the Works Cited list are determined by the type of source cited; an entry for a book written by a single author, for instance, includes the author, italicized book title, city of publication and publisher, year of publication, and medium, as follows:

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin, 1985. Print.

The entry for a periodical article includes the author, article title in quotes, italicized periodical title, periodical volume and issue, year of publication in parentheses, page numbers, and medium, formatted as below:

Kavanagh, Peter. "Why Postman Matters." *Commonweal* 130.20 (2003): 11-12. Print.

See Hacker section 32b for help with Works Cited entries for dozens of additional types of sources, including online and other electronic sources.

APA References

In the APA system, an alphabetized References list provides publication details for sources cited within the paper. As in the MLA system, formats for individual entries on the References list are determined by the type of source cited; an entry for a book written by a single author includes the author's last name and first initial, year of publication in parentheses, italicized book title, and city of publication and publisher, as follows:

Postman, N. (1985). *Amusing ourselves to death: public discourse in the age of show business*. New York: Penguin.

The entry for a periodical article includes the author's last name and first initial, year of publication in parentheses, article title, italicized periodical title, periodical volume and issue, and page numbers, formatted as below:

Kavanagh, P. (2003). Why Postman matters. *Commonweal*, 130(20), 11-12.

See Hacker section 37b for help with References entries for dozens of additional types of sources, including online and other electronic sources.[†]

[†] This handout is adapted from Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009); see especially sections 28-38.