The IUP Writing Center
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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MLA STYLE[1]

The three basic ideas behind documenting sources in MLA style include: 1) Use a **signal phrase** to lead from your words into the quotation or borrowed information. 2) Then use a **parenthetical citation** directly after the quotation or borrowed information. 3) Finally, on the final page list all the **works cited** in your paper.

1) Signal Phrase

Using the author's name before the quotation prepares your reader and makes the paper flow better:

> According to authors Janice Walker and Todd Taylor, "The bill prohibits the use of a cell phone while driving unless it is equipped with an earpiece or can act like a speakerphone, leaving the driver's hands free" (481).

2) Parenthetical (In-text) Citations

You must give credit to an author or source for any quotation or borrowed information. If you list the source in your signal phrase, you only need to give a page reference, as in the example above. However, if you do not list the source in your signal phrase, then you must include the author's name or a shortened version of the title within the parentheses, as shown below:

> As of 2001, "at least three hundred towns and municipalities had considered legislation regulating use of cell phones while driving" ("Lawmakers" 2).
>
> Most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times cell phones are a factor in accidents; as of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (Sundeen 17).

NOTE: There is no punctuation within the parentheses, and the punctuation for the sentence comes after the parenthetical citation.

NOTE: A good rule to remember is whatever information is listed first on your Works Cited page is what should go inside the parentheses (see below).

[1] Please refer to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 7th Edition for more information on MLA style.

3) Works Cited

Only those sources which have been directly cited in your paper should be listed. They should appear in alphabetical order and have hanging indents. For exact formats refer to the MLA section of *A Writer's Reference* or go to http:///www.wc.iup.edu/mla/cited.htm.

"Lawmakers." *Cell Phones Damage the Environment*. 25 May 2000. Web. 14 Sep. 2004.

(This is the format for a website without an author. The first date listed is the date the site was last updated; the second is the date you accessed the source. MLA no longer requires URLs, but the word "Web" is used between the dates to indicate what type of source is being used).

Sundeen, Katy. "Revolutionizing Driving in the Cell Phone Era." *Technology Today*. 22.3 (2004): 9-32. Print.

(This is the format for a journal. After the title of the journal is the volume number and issue number, then the date published, and then the page numbers. "Print" is included at the end of the citation to indicate what type of source is being used.)

Walker, Janice R., and Todd Taylor. *The Effects of Technology on Driving*. New York: Putnam, 2001. Print.

(This is the format for a book with two authors. "Print" is included at the end of the citation to indicate what type of source is being used.)

As noted above, you can always refer to our website (www.iup.edu/writingcenter), the MLA section of *A Writer's Reference*, or the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for more information on how to cite and document sources in MLA style. The Purdue OWL is also a helpful site for documenting sources and other writing concerns: http://owl.english.purdue.edu.