


MLA Parenthetical Citation Cheat Sheet - By: Jeff Wahl

Here is an example of a basic in text reference

“Rationalistic supernaturalism” relates to the first of the four stages of doubt (Watson 519).

Watson, Peter. *Ideas: a History of Thought and Invention, from Fire to Freud*. HarperCollins, 2005.



Author's Name Mentioned in the text

Watson clearly explains this idea (519).

While Watson (525-530), clearly differs with this assumption.


What if the article or book has more than one author?

Parenthetical citation can be difficult to understand (Smith and Jones 25).

Source cited has more than two authors

Parenthetical citation follows strict rules (Lawrence et al. 53).

No comma!



Using Direct Quotations

If the quoted section takes up less than four lines:

It has been argued that "the advent of doubt could not but have a major effect on ethical thinking" (Watson 525).

If the quoted section takes up more than four lines:

The following incident illustrates clearly that Voltaire took a great deal of inspiration from the life of Sir Isaac Newton:

During the time that Voltaire spent in England, the most significant episode for him was almost certainly the death of Sir Isaac Newton. An old man of eighty-four, Newton was President of the Royal Society and held in highest esteem. And it was this that impressed

Voltaire, that a man from a modest background, but blessed with great intellectual gifts, could rise so high in society and be so respected by his fellow men, whatever their own background. (Watson 527)

Or, if your quote runs into the text of your sentence, you can do it like this.

Voltaire believed that

the most significant episode for him was almost certainly the death of Sir Isaac Newton.

An old man of eighty-four, Newton was President of the Royal Society and held in highest esteem. And it was this that impressed Voltaire, that a man from a modest background, but blessed with great intellectual gifts, could rise so high in society and be so respected by his fellow men, whatever their own background. (Watson 527)

Citing one of several cited works by the same author

List the author's last name, the title or an abbreviated form of the title, and then the page number.

However, it is generally agreed upon by scholars in the field, that the previous account is "historically implausible" (Pagels, Origin 26).

Although the text of this ancient work is simple to read, "it's meaning is by no means obvious" (Pagels, Beyond 34).

What if the author of the article is quoting someone else?

Wahl was often overheard saying that MLA citation "drives him crazy" (qtd. in Jones 25).

Jones, Jonathan. *The Life of Wahl*. Clarendon, 2014.

Citing a work with no author listed

"Tancredo Wants Tax Debate with Hickenlooper." *Associated Press State Wire: Colorado (CO)*, 29 Jul. 2013.

The debate was over whether taxes should be raised by, “nearly a billion for school funding” (“Tancredo”).

Use quotation marks around the title, just like in the Works Cited

Parenthetically citing a work without page numbers or that has just one page

The former congressman countered that “he doesn't believe the additional funds will improve the quality of schools in the state” (“Tancredo”).

Since you can't list page #'s that don't exist, just cite to the author or title.

If you are citing the same work multiple times

The eighth edition of the MLA Handbook takes a whole new view of citation (Wahl 138). The container approach seems difficult at first, but eventually it makes sense (139).