The Writing Center
METHODIST UNIVERSITY

MLA IN-TEXT REFERENCES[1] & SAMPLE WORKS-CITED LIST

WHAT ARE IN-TEXT REFERENCES/CITATIONS?

An in-text reference or in-text citation is information you insert in your essay to refer the reader to an outside source from which you've borrowed an idea, a quotation, or facts.

The MLA style manual requires you to provide two pieces of information in every in-text reference: the **source's author(s)** and the relevant **page number(s)**. These two pieces of information (in *italics* in the examples that follow) can be presented together, enclosed in parentheses at the end of your sentence, like this:

> One doctor states that students who performed poorly on final exams were shown to forego sleep in favor of studying (*Mercer 206-207*).

There are other ways to present the two bits of information. Sometimes you want to use the author's name to introduce the information or quotation you're presenting. If you use the name of the source's author in the text or body of your sentence, in what's called the "signal phrase," then just the page numbers appear in parentheses at the end of the sentence:

> Dr. *Isaac Mercer* states that students who did poorly on final exams were shown to forego sleep in favor of studying (*206-207*).

WHAT ARE PARENTHETICAL REFERENCES/CITATIONS?
An in-text reference is called a "parenthetical reference" or "parenthetical citation" when we put the two pieces of information inside a set of parentheses. However, as the discussion above should make clear, this is not the only format for presenting an in-text reference.

WHY ARE IN-TEXT OR PARENTHETICAL REFERENCES NEEDED?
To be fair to your sources, and to avoid plagiarism, you must acknowledge any borrowed material in your paper and give credit to the source you're borrowing from. An in-text reference is a shorthand link to a more complete description of the source in your works-cited list.

HOW DOES AN IN-TEXT REFERENCE RELATE TO THE WORKS-CITED LIST?
The in-text reference is an abbreviated or shorthand reference that directs your reader to the list of your **works cited** at the end of the paper. The works-cited page is organized alphabetically and contains a more detailed description of each of the sources cited in your paper. From this detailed, more complete reference, your reader will be able to find the source for him/herself. For the examples above, the complete reference on the list of works cited would look like this:

> Mercer, Isaac. "Sleep Deprivation in Students." *Student Medical*, 2.4 (2015): 204–210.

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[1] Adapted in part from Jane E. Aaron's *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook*, 7th Edition. Boston: Longman/Pearson, 2011.

TWO OR THREE AUTHORS: If your source has two or three authors, always include all their last names in your text. Again, there are two ways you can do this, and the *words in italics* in the examples pick out the required citation information:

> According to *Strike and Moss*, "Colleges and universities have sometimes tried to foster more inclusive communities by teaching courses on racism or by promoting other forms of instruction" (*41*).

> In attempts "to ban hate speech" colleges have written "regulations that assume that what is important is not *what* is said (the content of the speech), but the *manner* in which it's said" (*Strike and Moss 41*).

MORE THAN THREE AUTHORS: When the source has more than three authors, you can choose either to give all the authors' names or to just give the first author's last name plus "et al." (Latin for "and others") with no punctuation in between.

> *Deng et al.* describes one of the lost boys of Sudan as he explained that, although his father tried to comfort him, "his talk frightened me and I had nightmares. I kept seeing those lights glowing in the bush" (*39*).

> Increased competition means that employees of public relations firms may find their loyalty stretched in more than one direction (*Cameron, Wilcox, Reber, and Shin 417*).

GROUP AS AUTHOR: Some works are produced by a government body, committee, company, or other group and don't name any individuals as authors. Cite this kind of source by the organization's name:

> A 2008 report by the *Hawaii Department of Education* provides evidence of an increase in graduation rates (*12*).

NO NAMED AUTHOR: For a source with no named author or editor, use a full or shortened version of the title of the work:

> One article notes that a death-row inmate may demand his own execution to achieve a fleeting notoriety (*"Right" 16*).

> *"The Right to Die"* notes that a death-row inmate may demand execution to achieve a fleeting notoriety (*16*).

NO PAGE NUMBERS: When you cite a specific passage from a work, such as an Internet source, that has no page, paragraph, or other reference numbers, your in-text reference might include only the author or authors' names. However, if the source has any kind of internal locational system, such as numbered paragraphs or section headings, then use those internal numbers or headings in place of page numbers:

> Twins reared apart report similar feelings (*Palfrey, pars. 6-7*).

> According to the Bible, at Babel God "did … confound the language of all the earth" (*Gen. 11.9*).

MLA SAMPLE LIST OF WORKS CITED

Works Cited

Becker, John E. "Science and the Sacred: From Walden to Tinker Creek." Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea 62 (1989): 400-13.

Dillard, Annie. Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. New York: Harper, 1974.

Johnson, Sandra Humble. The Space Between: Literary Epiphany in the Work of Annie Dillard. Kent: Kent State UP, 1992.

McIlroy, Gary. "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek and the Social Legacy of Walden." South Atlantic Quarterly 85.2 (1996): 111-16.

Suh, Grace. "Ideas Are Tough, Irony Is Easy." Yale Herald Online 4 Oct. 2005. 22 Jan. 2006 <http://yaleherald.com/archive/xxii/10.4.05/ae/dillard.html>.

Welty, Eudora. Rev. of Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, by Annie Dillard. New York Times Book Review 24 Mar. 1974: 36-37. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. ProQuest. Santa Clara U, Orradre Lib. 20 Jan. 2006 <http://proquest.umi.com>.