

In-Text Citation Basic Format

A sentence with a quote has three components: the signal phrase, the quote, and the in-text citation. You can also follow the quote with your own words, but for simplicity we will just consider a quote with a signal phrase followed by an in-text citation for now.

The signal phrase is a signal to your reader that a quote is coming up. You can and should vary your phrasing, but I am using the most basic format here:

#1: The Signal Phrase:

According to Chesterton,

#2: The Quote:

“The point of the story is not that a man can cut himself off from his conscience, but that he cannot”

Note that I did *not* include a period after the quote. You save that for after the in-text citation (unless it is a special punctuation mark such as an exclamation point or a question mark).

#3: The In-text Citation (usually indicates the page number that the quote appears on):

(184).

Notice that I did not include the author’s name in the citation, as I have already mentioned it in my signal phrase. Note: MLA currently states that if the author’s name is mentioned in the signal phrase that the citation is optional, but I do still like to see them.

Now let’s put all these parts together for a properly formatted quote with a signal phrase and an in-text citation. I’ve color-coded them in order to help us distinguish the three components. Write yours in black, please:

According to Chesterton,

“The point of the story is not that a man can cut himself off from his conscience, but that he cannot”

(184).

All together, it looks like this:

According to Chesterton, “The point of the story is not that a man can cut himself off from his conscience, but that he cannot” (184).

This would be the Works Cited entry for the quote above:

Chesterton, G.K. “The Real Stab of the Story.” *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, edited by Katherine Linehan, W.W. Norton, 2003.

If you are quoting from an online source that does not use page numbers, simply give the author’s last name in the in-text citation. If you do not know who the author is, provide an abbreviated form of the article title in quotation marks:

One critic states, “Jekyll can be viewed as one side of a person with multiple personality disorder” (“Split Personality”).

Contributed by: Elliot Hearst. “Basic In-text Citation Formatting and Works Cited Pages”