PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION – MLA STYLE

In a report or manuscript that contains a number of source references, the “Works Cited” list at the end of your paper is an acknowledgement of the sources of your information, but the list itself does not necessarily provide specific documentation. You must indicate to your readers not only the sources you used in writing the paper but also exactly what you derived from each source and exactly where in the source you found the material.

1. At the appropriate point in the main text, supply the author’s last name and the appropriate page number in parentheses. The reader who wants more complete information can consult the full entry in the bibliography.
   
   Example:
   According to a fine book on time management (Bittel 27), your ability to manage time depends in part on the way you experience the passage of time.

   NOTE: MLA uses the author’s last name followed by the page number, without a comma or a “p,” as shown in the example above. Find out from your instructor what is expected in your situation. If you use a source that has two or three authors, follow this example: (Bittel and Jones 54) or (Bittel, Jones, and Smith 47). If a source has more than three authors: (Bittel et al. 95).

2. If any of the data called for in a source reference are already provided in the main text, there is no need to repeat them in the textnote. For example, if the author’s name and/or the publication’s title already appear in the main text, give only the page number in parentheses.
   
   Example:
   Lester R. Bittel, in his fine book Right on Time! (27) says that . . .

3. If the bibliography lists more than one publication by the same author, the parenthetical documentation uses an abbreviated title or the year of publication to indicate which publication is being referred to.
   
   Example:
   . . . according to a fine book on time management (Bittel, Time 27).

4. If the bibliography lists two or more authors with the same last name, use each author’s first name or initial along with the last name.
   
   Example:
   . . . according to a fine book on time management (L. Bittel 27).
5. Place the parenthetical reference where a pause would naturally occur – preferably at the end of the sentence – and as near as possible to the material being documented. Place end punctuation after the parenthetical reference.

   **Example:**
   High software prices are a problem for students (Lee 15).

**NOTE:** A reference directly after a quotation follows the closing quotation mark.

   **Example:**
   In the late Renaissance, Machiavelli contended that human beings were by nature “ungrateful” and mutable” (1240), “and Montaigne thought them “miserable and puny” (1343).

6. If the quotation is set off from the text, type a space after the concluding punctuation mark of the quotation and insert the parenthetical reference.

   **Example:**
   John K. Mahon adds a further insight to our understanding of the War of 1812:

   Financing the war was very difficult at the time. Baring Brothers, a banking firm of the enemy country, handled routine accounts for the United States overseas, but the firm would take on no loans. (385)

7. If you quote more than once from the same page within a single paragraph – and no quotation from another source intervenes – you may give a single parenthetical reference after the last quotation.

   **Example:**
   Is Oedipus a tragic hero? According to Laurence Perrine’s six criteria, he is. Perrine says first “The tragic hero is a man of noble stature.” Oedipus is that if nothing else. . . . Perrine offers a second criteria: “Though the tragic hero is preeminently great, he is not perfect” (1016).

8. For Internet sources, place the electronic page number as follows:

   **Example:**
   That the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were originally intended to be heard rather than read is the first thing new readers need to know about the poems (Fry, electronic page 5 of 7).