

How (and Why) to Make Parenthetical Citations: Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism means taking the ideas of another person and presenting them as your own ideas. Plagiarism is considered to be a form of theft. If you are caught, the penalties can be severe: receiving no credit for a project, a failing grade for a class, expulsion from college, or even the loss of a job. (In 2003, a newspaper reporter was caught plagiarizing in the articles he wrote for *The New York Times*. He was fired and his reputation as a reporter was ruined. It is doubtful that any other newspaper or magazine will hire him as a reporter.)

To avoid plagiarism, you must let the reader know where you found the information that you use in your paper! Parenthetical citations are an easy way to make this clear to your reader.

Parenthetical citations are used whenever:

- ✓ You use a direct quotation from another source
- ✓ You paraphrase information from another source
- ✓ You summarize information from another source

A parenthetical citation often looks something like this: (Stein 60). It usually lists just the author's last name and the page number where the information is located. (Exceptions will be described below.) It is kept as brief as possible. The parenthetical citation gives the information that the reader needs to find complete publication information on the Works Cited page.

Examples of Parenthetical Citations

The parenthetical citation should be located close to the information to which it is referring. It is placed just before the period at the end of the sentence. The example below shows a paraphrase from a magazine article by Joel Stein:

The legal systems of several states are starting to recognize pets as companions rather than property. City councils have started listening as pet owners demand more pet-friendly facilities (Stein 60).

Sometimes you can work the author's name into the text of the paragraph to make your writing flow more smoothly. In this case, you do not repeat the author's name in the parenthetical citation; just put the page number.

Stein notes that the legal systems of several states are starting to recognize pets as companions rather than property. City councils have started listening as pet owners demand more pet-friendly facilities (60).

No Author's Name - If there is no author's name, list the title of the work, followed by the page number:

Contrary to popular belief, the literacy rate in the United States of America is not 100% (Almanac of the World 167).

Two Authors for a Single Source - If you are citing a source that has two authors, include them both in the parenthetical citation.

"Computer programming languages have changed dramatically over the last decade, but C++ will never become obsolete" (Wade and Giles 10).

Two or More Titles by One Author - If you are using several different works by the same author, include a recognizable part of the title in the parenthesis.

"...don't be a wet blanket, man, *this is 1928*. Even the garbage collector has got the goods on an 'inside tip,' and he can tell you a sure way to make some heavy sugar--fast" (Smith The Roaring Twenties 168). By 1932, this view of the stock market had changed to a more negative one (Smith The Whimpering Thirties 35).

More than One Source - If you are using two sources in the same sentence, cite both of them.

Many leading experts in the field of education agree that simply adding more days to the school year will not increase student achievement unless the curriculum is changed and made more interesting and relevant to students (Williams 47; Sonoma 103).

Using Several Pages from One Source - If you are citing separate parts of a single work in one sentence list the page numbers after the author's name.

Unfortunately, scientists have not yet discovered a way to prove, beyond all doubt, that global warming is caused by emissions from factories and exhaust fumes from automobiles (Gasper 23, 59-60).

Source Has No Page Numbers - Some sources do not have page numbers, most web pages, for example. When making a parenthetical citation for this source, just use the author's last name, or the title of the page if there is no author, without page numbers.

In less than ten years, all banking will be done online (Wells).

In the slang of the 1920s, a "face stretcher" meant an older woman who was trying to look younger ("It's All News").

Sample Paragraphs With Parenthetical Citations

Sample #1:

In studying the influence of Latin American, African, and Asian music on modern American composers, music historians tend to discuss such figures as Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, Henry Cowell, and John Cage (Joel 14; Diamond 104-139). They usually overlook Duke Ellington, who Gunther Schuller rightly calls “one of American’s great composers, probably because they are only familiar with Ellington’s most popular works like “Sophisticated Lady” and “Mood Indigo” (John 203). Still little known are the many ambitious orchestral suites Ellington composed, several of which “explore his impressions of the people, places, and music of other countries (“Global Outreach” 89).

Not all music critics, however, have ignored Ellington’s excursions into longer musical forms. In the 1950s, for example, while Ellington was still alive, Raymond Horricks compared him with Ravel, Delius, and Debussy (59).

Sample #2:

A robot is a mechanical device that operates by following a program or set of instructions that specifies its task (“Robots” 38). These instructions are stored in a computer. By changing the program, a person can alter the robot’s behavior. Thus, according to one report, a robot is “a computer to which limbs, organs, tools, and other equipment have been attached” (Barrett 37).

The rapid advance of electronics during and after World War II and the development of the tiny computer microchip in the late 1950s provided the technology necessary to help inventor George J. Devol, Jr. create the first practical robot. Hardly resembling its science-fiction ancestors, this robot was a computerized arm that could perform routine operations with precision (Asimov Science 865).

Like Devol’s early models, the majority of today’s robots are stationary structures made up of a single arm. The arm can lift objects and use simple tools (Asimov, Guide 35). It is ideal for assembly lines in factories.

Sample of a Student-Written Research Paper

Traditional Ethics and Modern Society

American people have so many problems that they seem overwhelming sometimes. Drug abuse, the high divorce rate, intolerance, and war--all these challenge American citizens. We try counseling and read a number of self-help books to figure out how we can overcome these unhealthy behaviors. These problems would be easier to fix if we started applying the ethics followed by traditional American Indians. Several of their ethics would help America become a better place to live.

By respecting ourselves and others, we would not see so many examples of common conditions of anorexia and depression and acts of hate crimes. Unfortunately, "About one out of every one hundred young women between ten and twenty are starving themselves, sometimes to death," a reality in our country (Manning 45). If young girls respected their bodies, they would see themselves as just right; therefore, they would not put themselves through physical torture to receive attention from someone else. Another problem area is that "17.5 million Americans suffer from clinical depression" ("Out of Control" 19). If we respected ourselves enough to seek help when we feel depressed, we would feel less helpless and controlled by our limitations. Finally, if everyone respected other's rights, we would see fewer statistics like "in the year 2000, 8,063 hate crimes were committed in the U.S." ("Hate Crimes" 3). If everyone respected another individual's rights, no one would need to fear being beaten or killed just because s/he is different from others. If Americans started respecting each other, these common problems would dwindle.

Secondly, if people "lived more as a community," suicide, school shootings, and rape would be greatly reduced. It is sad that "an average of one person every 17.1 minutes kills himself" (Peters 24). Suicide would not be necessary if we "lived as a community" because we would feel loved and would know who to go to for help and support. In addition, last year "students 12-18 were victims of more than 2.7 million total crimes at school" (Jones 190). If we accepted everyone into our school communities, students would not be shoved to the side, bullied, or harangued; therefore, no one would need to take revenge or act out his anger. Another serious problem is revealed by crime studies at Washington University which show that "22% of all women say they have been forced to do sexual things against their will, where only 3% of men

admit to ever forcing themselves on a woman" (Laumann 23). If communities felt responsible for their members, men would protect women from being mistreated sexually, and eventually, rape would be eliminated. So many individually demeaning crimes would not occur in American society if we supported each other.

Finally, the problems that result from debt, stress, and rage would be minimized if we acted with the ethic of "knowing our boundaries." An example is "that America is in debt by \$862 billion dollars" (Robinson). If people spent their money wisely as opposed to irresponsibly, they would not slip into debt and could manage their money more effectively. Another problem that has many effects is stress. An American Medical Association pamphlet cites stress "as linked to the six leading causes of death--heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide" (Miller 60). If we would not take on more than we can handle, we would not suffer so much from stress. We would be able to make time to relax by knowing our limits. Another frightening problem is "Men's violence against women and children is the most common form of domestic violence in our society" (Center for Family 35). If men recognized their boundaries, they would not allow themselves to get to the point that they explode against their loved ones. If Americans learned their boundaries and limits, we would be able to avoid problems caused by the stresses of life that we don't control.

If we seriously lived with these Sacred Tree ethics, America would be a more pleasant and safe place to live and raise our children. It would be a challenge at first to follow these simple, people-oriented ethics, but once we did, we would begin to see drastic changes for the better. By applying these ethics one at a time as Benjamin Franklin did with his thirteen virtues, we could learn to live by them gradually. Are we strong enough to take on this challenge to change? I hope so.