

MLA Documentation
BCWC (Bridgewater College Writing Center) Handout

Documentation means:

- 1) Showing in your text that information comes from a source; in MLA format, cite author's last name and page number in parentheses, like this:
(Krakauer 15).
- 2) Including all sources in a list at the end of the paper (a bibliography); in MLA format, the list is called Works Cited, and the author's name, title of the work, city of publication, publishing company, and date are shown for a book entry, followed by the word "Print."
Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York: Random House/Anchor, 1996. Print.

What should you document?

- 1) Factual information;
- 2) Quotation (which means you are using the author's exact words);
- 3) Paraphrase (which means you have put a passage into your own words);
- 4) Sometimes, summary (which means you have put a passage into your own words in shortened form).

Examples:

Contrary to the prevalent assumption that Chris McCandless poisoned himself by mistaking the wild sweet pea for the edible wild potato, he appears to have died from mold on the seeds of the safe plant (Krakauer 194).

When the Datsun was flooded, Chris McCandless "was exhilarated" because he "saw the flash flood as an opportunity to shed unnecessary baggage" (Krakauer 29).

[Note that no comma is used before the quoted words when you weave them into your sentence.]

Note: When you use the author's name to introduce the information or quotation, put only the page number in parentheses.

Examples:

Krakauer reports that Chris McCandless did not see or speak to any human being for thirty-six days when he canoed from Arizona into Mexico (36).

According to Krakauer, "The trip was to be an odyssey in the fullest sense of the word, an epic journey that would change everything" (22).

Krakauer comments on the silence of the area where Chris McCandless camped in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park: "Only the rattle of the wind interrupts the spectral quiet" (49).

[Note that when a whole statement is used to introduce a quotation (Krakauer comments on the silence of the area where Chris McCandless camped in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park), a colon, not a comma, is used before the quotation, which is also a whole statement.

A long quotation should be indented from the left margin. A long quotation, in MLA format, is a quotation of four lines or more. When a quotation is indented, punctuate the end of the sentence at the end of the quotation before adding the parenthetical citation. No period is placed after the parenthetical citation.

Example of a paraphrase:

Chris McCandless completed his college education out of a sense of duty to his parents. Once he accomplished that, he felt free to escape from his parents' and classmates' confining life. They valued a life of ideas, money, and possessions, but he felt that their lifestyle separated him from the reality of living in the world (Krakauer 22).

Original:

"He had spent the previous four years, as he saw it, preparing to fulfill an absurd and onerous duty: to graduate from college. At long last he was unencumbered, emancipated from the stifling world of his parents and peers, a world of abstraction and security and material excess, a world in which he felt grievously cut off from the raw throb of existence" (Krakauer 22).

INADEQUATE PARAPHRASE (PLAGIARISM):

Chris McCandless spent four years fulfilling an absurd duty, to graduate from college. At last he was freed from his parents' stifling world of abstraction, security, and excess, where he was cut off from raw existence.

BC Plagiarism Policy: Follow the link from the Writing Center page.

Other Sources: Entries in Works Cited

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008. Print.

This is a book.

Johnson, Kirk. "The Mountain Lions of Michigan." *Endangered Species Update* 19.2 (2002): 27-31.

Expanded Academic Index. Web. 26 Nov. 2008.

This is an article from a periodical found in a subscription database.

Shumaker, Peggy. "Moving Water, Tucson." *Short Takes*. Ed. Judith Kitchen. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005. 19-20. Print.

This is a short text included in an anthology, or collection of texts by various authors.

Paulson, Steve. "Buddha on the Brain." *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group, 27 Nov. 2006. Web. 18 Jan. 2009.

This is an article from a Web-based periodical.

Ryan, Katy. "Revolutionary Suicide in Toni Morrison's Fiction." *African American Review* 34.3 (2000): 389-412. Print.

This is an article from a print periodical.

Miller, Roger. "King of the Road." *CowboyLyrics.com* 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2011.

This is a web page that publishes song lyrics.

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. *Drinking Water Standards*. EPA, 8 July 2004. Web. 24 Jan. 2005.

This is a Webpage with an organization as the author.

Penn, Sean, dir. *Into the Wild*. Perf. Emile Hirsch, Vince Vaughn, Catherine Keener, Marcia Gay Harden, and William Hurt. Paramount, 2008. DVD.

This is a DVD.