**MLA In-text Citation Steps for Quoting or Paraphrasing**

Every time that you quote directly or paraphrase, you must include four separate steps.

1. **Signal Phrase.** Write a phrase that will tell your reader that you are introducing someone else's words and/or ideas into your paper. A signal phrase is usually a short phrase rather than a complete sentence, and it must always be your original writing, not copied from another source. Most often, a signal phrase is separated from the quotation or paraphrase by a comma. If the signal phrase is a complete sentence, then you will separate it from the quotation or paraphrase with a semi-colon.

2. **The Quotation or Paraphrase.** Direct quotations must be inside quotation marks, and paraphrases must not be inside quotation marks. Be very careful about getting the quotation marks in the right place. A mistake here is very serious.

3. **MLA In-text Citation.** The MLA in-text citation should be a parenthesis with the author's last name and the numerical page reference inside it. If you do not know the author's last name, include the underlined title of the article or book instead. If the source is electronic, then you will have no page number to include, so you skip it.

4. **Sentence of Interpretation.** Finally, you must finish your citation by telling your reader what you think of the ideas in the quotation or paraphrase. Like the signal phrase, the sentence of interpretation must always be your own original work, never copied. You can indicate your support of the idea, or you can demonstrate how the idea has been disproven over time, or you can explain that the idea doesn't really make any sense. As the title suggests, your sentence of interpretation must be a complete and correct sentence.

**Sample--**

A study of American culture may prove that "life in the USA is always a matter of change and progress, even when the change is negative and the progress is backward" (Amundsen 47). Americans value speed and the future above all other qualities.

**Sample broken into four steps--**

A study of American culture may prove that **[signal phrase]**

"life in the USA is always a matter of change and progress, even when the change is negative and the progress is backward" **[quotation]**

(Amundsen 47). **[in-text citation]**

Americans value speed and the future above all other qualities. **[sentence of interpretation]**