MLA Citation Handout
Updated February 1st, 2020

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Introduction
The Modern Language Association’s MLA citation format is one of the most commonly used citation styles in academic writing. It is primarily used in English, humanities, and literature studies.

In MLA, sources are cited in two places: within the body of your paper as an in-text citation and as a full citation in a Works Cited list at the end of your paper.

This handout is a brief summary of the 8th edition of MLA and is designed to provide some practical examples of the most commonly used sources. For complete information about citing and integrating sources, please refer to the MLA Handbook (8th edition) or speak to a librarian or Learning Center writing tutor.

REMEMBER:
Your professors have the final word about how they want to see citations formatted!

No online or computerized citation tool is perfect. It is up to you to check the accuracy of your citations before submitting research papers or other class assignments.

If you need help, contact:
the Learning Center
tutoring@northampton.edu
www.northampton.edu/learningcenter

the NCC Libraries
askthelibrarian@northampton.edu
www.northampton.edu/library
Core Elements and Guidelines for All Citations
The 8th edition of MLA provides a set of guidelines for citing sources across all format types, known as core elements, that should be included in the citation on the works cited page, if they are provided by the source. If any of the following information is not provided or it doesn’t apply to the source you’re citing, you may omit that element in your citation.

1. Author  
person or organization that created the source

List the author’s last name, followed by a comma, then their first name (Last Name, First Name).

2 authors: invert only the first author’s name, followed by a comma. The other author’s names are listed (first name last name) in the same order they appear on the title page.

3 or more authors: the first author’s name is followed by et al. (meaning “and others”).

No Author: alphabetize by the first word in the title, ignore A, An, or The.

Editor: if the editor did not create the main content, follow the name with a label describing their role. For two or more individuals, see the guidelines above and pluralize the role.

Corporate Authors: list as the author in the citation, if the publisher is a separate organization. When an organization is both the author and publisher, begin the entry with the title, skip the author element, and list the organization as publisher. Example: United States, Department of Labor.

2. Title of Source  
specific name of source, such as book, article, chapter, episode title

State titles fully in the works cited, including subtitles. Capitalize each word, but not a, an, the, conjunctions (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet), or prepositions (against, as, between, etc.), unless they are the first word of the title or follow a colon in a title. Do not reproduce any special capitalization or lowercasing of all letters if it appears on the source.

Major works such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers, films, and web sites are italicized.

Minor works, such as articles contained in other sources, are in quotation marks.

Titles beginning with numbers: The title should be alphabetized as if the numeral were spelled out. For example, 1914: The Coming of the First World War would be alphabetized as if it began Nineteen-Fourteen...

3. Title of Container  
when a source is part of a larger whole, the whole is the container

Containers include books that are collections or anthologies, periodicals like journals, magazines, or newspapers, or Web sites that contains articles or postings. You may have a second container such as a database or platform.

4. Other Contributors  
any editors, directors, translators, narrators, or performers

5. Version  
edition [updated, expanded, 7th, etc.], cut [film], version [King James]
6. Number  volume and issue number, typical for newspapers, magazines, and journals.

Use the abbreviations, vol. for volume and no. for issue number.

7. Publisher  organization responsible for producing the source

Publisher is not listed in the cases of newspaper, magazines, journals, or web sites with titles that are the name of the publisher.

Organization is also the author: begin the entry with the title, skip the author element, and list the organization as publisher only.

Business words like Company (Co.), Corporation (Corp.), Incorporated (Inc.), etc. are omitted.

University presses are abbreviated with U for university and P for press. Example: U of Pennsylvania P.

City of publication is not required.

8. Publication Date  date that the source/container was published

Dates should be given as fully as they appear in the source.

Months should be abbreviated except for May, June, and July.

Use the day month year style (19 Mar. 2002).

Seasons are included and capitalized when part of a publication date (Spring 2007).

9. Location  page number, chapter, section, DOI, website URL, or permalink

Page number(s) are preceded by a p. for one page or pp. for a range of pages.

A second container, if any, would be placed after the page numbers.

Online sources should include the digital object identifier (doi), or if the doi is not available, the URL.

- Omit the http:// or https:// from the beginning of the URL. Some instructors will ask for no URL or a shortened URL. Follow your instructor’s directions.
- If a database (like JSTOR), provides stable URLs or permalinks, they should be used.

Other information (date of original publication, city of publication, number of volumes, series name, type of work, prior publication, or date of access), is optional, but may be included if it helps in locating the source.

Example:
In-Text Citations

In-text citations should lead the reader to the full citation in your works cited page. Include an in-text citation whenever you use a quote or an idea from a text—even if you paraphrase or summarize the idea. When integrating in-text citations, do not disrupt the flow of your writing.

Typically, the in-text citation consists of the first element from the works cited entry and a page number in parentheses. Example: (Frey 54)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>How to Cite It</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quoting directly from the source</td>
<td>• place the in-text citation directly at the end of the sentence.</td>
<td>In this process, “learners may interpret or distort the new information,” despite their teacher’s intentions (Ormrod 36).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing or summarizing an idea from the source</td>
<td>• place the in-text citation as close as possible after the borrowed idea, at a natural pause in your sentence.</td>
<td>Survival is the ultimate goal for all forms of life (Canton 270), demonstrated by the behavior of parasitic organisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s name mentioned in your sentence</td>
<td>• provide the page number in parentheses. If you do not have page numbers, you do not need to put anything in parentheses.</td>
<td>As historian K. Theodore Hoppen notes, country doctors in England during the Victorian era were often not well respected (43).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple authors</td>
<td>• 2 authors: use the last names of each author.</td>
<td>(Carlson and Wilner 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 or more authors: use the last name of the first author followed by et al.</td>
<td>(Harris et al. 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page numbers</td>
<td>• if provided, include them to indicate where you found the information or quote.</td>
<td>(Marcus 134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbered paragraphs or sections, but no page numbers</td>
<td>• place a comma after the author’s last name, and use the paragraph or section numbers in place of a page number with the abbreviation “par. or pars.” or “sec. or secs.”</td>
<td>(Chan, par. 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No page numbers and no other numbers

- use the author’s last name

(Smith)

No author (source is listed by the title on the works cited)

- use the title or a shortened title, usually the first noun, noun phrase, or if not a noun, the first word.

(Reading 15)
(“The Story” 3)

Multiple sources by the same author

- place a comma after the author’s last name and include a shortened title.

(Hudson, “Creating” 89)

More than one author with same last name

- add the author’s first initial, or if the initial is also the same, the author’s full first name to distinguish between the two sources.

(J. King 378)

Citing multiple sources in the same citation

- within the parentheses, separate each source with a semi-colon.

(Carter 7; Jones 21)

Long (Block) Quotations

Direct quotations that are more than 4 lines of text should be set off in their own block of text. The full block quote should be ½ inch indented from the left margin. Do not use quotation marks. Insert the parenthetical citation after the concluding punctuation of the quotation.

Example:
Gatsby did just that, as described in the following passage:

The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (Fitzgerald 92)

Indirect Sources

Always try to cite information directly from the original source. If you must cite a source that was cited in another source, name the original source in your text and include the indirect source in parentheses with the abbreviation "qtd. in" (quoted in). List the indirect source in your works cited.

Example: (qtd. in Osmond 5).
Sample Works Cited Page Entries

**General Format:**
Author(s). *Title of Book*. Publisher, year of publication.

**Rules for Books:**
- Capitalize each word in the title of the book, but not *a, an, the* conjunctions or prepositions, unless they are the first word of the title or follow a colon in a title.
- Punctuation is important. Use periods, commas, colons, italics, and quotation marks as shown.

**Examples of Book Citations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book (single author)</td>
<td>Author. <em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↓            ↓   ↓     ↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book (two authors)</td>
<td>List authors’ names in the same order they appear on the book’s title page. Reverse only the name of the first author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author’s name, and Author’s Name. <em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↓     year of publication.    ↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Witte, Stephen P., and Lester Faigley. *Evaluating College Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book (three or more authors)</td>
<td>The first author’s name is followed by et al. (meaning “and others”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author, et al. <em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book without an author</td>
<td><em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Source</td>
<td>MLA Citation Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book with an editor and no author</td>
<td>Name of editor followed by “editor”. <em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book created by a group, government agency or other body with no individual’s name as author. (Corporate author)</td>
<td>Corporate author. <em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book both authored and published by an organization</td>
<td><em>Title of Book</em>. Publisher, year of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of a book, such as a chapter or entry</td>
<td>Author(s). “Title of Entry.” <em>Title of Book</em>, edited by Name(s), volume, Publisher, year, pages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Articles in Print Journals, Magazines, & Newspapers

General Format:
Author(s). “Title of Article.” Title of Periodical, volume, issue or number, publication date, page numbers.

Rules for Articles:
- Titles of articles or documents are placed in quotation marks. All major words are capitalized.
- Titles of journals, magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals are italicized, and all major words are capitalized.

Examples of Article Citations:

Articles in Scholarly/Peer-reviewed/Academic Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>“Title of Article.”</th>
<th>Title of Periodical</th>
<th>vol. x, no. x, publication year, pages.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Articles in Magazines


Articles in Newspapers

**Articles from Library Databases**

Most of the library databases will provide an MLA citation for each article. Check suggested citations, as they often need correcting.

**General Format:**
Author(s). “Title of Article.” Title of Periodical, volume, issue or number, publication date, page numbers. Name of Database, digital object identifier (doi) or URL.

**Examples of Citations for Articles from Databases:**

**Scholarly/Peer-reviewed/Academic Journal Articles from Databases:**


**Magazine Article from a Database:**


**Newspaper Article from a Database:**


**Viewpoint or Editorial from a Database**

Web Sites

General Format:
Author(s). “Title of Article.” Title of Web Site, date of article, web site url.

Note: Copy the url address directly from your web browser. Omit http:// or https://.

Examples of Web Site Citations:

Web Site (Whole site)

Author. Title of Web Site, date of website, web site url.

Farkas, Meredith. Information Wants to Be Free, June 2015, meredith.wolfwater.com.

Article (Web Page) on a Web Site

Author. “Title of Article.” Title of Web Site, date of article, web site url.


Examples of Other Types of Citations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE CITATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graph</td>
<td>“Table 311.80: Number and Percentage Distribution of Course Enrollments in Languages Other Than English at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Language and Enrollment Level: Selected Years, 2002 through 2013.” <em>Digest of Education Statistics</em>, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_311.80.asp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview, Published</td>
<td>Clinton, Hillary. Interview by George Stephanopoulos. <em>This Week</em>. ABC. WNEP, New York. 7 June 2009.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview, Personal</td>
<td>Johnson, Alex. Personal interview. 21 July 2019.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formatting Your Paper

✓ Every page needs a **1-inch margin**.

✓ **Double-space** every line for the entire document, including any long quotations and the citations on the Works Cited page.

✓ Use a readable font and size. Times New Roman, 12 pt is suggested.

✓ **Indent** the first line of every paragraph ½ inch from the left margin.

✓ **MLA does not require a title page**; instead, the first page of the paper should begin, underneath the header, with four lines, double-spaced, listing: your name, your instructor’s name, name of the course, and the date.

✓ **Page numbering**: Insert a header appearing on every page that includes your last name and the page number in the upper right hand corner, ½ inch from the top of the page.

The first page should look like this, unless your professor’s instructions direct you otherwise:

---

**Flower 1**

Dina Flower

Professor Vole

English 101, section 07


The Fishing Creek Confederacy

In 1846 the military occupation of Columbia County, Pennsylvania, began. The cause of this occupation was stated as a Copperhead movement in the area (“Copperheads” 421). Insurgents “had erected a fort...they had field-pieces or cannon, and ...refugees from Canada and deserters from other sections had joined them in considerable forces” (Freeze 401). The formation of this movement was a significant stage in Columbia County history.

*Here, the student’s name is Dina Flower, her instructor is Professor Vole, and the course is English 101.*
Formatting the Works Cited Page

- Separate page at the end of the paper.
- Maintain 1-inch margins, double-spacing, page numbering and the header from the paper’s main body.
- Center the words “Works Cited” at the top of the page.
- If a citation takes up more than one line of the page, indent the remaining line(s) ½ inch from the left margin using a hanging indent.
- Alphabetize entries by author’s last name. If there is no author, alphabetize by the first word in the source’s title other than A, An, or The.

An MLA-style works cited page looks like this:


All entries are double-spaced.
Additional MLA Citation Help Resources


*The MLA Style Center*
https://style.mla.org/

*Ask the MLA FAQ*
https://style.mla.org/category/ask-the-mla/

*Behind the Style Blog*
https://style.mla.org/category/behind-the-style/

*Purdue Online Writing Lab MLA Style*
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html