Documenting in the MLA Style

Introduction

In most of the Humanities, the MLA (Modern Language Association) style is the preferred method of documentation. MLA style requires two parts: 1) a works-cited list at the end of the text to give detailed information about all sources used and 2) parenthetical citations within the text to identify source material found in the works-cited list. In addition, all sources in the works-cited list must have citations in the paper; conversely, all parenthetical citations must have corresponding entries listing bibliographic data in the works-cited list.

Since there are so many possible ways to retrieve source information and new mediums arising all the time, the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook, published in 2016, takes a new approach to citing. You no longer have to determine "what kind of source" you have. You simply have to gather information that is common for most sources and record it in a consistent manner.

These primary elements will assist you in creating the works-cited list.

Author. Title of source. Title of container, Other Contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

The overall goal is to give credit to your sources and provide your reader with enough information to access the source.

For further information about MLA style beyond what is covered in this handout, we recommend the Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab):

- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/,
- as well as the MLA's own Style Center at https://style.mla.org/.

Guidelines for MLA Works-Cited List— Writing this first.

Why create the works-cited list before the in-text parenthetical citations in your paper? The answer is simple. The information found at the **beginning of the citation** (along the left hand margin) in the works-cited entry will be the identifying information used in your in-text citation. Thus, it makes sense to create the works-cited list first so you will know what to put in the parenthetical citation in the body of the paper.

General format for Works Cited page

1. Number the works-cited page as you would all other pages. For example, if your text ends on page 5, your works-cited page begins on page 6. Center the heading **Works Cited** (no bold, though) above the list. **Do not use bold print, italics, or quotation marks, and capitalize only the *W* and the *C*.**
2. Double-space the works-cited entries with no extra spaces between the entries. Begin the first line of each entry at the left margin, and indent subsequent lines ½ inch.
3. Alphabetize the entries by the first word of the entry, commonly an author's last name. However, if the entry begins with a title instead, ignore *A*, *An*, or *The* and alphabetize by the first letter of the next word. If the title begins with a numeral, for instance 2016, alphabetize as if the number were spelled out, in this case T, as in Two Thousand Sixteen or Twenty Sixteen.

As explained above, the citations for the works-cited list should be created using these commonly found source elements **in this order with corresponding punctuation**:

Author. Title of source. Title of container, Other Contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

Special notes

- Be sure to collect this information from the source itself, not from citations you may find elsewhere, for instance in a database record. That information could be incorrect.
- However, some sources will not provide all this information. <u>You may skip elements if information is not available</u>. Please don't assume an element does not exist. If you feel an element is needed to locate the source, please look for it.

Element #1   AUTHOR.

Designating Author name(s)

1. **Work with one author**--Author's last name first, followed by a comma, and the rest of the name. End with a period.
    <u>Example:</u> Smith, John.

2. **Work with two authors**--Give first author's name as instructed above (see work with one author), followed by a comma, the word ***and***, then the second name in **traditional order**. End with a period.

<u>Example:</u> Smith, John, and Peter Adams.

<u>Note:</u> Present the names in the order they are given; in other words, do not alphabetize the names, for example listing Adams first because it begins with A and Smith last because it begins with an S.

3. **Work with three or more authors**--Give the name of the first author as described above (see work with one author),   followed by a comma, and *et al.* End with a period.
<u>Example:</u> Smith, John, et al.

4. **Work with editor(s)**--One editor: Smith, John, editor.   More than one editor, end with a period:
<u>Example:</u> Smith, John, et al., editors.

5. **For more than one work by the same author**, alphabetize the second entry (immediately below the first) according to title. Instead of repeating the author's name, type three hyphens and a period before the title, as in the following <u>example</u>:
Murray, Donald. "The Essential Delay: . . .   (First source by Murray; title begins with *E*).

---. *Write to Learn* . . . (Second source by Murray; title begins with *W*.)

Special situations: What if there is no author?

- Corporate Author. If there is no author, perhaps the author is a corporation, organization, government agency or institution. If the organization and publisher are not the same, use the organization's name in the author position. Always omit the word *The* in the entry. If the organization and publisher are the same, skip the author designation and begin the entry with the next requirement on the list, which is the title of the work.
- No author or corporate author. If there is no author or corporate author, begin the entry with the next requirement on the list, which is the title of the work. Do not begin the entry with *Anonymous* as the author.
- Sometimes, such as in cases of films or videos, you might need to begin your entry with a director's or performer's name. In such cases, type the name as directed above (work with one author) followed by his or her title, for example director or actor.
- For a Twitter entry, when a name is not given, begin the entry with the person's screen name, for instance @johnsmith.
- The title for a class lecturer is the instructor and the title of a personal interview is the name of the person interviewed.
- Do not list an author as *Anonymous.*

Element #2   TITLE OF SOURCE.

There are two types of sources you will commonly encounter:

1. A self-contained, independent work such as a book or a complete website.
2. A smaller work found in a larger work (Container #1). **If your source is a work within another work**, for example articles, essays, poems, and stories found in larger works or parts of or posts on websites, Element #2 is the title of the smaller work within the larger one (the title of the larger work will be listed in Element #3). For example, if you have an article titled "Helping Students with MLA Citing" published in a periodical titled *College Student Journal*, you would list the title of the article as Element #2.

Designating Titles
1. For all titles, copy word for word using standard, traditional capitalization. A subtitle is preceded by a colon.
2. For **self-contained, independent works**, use **italics** (no underlining).
3. For **smaller sources** within larger works, use **quotation marks.**
4. Follow the title with a period.

Special situations

- What if there is no official title? If there is no title, write a short description of the work. Capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns. Do not enclose the description in quotation marks or use italics.
- If referring to a comment on an online posting, include a reference to the original work, for example, Comment on "Helping Students with MLA Citing."
- The title of a Tweet should be the message itself, verbatim as printed, in quotation marks.
- The title of an email is the subject line, verbatim, in quotation marks with traditional capitalization.
- The title of a personal interview is Personal interview, no quotation marks or italics.

Element #3   TITLE OF CONTAINER #1

(See below—after Element #9--for Container #2 or Container in a Container)

Containers are larger works which hold smaller works. Here we are designating Container #1, for example titles of anthology books holding collections, periodicals holding articles, websites containing articles and postings, or even a television series with multiple episodes.

Designating Titles of Containers
1. For all titles, copy word for word using standard, traditional capitalization. A subtitle is preceded by a colon.
2. Use *italics* for titles (no underlining).
3. Titles of containers are usually followed by a comma, allowing more descriptive information about the container to follow.

Element #4 Other Contributors,	Sometimes there may be other people to acknowledge in addition to the author, for example editors, illustrators, narrators, directors, creators or the like.
	Designating Other Contributors
	1. Before each name, give function of contributor, for example edited by Paula Clark or created by Duncan Jones.
	2. End this element with a comma.
Element # 5 Version,	1. If the work lists a version or edition, list it here, for example unabridged version or 2nd ed.
	2. End this element with a comma.
Element #6 Number,	1. If the work includes both a volume and issue number, as with a periodical, give both as in vol. 128, no. 1. MLA no longer uses the format 128.1 as the descriptor. If the source is one of a numbered set of works, list the number, for example 2nd ed., vol. 2.
	2. End this element with a comma.
Element #7 Publisher	1. The publisher produces and distributes the source. A university press would be designated as Oxford, UP. If two or more entities are publishers, list all names separated by a forward slash, for example Bedford/St. Martins. A website may be published by an organization.
	2. End this element with a comma.
	Special note
	• There is no need to list a publisher for the following publications: periodical (journal, magazine, newspaper), self-published work, website whose name is the same as that of the publisher, databases such as *JSTOR, ProQuest* or other entities not involved in actually producing the work. (A database will be listed as Container #2 [Container within a container]—see page 4.)
Element #8 Publication date,	Look for publication date on the source. Oftentimes there will be more than one date, so use the one that is most closely related to the source you are using. For example, when using a print book, give the date the book was printed. However, if an online source gives the date of the online posting as well as the date of an original printing, give the online posting date because that is the source being used. If the date includes a month or a day as well as a year, give whatever information will be most helpful for the reader to locate the source. Periodicals often denote the time of year such as Spring or Winter, and this should be included if

present. Likewise, if a newspaper or website article includes a day along with the month and year, include that as well.

Designating Dates of Publication or date of live presentation or interview.

Dates should be written in this order: day, month, year.   Example 28 Dec. 2015. Months are abbreviated, followed by a period and no comma before the year.

1. End this element with a comma.

Element #9   Location.

This element designates where the source was found and depends on the type of source being used.

1. **Print source not found online.** If the source is a print source within a larger print work (a container), for example an essay in a book or an article from a periodical, include the page or page numbers. Use p. for one page and pp. for a range. Page numbers should be all inclusive, from the beginning to the end of the source (pp. 109-127), not just the specific pages from which the source information was taken.
2. **For online or database sources, see rules for Container #2**

Container #2

In many cases, a source will have two containers. When it does, then the "outer" container, which we'll also call "container #2," gets listed *after* element #9. For instance, suppose you wish to cite an article from an academic journal, and you located the article via an online database such as *JSTOR*. In that case, the title of the academic journal would be the inner container (container #1), while the name of the database would be the outer container (container #2). Other examples might include a post from a blog (container #1) in a network of blogs (container #2), an article from a book (container #1) found in a digital library (container #2), an episode from a television series (container #1) found via Hulu (container #2), and so forth.

After you list the "outer" container (container #2), add any information from elements 4-9 that pertains to container #2. In most cases the only information to add will be from element #9, location—the World Wide Web address for an online database such as *JSTOR*, for example.

Basic rules for web or online database sources.

Although choices are given here, MLA suggests always following instructor guidelines regarding how to cite online sources.

1. Use a DOI (digital object identifier) if provided. This is a number (beginning with 10.) that is attached to many electronic sources. DOI's should be written like this: doi: 10.xxxxxxxxx (Note it's doi, not DOI.)

DOI EXAMPLE from the MLA Handbook, eighth edition (48):

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 10, no.3, May 2000. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/pmc.2000.0021.

1. Use the URL or web address. An advantage of using a URL is that it may provide a hyperlink to the source. A disadvantage is that URLs become outdated, although a permalink is more stable and recommended.

WEB ADDRESS EXAMPLE from the MLA Handbook, eighth edition (48.):

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist—and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The Atlantic*, 28 Dec. 2014,

www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of--the - artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/.

DATABASE EXAMPLE from the MLA Handbook, eighth edition (32):

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2010,

pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

1. End this element with a **period, not a comma.**

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS
Even though these elements are optional, they may be needed for the reader to locate the source. When using an optional element, include the information within the corresponding core element.

a. Date of original publication
b. City of publication
c. Other facts such as information about multi-volume sources
d. Descriptive terms such as lecture or performance/address. When citing a lecture or a speech you attended, give as much information as possible about the event using the element. Then type Address at the end.
e. Prior publication formats
f. Date of access. **This is particularly important if the online URL is likely to change or if the source does not provide a publication date.** Use "Accessed on" if including the date.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS IN MLA STYLE

The intent of an in-text parenthetical citation is to guide readers to the entry on the works-cited page. Use parenthetical citations to identify each quotation, paraphrase, summary, or reference in your text. There are two parts to an in-text citation: 1) the element that comes first (along the left-hand margin) in the works-cited entry on the Works Cited page and 2) the page or paragraph number that corresponds to the information used.

1. Include the author's last name and page number for a print source or electronic source in PDF, placing the period or other appropriate punctuation mark AFTER the parentheses. If you are using an electronic source that provides paragraph numbers rather than page numbers, place a comma after the author's name and precede the paragraph number with the abbreviation *par.* or *pars.* If the source has no page or paragraph numbers, no number is given in the parenthetical citation. <u>Examples:</u>
   o Women's communication often reflects their role as mediators (Tannen 32). [print source or electronic PDF]
   o Women's communication often reflects their role as mediators (Tannen, par. 9). [electronic source with numbered paragraphs, not PDF]
   o Women's communication often reflects their role as mediators (Tannen). [no page or paragraph number provided by source]
2. If you mention the author's name in your text (for example in a signal phrase), include only the page or paragraph number (if present in the source) in your citation:
   o Tannen notes that women's communication often reflects their role as mediators (32).
3 If a quotation runs more than four lines, block the quotation by indenting all lines ½ inch from the left margin only. Double-space. Omit quotation marks. End blocked quotations with a period, then add parenthetical citation with no period after the parentheses.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS

1. For a source with no author, use the first significant word of the title by which you'll alphabetize your entry on the works-cited page. For example, "Hospitals Turn to Advertising" in the *New York Times* would be cited as ("Hospitals" 47) because "Hospitals" is used to begin the works-cited entry.
2. If your source has multiple authors, use the following guidelines. (Note the punctuation.)
   • for works with <u>one to two authors</u>, give the authors' last names in the order listed on the source:
      o (Raden and Green 41).   (Raden and Green, pars. 13-14). (Raden and Green).
   • for works with <u>three or more authors</u>, give the first author's last name followed by *et al.*   (Jacobs et al. 61).

3. If two or more of your sources are by the same author, place a comma after the author's name and add a shortened version of the title before citing the page number:
   - (Murray, "Essential" 221).
4. If your source is authored by a group (corporation, association, government agency, etc.), you may shorten terms that are commonly abbreviated: (Natl. Research Assn. 15). It is better to include a long name in the text so that the reading is not interrupted with an extended parenthetical reference:
   - E.g. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa predicts advancement within thirty years (12).
5. When using an indirect source—i.e. when quoting or paraphrasing an author who <u>has been **quoted** by another author</u>—indicate both names as follows:
   - (Goodman qtd. in Murray 207). On the works-cited page, include only your source, Murray.
6. If you wish to include two or more works in a single parenthetical citation, cite each work as you normally would and use a semicolon to separate the citations:
   - (Raden 38; Cramer, par. 16).
7. When citing a literary work, such as a novel, that is available in several editions, put a semicolon after the page number and add other identifying information, using appropriate abbreviation such as *ch.* for a chapter in a novel: (Twain 35; ch. 2). When citing classic verse plays or poems, omit page numbers altogether and cite by division (act, scene, book, part) and line, with periods separating the various numbers. In general, use Arabic numerals rather than roman numerals. For example, (*Iliad* 9.19) refers to book 9, line 19 of Homer's *Iliad*, or (*Hamlet* 1.5.35-37) refers to act 1, scene 5, lines 35-37 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
8. When citing time-based sources, cite the time by providing the hours, minutes, and seconds separated by colons:
   - ("Momma's House" 00:03:18-25).

GENERAL MLA ESSAY FORMAT	1. Double-space your entire text, including all block quotations and the Works Cited page, with no extra space before or after a title or between paragraphs.
	2. Headers: place a header (your last name plus page number) in the upper right-hand corner of each page (e.g. Smith 1), including the works-cited page.
	3. On the left-hand corner of the first page, type your name, your instructor's name, the course title, and the date on separate lines, double-spacing between the lines. Then enter the title of your text, centered, capitalizing the first word and all major words.

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Less Is More

In describing her writing process, author Ellen Goodman has said, "What makes me happy is rewriting. . . . It's like cleaning house, getting rid of all the junk, getting things in the right order, tightening things up" (qtd. in Murray, *Write* 207). Student writers should try to emulate Goodman's example, for as William Zinsser says in his book, *On Writing Well*, "Clutter is the disease of American writing" (7). Eliminating clutter and achieving conciseness is one goal of the revision process.

Two ways to reduce clutter are to cut every word that is unnecessary and to replace vague words with specific concrete words (Neeld, par. 36). Such cleaning up of prose has two results: precision and energy (Elbow 134). Marjorie Ford and John Ford expand upon this idea of energy in concise writing:

> The number of words in a sentence of a passage often makes the difference between writing that has a quick, witty, to-the-point feeling to it and writing that is dull and plodding. Thus one of the major principles of effective rewriting is the principle of economy in language: we might call it the "less is more" principle. (141)

In tight, concrete writing, less is more, for "two plus two equal seven—or eleven' (Murray, "Essential" 221).