What is MLA Style?

Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style is the formatting method used by academic humanities generally to help scholars lead one another to the sources they have used in their writing. Curious readers will want to find out more about the ideas in the papers they read, and having a consistent method for listing the path to each source helps those readers to efficiently look up the listed sources and find out more about the ideas touched on in the writing. Writers serve each other by doing their very best to leave a good trail to their sources.

In-Text Citations

Each time a source is quoted directly or paraphrased in a paper, it needs to be accurately cited in parentheses and then listed on the works cited page. Follow these basic guidelines when citing sources:

- Most in-text citations consist of the author’s last name and the page number where the information was found.
- If the author’s name is mentioned in the sentence, only include the page number in the citation.
- Always place quotation marks around direct quotes.
- Paraphrasing needs citation but not quotation marks.
- Citations go after quotation marks, but the period goes after the citation: “Put the period after the citation” (Smith 389).

Common Citations in the Text of a Paper

One Author

(Jackson 1).

Two Authors

(Jackson and Hess 239).

More Than Three Authors

(Jackson et al. 23).

No Author

(Use the first two or three words from title). “Black hair is better” (“Black Hair” 37).

More Than One Work by the Same Author

/Add title to citation). (Bartholomae, “Inventing the University” 635).

Indirect Sources

(qtd. in Neuhaus 65).

Works Cited

Each source that is quoted or paraphrased in a paper should be listed on the works cited page. Entries should be in alphabetical order, double spaced, and formatted with a hanging indent.


Books

Book with One Author


Book with Two or Three Authors


(Book with more than three authors, either list each author’s name or put et al. after the first author’s name.)

Book with an Editor or Translator


Work in an Anthology


Journal Article


Newspaper Article


Magazine Article


Personal Interview

Online Sources

There are a variety of useful resources available online. Before using online sources, confirming that the information is reputable and reliable is important. Because of the wide variety of material available electronically and online, citing and referencing can often be challenging and a little confusing. The following are examples of some possible references. It is important to note, however, that each element of a reference is not always available for each source.

Note: If the internet site or electronic source does not have all the necessary information, insert place markers: n. pag. for “no page,” n.p. for “no publisher,” or n.d. for “no date.”

Article in an Online Periodical
If the article you found online was also printed, first cite it like a printed article and then add information about the electronic version. The reference should include the following:

• Author’s name
• “The Title”
• Information about print publication
• Date of access


Article in an Online Newspaper
When citing a newspaper article that was found online, first cite the print information and then cite the electronic information. If page numbers are not available, use n. pag. (no page).


Website
Look for the following information about internet sites. If you cannot find everything, cite what is available and insert place markers (listed above) for unavailable information.

• Title of the site (italicized)
• Name of the publisher or sponsor
  Note: If not given, use n.p.
• Medium (Web)
• Date of access


Online Subscription Source
For online subscriptions, such as databases, begin with the standard information about print publication: author’s name, title, name of magazine/newspaper, and date. Then list electronic publication information.

• Name of the database
• Name of the service
• Date of access


Online Book
First list the information about the printed version (if given): author’s name, title, editor, and publication information. Then list electronic publication information.

• Title of internet site (italicized)
• Medium (Web)
• Date of access (ex: 23 Oct. 2010)


Corporate Authors

• When citing corporate authors omit any initial article; i.e., a, an, or the.
• Cite the book by the corporate author even if the corporate author is also the publisher.