Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation Style

Introduction

Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style is used primarily when writing papers in the fields of liberal arts and the humanities. This guide is based on the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th edition) and the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2nd edition).

MLA requires that sources be briefly cited in the text of the paper using author-page format. Complete citations should be given on a works cited page at the end of the paper. The following examples demonstrate how to cite sources within the text, as well as on the works cited page. If none of these examples seems appropriate, consult the *MLA Handbook*, available in the Missouri S&T Writing Center, 113 CSF.

In-Text Citations

In-text citations appear in the text of a paper following a direct quotation or paraphrase of another’s work, or when relying on or referring to another’s work. These citations direct the reader to a corresponding entry in a list of works cited where full bibliographic information is provided. The in-text citation appears in parentheses immediately after the quotation, paraphrase, or reference and generally includes the author’s last name and the page number, if available. If the author’s name is mentioned explicitly in the sentence containing the reference, the citation should include only the title or short title, if necessary, and the page number. In this case, if no page number is available, no in-text citation is provided as long as the reference to the source is clear enough that the reader can locate the source in the list of works cited.

Books (or Journal Articles) with One Author

Examples:

*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* begins with a description of the characters’ location, stating that they “were somewhere around Barstow, on the edge of the desert” (Thompson 1).

Thompson writes, “we were somewhere around Barstow, on the edge of the desert, when the drugs began to take hold” (1).

Books (or Journal Articles) with Two Authors

Example:

“…to fetch a pail of water” (Smith and Jones 1).

Multiple Citations: When citing multiple sources simultaneously, separate the citations with a semi-colon:

Example:

…and has been discussed elsewhere (Burke 3; Dewey 21).

Multiple Works by the Same Author: If the Works Cited list includes multiple works by the same author, differentiate among those works by including the source title in the citation. Begin the citation with the author’s name, followed by a comma, the title of the work, and the page number. If the title is long, use a shortened version of the title, but be sure the first word of the shortened version is the same as the word under which the work is alphabetized in the works cited list.

Examples:
The prisoner’s testimony was angry, incoherent, and rambling (Powers, *Tom and Huck*, 301).

Lightener has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children (“Too Soon” 38), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child’s second and third year (“Hand-Eye Development” 17).

**Anonymous Works/Author Unknown:** If an author’s name is unknown, use a shortened title instead. For information on shortened titles, see the section above on multiple works by the same author.

Example:

An anonymous critic once argued that Wordsworth’s poems were too emotional (“Wordsworth Is a Loser” 100).

**Indirect Sources:** When citing an indirect source (i.e., a source within a source), “qtd. in” is used to indicate the source actually consulted.

Example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as “social service centers, and they don’t do that well” (qtd. in Weisman 259).

**Works Cited List**

The works cited list is located on a separate page at the end of the paper; each entry corresponds to an in-text citation. Double space both within and between citations. The first line of each entry should be flush with the left margin; subsequent lines should be indented 5 spaces or 1/2 inch.

Entries should be alphabetized by last name of first author or, if the author is unknown, by title. When alphabetizing by title, ignore the words *a*, *an*, or *the* at the beginning of the title.

Italicize titles of books, periodicals, plays, Web sites, online databases, films, CDs, and works of visual art. Place quotation marks around book chapters, articles or essays within a book or periodical, Web pages, songs, and poems.

**BOOKS**

**Books with One Author:**

Basic Format:

Author. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example:


**Books with More Than One Author:**

Basic Format:

Author and Author. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example:


**Two or More Books by the Same Author:** After the first listing of the author’s name, three hyphens and a period are used in the following listings instead of the author’s name.
Basic Format:
Author. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

---. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example:


Books with No Author: If a source has no author, list and alphabetize the source by its title (disregarding a, and, and the).

Basic Format:
Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example:

Anthologies or Collections: When citing an anthology or collection, list and alphabetize the source by the editor(s), followed by ed. or eds. (no italics).

Basic Format:
Editor and Editor, eds. Title of the work. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year. Medium of Publication.

Example:

Parts of a Book: A part of a book includes sources such as an essay within a collection or anthology, or a chapter of a book.

Basic Format:

Example:

Government Publications: If an author is identified, cite him/her followed by the government agency, and any subdivision.

Basic Format:

Example:
PERIODICALS

Magazine or Newspaper Articles:

Basic Format:
Author(s). “Title of Article.” Title of Periodical Day Month Year: pages. Medium of Publication.

Example:

Journal Articles:

Basic Format:

Example:

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

In the past, the MLA Handbook recommended including URLs of web sources within the citation. URLs, however, have limited value because they can change or be specific to a user or a session of use. Thus, URLs should only be included in the citation when the reader will not likely be able to find the source without it, or when your instructor requires it.

Works Published Only on the Web:

Basic Format:
Author(s). “Title of Work.” Title of Website. Edition. Publisher, Day Month Year. Medium of Publication. Date of Access (Day Month Year).

Example:

Works Published on the Web but Including Print Publication Data:

Basic Format:

Example:

*Use the designation N. pag. when no page numbers are available.

Online Journal Articles:

Basic Format:
Author(s). “Title of Article.” Title of Online Scholarly Journal Volume Number. Issue Number (Date): page number(s). Medium of Publication. Date of Access.
Example:
Wheelis, Mark. “Investigating Disease Outbreaks Under a Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Conven-

**Web Sites/Web Pages:** Citation of Web sites or pages within a site can be difficult because the types of
publication information available for such sites vary significantly. The example below includes all the elements
that would ideally be included in an entry for such a source. If some of these elements are unavailable, you may
have to improvise, including what information you have that might be helpful to the reader who wishes to locate
the source.

Basic Format:
Author(s) (or compiler, director, editor, translator, narrator, etc., depending on the information available). Title of
page (italicized if independent, or in quotation marks if part of a larger work or site) or, if no title is apparent, type
of page (e.g., Home page, Introduction, Online posting, etc., neither italicized nor enclosed in quotation marks).
Title of the Web site (italicized), if distinct from the page title. Publisher or sponsor of the site if different from
title of Web site (or n.p. if this information is unavailable), Medium of publication (in this case, Web). Date of
access (day, month, and year). URL, if necessary, in angle brackets (< >).

Examples:


**Images (including paintings, sculptures, photographs, etc.):**

Basic Format:
Artist. *Title of Piece*. Year the work was created. Institution that houses the work (if applicable), *Title of Website.*
Medium of Publication. Date of access.

Example:

**Periodical Publications in Online Databases:**

Basic Format:
Author(s). “Title of Article.” *Title of Online Scholarly Journal* Volume Number. Issue Number (Date): page
number(s). Medium of Publication. Date of Access.

*Note:* If no page numbers are available, insert instead the abbreviation n. pag., as shown below.

Example:
Web. 5 June 2008.

**E-mail or Other Personal Communications:**

Basic Format:
Author. “Title of the message (if any).” Message to person’s name. Date of the message. Medium of Delivery.

Example:
OTHER NON-PRINT SOURCES

Lectures or Speeches:

Basic Format:
Speaker name. “Title of Speech”. Meeting/event details. Location. Date of Lecture/Speech. Form of Delivery.

Example:

Note: If there is no title, the speech is labeled according to its type, e.g., Keynote Address, Guest Lecture.

Broadcast Television or Radio Programs:

Basic Format:
“Name of the Episode.” Name of the Series. Network. Station, City. Date of Broadcast. Medium of Reception.

Example:

Individual Songs:

Basic Format:
Artist. “Title of Song.” Album Title. Label, Year of Release. Medium.

Example:

Films:

Basic Format:
Title of Film. Director. Film Studio, Year of Release. Medium (film, DVD, videocassette, etc.).

Example:

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