

MLA Format

Introduction

In April of 2016, the Modern Language Association (MLA) published the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*. The main difference between the 8th edition and the previous edition is the way Works Cited citations are constructed. Instead of searching for the correct citation format for a specific type of source, the 8th edition introduces a new *pattern* for Works Cited citations. The new pattern refers to the nine core elements used to document sources, regardless of whether they are print, electronic, or visual media:

- Author
- Title of source
- Title of container
- Other contributors
- Version
- Number
- Publisher
- Publication date
- Location

The use of these core elements makes citation guidelines universal for all source types. Furthermore, the use of these elements permits writers greater freedom to construct citations in a way that is the most useful for their readers. The core elements of the new MLA pattern are explained further in this handout on pages 8-13.

In addition to the new Works Cited pattern, MLA has made two changes to the construction of in-text citations. While most in-text citations will look the same as the previous edition, writers should now use the abbreviation “et al.” when creating an in-text citation for a source with three or more authors. Also, if the writer is using a multimedia source, such as a CD, a DVD, an online video, etc., a time stamp should be added within the in-text citation. The time stamp allows the reader to know where the cited material may be found in a multimedia source (see pages 3-8 for in-depth in-text citation information).

General Format

- Type the paper, and print it out on standard-sized paper (8.5 X 11 inches).
- The font should be Times New Roman or Arial and size 12.
- Double space your paper.
- Set the margins of the document to 1 inch on all sides.
- Use *italics* throughout the essay for highlighting the titles of longer works and providing emphasis.
- If any notes about the sources used in the paper are necessary, include them on a page prior the Works Cited page, and format them the same way as the Works Cited list.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for the paper unless specifically requested by the instructor.
- Provide a double-spaced entry in the top left corner of the first page (below the header) that lists your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date.
- Create a header that includes your last name and consecutive page numbers in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Note: The instructor or whoever is reading the manuscript may ask that you omit the number on the first page. Always follow the instructor's guidelines.
- Center the title on the line underneath the header with your name, and begin the paper immediately below the title.

Here is an example of the first page of an essay written in MLA style:

	Purdue 1
Pete Purdue	
Dr. B. Boilermaker	
English 101	
12 November 2000	
Building a Dream: Reasons to Expand Ross-Aide Stadium	

During the 2000 football season, the Purdue Boilermakers won the Big Ten Conference Title, earned their first trip to the Rose Bowl in thirty-four years, and played consistently to sold-out crowds. Looking ahead...

Making Reference to Works of Others in Your Text

In MLA style, you can refer to the works of others in your text in two ways: quoting or paraphrasing. When quoting or paraphrasing information borrowed from a source, you should:

- Provide the author's name (or the title of the work) and the location of the work, which would be the page number, paragraph number, time stamp, etc., in a **parenthetical citation**.
- Provide full citation information for the work in your **Works Cited** list.

Parenthetical Citations

MLA format follows the author-location method of citation in which the author's last name and the location where the borrowed information was obtained must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in the Works Cited list. The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, but the location should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of the sentence.

For example:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

If the source referenced has three or more authors, use the first author's last name and "et al." in the in-text citation.

For example:

According to one article, “Wordsworth was one of the pioneering authors of Romantic poetry”
(Jones et al. 42).

If the source referenced has no author, use an abbreviated version of the title of the source in place of the author’s name in the in-text citation.

For example:

An anonymous Wordsworth critic once argued that his poems were too emotional (“Wordsworth is a Loser” 100).

Sometimes you may have to use a quotation from an indirect source. Quoting from an indirect source occurs when the words being quoted are not original to the source you are citing but come from a different original work. For such indirect source quotations, use “qtd. in” to indicate the source.

For 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).

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which information is borrowed. For instance, if two or more authors have the same last name, provide both authors’ first initials, or his or her full name if different authors share initials, in the citation. If more than one source by a particular author is cited, include a shortened title for each work to distinguish it from the other works by that same person.

For example:

Two Authors with the Same Last Name:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

Two Works by the Same Author:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children (“Too Soon” 38), though he has acknowledged 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).

In cases where you have used video or audio media sources in the paper, the in-text citation should include the author’s name (if available), or a shortened version of the title, and the time stamp to show the specific location of the referenced material in the media source.

For example:

Media Source with Author

In a line from the song “Wanted Dead or Alive,” the singer points out that, “It’s all the same, only the names will change” (Bon Jovi 00:00:35).

Media Source with No Author

TED Talks speaker Sir Ken Robinson said that, “All kids have tremendous talents, and we squander them” (“Do Schools” 00:03:09-12).

Short Quotations

Short quotations are fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse in the text of the paper. To indicate short quotations, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks and incorporate it into your text. In parenthesis, provide the author and location of the original work, and include a complete reference in the Works Cited list. Punctuation such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation points

should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.

For example:

According to some, dreams express “profound aspects of personality” (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes’s study, dreams may express “profound aspects of personality” (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express “profound aspects of personality” (Foulkes 184)?

The speaker says, “Of all the things that happened there/ That’s all I remember” (Cullen 11-12).

Long Quotations

Place prose quotations longer than four typed lines, or verse quotations of three lines or longer, in a freestanding block, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented half an inch from the left margin, and maintain double spacing. In addition, the parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks.

For example:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got

there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)

The poem “Sources” explores the roles of women in shaping their world:

The faithful drudging child
the child at the oak desk whose penmanship,
hard work, style will win her prizes
becomes the woman with a mission, not to win prizes
but to change the laws of history. (Rich 23-7)

Adding or Omitting Words in Quotations

If you add a word or words to a quotation, put brackets around the added words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

For example:

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: “some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale” (78).

If you omit a word or words from a quotation, indicate the deleted word or word by using ellipsis surrounded by brackets.

For example:

In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that “some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale [...] and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs” (78).

If there are ellipsis in the original text, do not put brackets around them; only use brackets around ellipsis to acknowledge that you omitted words from the original source.

Citing the Bible

In the first parenthetical citation, make clear which Bible you are using and italicize the title, as each version varies in its translation. Follow the title with the book, chapter, and verse.

For example:

Ezekiel saw “what seemed to be four living creatures,” each with faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 1.5-10).

All future references to the work can just cite the book, chapter, and verse, since the edition of the Bible you are using has been established.

Your Works Cited List

The MLA Pattern for Citing Works

The *MLA Handbook, 8th Edition* has established a new pattern for creating reference citations for all source types. The thought behind this new pattern is that:

- Writers and researchers should have an easier time citing sources using this new pattern.
- Citations should be more clear, logical, and approachable for writers and readers.
- The traits shared by most works are the traits that should be cited.
- There may be more than one “correct” way to cite a source depending upon how the writer is using the sources in his or her paper.
- The primary purpose of documentation is to be useful for readers who are trying to locate the sources.

With the introduction of this new pattern, there are now three types of sources:

1. Self-containing source: This type of source is complete in and of itself. For example, a novel, a film, or a website would be considered self-containing sources.

2. Source within a container: This type of source is used when a portion of the source exists within a larger publication. In this case, the larger publication is the container. Some examples of a source within a container would be an article within a journal, a television episode that is a part of a series, a poem within a collection, or a webpage that is part of a website.
3. Source within a container within a container: This type of source is contained within a larger publication that is published by a third-party. Both the larger publication and the third party location are containers. An article in a journal found in an online database or an episode of a television series on YouTube are both examples of this type of source.

What is a “container?”

MLA also introduces the idea of the “container” to the Works Cited page. A container is a larger work that holds a smaller work, such as a journal containing an article.

Elements of the MLA Pattern

The new MLA pattern is constructed as follows, including the specific punctuation:



If any of the listed elements are not present in the source, skip the element, and move on to the next one.

The first element of the MLA pattern is:  **Author.**

There are three options for inserting the author’s name into the citation, depending on how many authors the source has.

A source with one author

In this type of source, the author's name is listed as last name, a comma, and then the first name.

For example:

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*. Centennial edition, Penguin, 2002.

A source with two authors

For a source with two authors, the first author's name is included in the citation as discussed in the previous section, and the second author's name is added as first name last name.

For example:

Gaiman, Neil, and Terry Pratchett. *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch*. Harper Collins, 2006.

A source with three or more authors

For a source with three or more authors, use the first author listed in the source in the order of last name, a comma, and then the first name followed by another comma. After the second comma, type "et al."

For example:

Berg, Carla, et al. "Depression and Substance Abuse and Dependency in Relation to Current Smoking Status and Frequency of Smoking among Non-daily and Daily Smokers." *American Journal on Addictions*, vol. 22, no. 6, Nov. 2013, pp. 581-89. JSTOR, doi: 10.1111/j.1521-0391.2013.12041.x.

The second element of the MLA pattern is:

 Title of Source.

If your source has a title other than the title of the container, this title should be placed in quotation marks after the author.

For example:

Etehad, Melissa, et al. "Firefighters Have Never Seen a Wildfire Like This One." *Los Angeles Times*, 19 Dec. 2017, beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-fire-week-three-20171219-story.html

The third element of the pattern is:  **Title of Container,**

The title of the container is italicized within the citation. The punctuation following the container is dependent upon which type of source you are citing (see “The MLA Pattern” section on page 11 for the three types). If the source is self-containing, the punctuation after the title of container will be a period. If the source is either one of the two other types of sources listed below, then the punctuation after the title of container will be a comma.

For example:

Self-containing sources

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*. Centennial edition, Penguin, 2002.

Sources within a container

Steinbeck, John. “The Moon is Down.” *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck*, Kindle edition, Penguin, 2009.

Note: As previously discussed, this source is in a container because the source, the short story “The Moon is Down,” is contained within a larger publication, The Short Novels of John Steinbeck.

Sources within a container within a container

Berg, Carla, et al. “Depression and Substance Abuse and Dependency in Relation to Current Smoking Status and Frequency of Smoking among Non-daily and Daily Smokers.” *American Journal on Addictions*, vol. 22, no. 6, Nov. 2013, pp. 581-89. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.1111/j.1521-0391.2013.12041.x.

Note: As previously discussed, this example is a source within a container within a container because the article “Depression and Substance...” is contained within the journal American Journal on Addictions, and the journal is contained in the JSTOR database.

The fourth element in the pattern is:  **Other Contributors,**

This element of the pattern is the location to include editors, translators, directors, actors, and other people who have contributed to the work besides the author.

For example:

“The Old Gods and the New.” *Game of Thrones*, written by Vanessa Taylor, season 2, episode 6,
HBO, 6 May 2012.

The fifth element in the MLA pattern is: 

The version element is the location in the MLA pattern to place information such as the specific edition of a book or media file.

For example:

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*. Centennial edition, Penguin, 2002.

The sixth element in the pattern is: 

The number element of the pattern is the place to include numbers that show the volume number, issue number, season number, episode number, etc. of sources such as journals, newspapers, or television series.

For example:

Berg, Carla, et al. “Depression and Substance Abuse and Dependency in Relation to Current Smoking Status and Frequency of Smoking among Non-daily and Daily Smokers.” *American Journal on Addictions*, vol. 22, no. 6, Nov. 2013, pp. 581-89. JSTOR, doi: 10.1111/j.1521-0391.2013.12041.x.

The seventh element in the pattern is: 

This is the location for information about the company, organization, etc. that published the source. It is important to note that the *MLA Handbook, 8th Edition* does not require that a publisher be listed for sources where the publisher and the title of the container are the same.

For example:

Source with publisher

Gaiman, Neil, and Terry Pratchett. *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch*.
Harper Collins, 2006.

Source with same publisher and title of container

“Ambassador Richard Olson Travel to Pakistan and Afghanistan.” *U. S. Department of State: Diplomacy in Action*, 12 June 2016, www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258388.htm.

The eighth element in the pattern is: Publication Date,

In this location, put the date that the source was published if there is a date available.

For example:

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*. Penguin, 2002.

The final element in the MLA pattern is: Location.

Include location information, such as the page number or page range for a print source, the DOI or URL for online sources, the disc number of a DVD in a collection, or the physical location of a work of art, in the citation, and place a period after the location.

For example:

Berg, Carla, et al. “Depression and Substance Abuse and Dependency in Relation to Current Smoking Status and Frequency of Smoking among Non-daily and Daily Smokers.” *American Journal on Addictions*, vol. 22, no. 6, Nov. 2013, pp. 581-89. JSTOR, doi: 10.1111/j.1521-0391.2013.12041.x.

Note: This citation illustrates a source with two containers, so it has two locations. It has the page numbers of the print journal article at the end of the first container and the digital object identifier (DOI) assigned by the database.

Optional Element: Access Date

Some instructors may ask for an access date to be included with the citation for resources found on the internet, including web articles and research acquired on the library website. If the access date needs to be included, place it after the URL or DOI.

For example:

Etehad, Melissa, et al. "Firefighters Have Never Seen a Wildfire Like This One." *Los Angeles Times*,
19 Dec. 2017, beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-fire-week-three-20171219-story.html.

Accessed 19 Dec. 2017.

Additional Resources

For further information about MLA Citation Style, please refer to the Academic Center for Excellence's handouts [MLA Formatting in Word 2010](#), [MLA Formatting in Word for Macs](#), [MLA Sample Paper](#), and [Formatting an Academic Paper in Google Docs](#).

Additionally, the Academic Center for Excellence offers a variety of MLA tutorials. To register for an on-campus workshop, contact the Academic Center for Excellence at the Locust Grove Campus at **(540) 423-9148**, the Fredericksburg Area Campus at **(540) 891-3017**, the Barbara J. Fried Center in Stafford at **(540) 834-1993**. To view an online workshop, please visit our website at www.germannanna.edu/academic-center-for-excellence/workshops-open-labs-and-study-groups/-center-for-excellence/.