MLA Style Citations

Most writing within the humanities adheres to Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Incorporating and citing sources in MLA style increases a writer's credibility and directs others to resources where they can learn more about the subject or topic. The information in this handout is based on the *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition* and The MLA Style Center Online (style.mla.org). For each element of a citation, the corresponding pages in the handbook are listed in parentheses. For more information on MLA, please see our MLA Formatting handout.

In-Text Citations (*MLA Handbook* pages 54–58, section 3)

An essential component of MLA style is the use of in-text citations. In-text citations follow any incorporated sources and direct the reader to the source on the works cited page. In-text citations are usually placed in parentheses and consist of the author's last name followed by a space and a page number. To cause the least disruption possible, in-text citations are placed where there is a natural pause in the text. In-text citations come after the closing quotation mark of quoted material and any sentence punctuation follows the citation.

> **Example:** In the digital age, "reading is no longer a uniquely solitary practice—it is alternately solitary and social" (Collins 208).

The author's name may also appear in the text itself when introducing the quoted or paraphrased material. In this case, only the page number would appear in the in-text citation.

> **Example:** Jim Collins argues that in the digital age "reading is no longer a uniquely solitary practice—it is alternately solitary and social" (208).

When the works cited entry begins with the title of the source (meaning no author is provided), the title is included in the in-text citation. As with using the author, the title may appear in the text itself when introducing the source material, or with the page number in parentheses. You may abbreviate the title to the first word or first couple of words when using it for your in-text citation (see *MLA Handbook* section 3.2.1).

> **Example:** *Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy* reports that in contrast to previous studies, there has been a rise in literary reading from 2002–2008 and "a slight majority of American adults now read literature or read books" (8).

> **Example:** In contrast to previous studies, there has been a rise in literary reading from 2002 to 2008 and "a slight majority of American adults now read literature or read books" (*Reading* 8).

When citing classical literature, such as *The Iliad* or *Hamlet*, omit page numbers and cite by division method (e.g. act, scene, canto, book, part) and line, separating each number with a period.

> **Example:** (Shakespeare 1.5.12–13) or (Dante lines 131–132)

If no line numbers are present, cite a page number or other form of division numbering if available.

For more information, refer to the "Modern Verse Works" section of the *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition* (page 121).

When citing an image or a figure, refer to *The MLA Style Center* (style.mla.org/formatting-papers/#tablesandillustrations).

MLA Practice Template (MLA Handbook page 129)

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

MLA now uses a template format instead of a series of exact rules for each type of source. To the left is a simplified version of the practice template. The full template can be found both in the *MLA Handbook* and on the companion website (style.mla.org). This template can be filled out for practice or the creation of actual citations. Some citations will have no containers (a book is usually not found inside of anything); others will have multiple containers (an article contained within a journal contained within an online database).

Citing Sources: Core Elements of Works Cited (*MLA Handbook* pages 20–53)

Each citation on a works cited page is constructed from a selection of core elements given in a specific order. This handout briefly explains and provides an example of each element. The correct punctuation mark to use after each element is shown in bolded parentheses and follows the element name. As you make your own works cited entry for each source, gather as much information corresponding to the core elements as possible. If a source is missing an element, simply move on to the next element.

1. Author (.) (pages 21–24)

One author: Last name, First name. (Include middle names and initials after the author's first name.)
Two authors: Reverse the first listed author's name (same as for one author), follow it with a comma and *and*, and give the second name in normal order. (Pratchett, Terry, and Neil Gaiman.)
Three or more authors: List the first author and then et al. (Booth, Wayne C., et al.)

Author is a loose term here. If no clear author exists, indicate whoever is primarily responsible for the work, such as an editor, translator, performer (for film), creator, group, etc.

Example: Shea, Victor, and William Whitla, editors. *Victorian Literature: An Anthology.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

For a work with a corporate author (a group that does not identify an individual author), put the name of the group as the author. If the corporate author is the same as the publisher, skip the author slot and list the title first.

Example: American Education Association. *Dynamics of Elementary Education.* Random House, 2001.

2. Title of source (.) (pages 25–29)

Titles are placed in quotation marks or italicized depending on the source. When the source is part of a larger work, place the title in quotation marks. If the source is not part of a larger work, italicize the title.

Italicized: titles of books, websites, television series, plays
Example: Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.* A.A. Levine Books, 1999.

Quotation marks: titles of poems or short stories in a collection, articles or pages on a website, episodes of a television series, articles in a journal or magazine. Note that the period goes within the quotation marks.
Example: Sanders, Scott Russell. "The Way of Imagination." *The Georgia Review,* vol. 66, no. 2, 2012, pp. 251–263.

3. **Title of container (,)** (pages 30–36)

When a source is part of a larger work, the larger work is considered a container that holds the source. Italicize the title of the container and follow it with a comma.

> **Some possible containers:** short stories collection, poems, essays, periodicals, television series, websites
> **Examples:** *The New York Times, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, The Office*

Often, a container is nested in a larger container, such as a journal stored on a database like *JSTOR*. In these cases, repeat core elements 3–9 (using the larger container's data) after the first container's entry.

4. **Other contributors (,)** (pages 37–38)

In some sources, people other than the author may be credited in the source as contributors. When contributors are important to your research or to the identification of the work, include them in your entry and introduce each with a description of their role (for example: adapted by, directed by, edited by, illustrated by, introduction by, narrated by, performance by, translated by).

> **Example:** Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* Translated by Gregory Rabassa, HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.

5. **Version (,)** (pages 38–39)

Some sources indicate that it is a version of a work released in more than one form. Versions can be editions of books, unabridged or abridged editions, or an expanded or updated edition.

> **Example:** Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction.* Updated ed., Harper Perennial, 2014.

6. **Number (,)** (pages 39–40)

Some sources are part of numbered sequences such as volumes, issues, episodes, or seasons.

> **Example:** McGill, Meredith L., and Andrew Parker. "The Future of the Literary Past." *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4, Oct. 2010, pp. 959–967.

7. **Publisher (,)** (40–42)

The organization primarily responsible for producing the source is the publisher.

> **Example:** Lowenstein, Roger. *America's Bank.* Penguin Press, 2015.

For the following kinds of sources, you do not need to include the publisher: a periodical, a work published by its author or editor, websites whose titles are the same as the publisher, websites not involved in producing the work (JSTOR, YouTube, ProQuest, etc.).

8. **Publication Date (,)** (pages 42–49)

Include as much information about the publication date as possible. Books, for example, will list only the year on the copyright page. A news article, on the other hand, will often list the day, month, and year. The general rule is to write the full date as listed in the source, in the order of day-month-year.

> **Example:** Borges, Jorge Luis. *Ficciones.* Vintage Books, 2012.

For sources listing more than one date, cite the date most relevant to your purpose.

9. **Location.** (pages 46–50)

The location of a source may be a series of page numbers, a URL, a DOI, a disc number, etc.

> **Example:** Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner.* Riverhead Books, 2003, pp. 30-31.

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Journal Article from a Database

Last name, First name. "Title of Source." *Journal Title*, volume number, issue number, publication year, page number(s). *Database Title*, doi or URL.

Tuite, Kevin. "Agentless Transitive Verbs in Georgian." *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 51, no. 3/4, 2009, pp. 269–295. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40929716.

Journal Article in Print

Same as **Journal Article from a Database**, but do not include the database title, doi, or URL.

Tuite, Kevin. "Agentless Transitive Verbs in Georgian." *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 51, no. 3/4, 2009, pp. 269–295.

Book

Last name, First name. *Title of Source*. Other Contributors (translators, illustrators, etc.), Publisher, publication year.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. A.A. Levine Books, 1999.

Article from a Website

Last name, First name. "Title of Source." *Title of Website*, publication date, URL.

Jabr, Ferris. "The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens." *Scientific American*, 11 Apr. 2013, www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/.

Work from an Anthology

Author of Selection. "Title of Selection." *Title of Anthology*, edited by Editor's Name(s), version, Publisher, publication year, page(s).

Aesop. "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, edited by Simon Peter and translated by Laura Gibbs, W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, p. 631.

Online Videos

Last name, First Name, director. *Title of Video. Upload site*, uploaded by account name, date, URL.

Ze Frank: Are You Human. YouTube, uploaded by TED, 18 July, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ.

Missing Elements

If an element (such as an author, the director of an online video, page number or publication date) is missing, do not include those elements in the citation.

The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes. Edited by Rowland, David, and Keith Whitlock, Aris & Phillips, 2000.