

MLA Style: Formatting & Documentation

Based on the *MLA Handbook* (8th Edition)

MLA Style was created by the Modern Language Association. It is a set of formatting and documentation rules for publications and student papers in the Humanities.

We strongly recommend viewing the sample MLA papers available at www.style.mla.org/sample-papers in addition to reading carefully through this handout.

GENERAL FORMATTING RULES

- Use the same font set at the same size throughout your paper. Recommended fonts include 12-point Times New Roman or Arial.
- Use 1-in. (2.54 cm) margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right) of each page.
- Double-space the entire paper, including the Works Cited page.
- Insert your surname followed by one space and a page number in the top-right corner of your document's header, beginning on the first page (i.e., Surname 1).
- Align the text of the paper to the left and leave the right margin uneven; do not use full justification.
- Indent the first line of every paragraph 0.5 in. (hit "Tab" on your keyboard).
- Do *not* underline or set in boldface your title, headings/subheadings, or "Works Cited."

DOCUMENTATION/CITATION RULES

In MLA, you must document or *cite* any source that you have paraphrased, quoted, or otherwise used to write your paper. Cite your sources in two places:

1. In the body of your paper where you add a brief **parenthetical citation** (sometimes called an *in-text citation*) for any ideas or data you've paraphrased (stated in your own words) or quoted directly using "quotation marks."
2. In the **Works Cited** list at the end of your paper where you give more complete information about the source.

MLA PARENTHETICAL (or "in-text") CITATIONS

All parenthetical references must direct the reader to a specific entry in the Works Cited list. The essential elements of a parenthetical citation are the following:

- The author's surname (or the document's title, if there is no author identified).
- A page number if one is given in the source. Note that many online sources do not provide page numbers. If a paragraph number is given (or easy for you to count) in an online source, use **par. #**.

If the author's name is mentioned in your sentence or it's otherwise clear which source you're referring to, do not repeat this information in an in-text citation. In these cases, provide a page number only.

Parenthetical Citation Examples:

Climate change is advancing at a “a far more frightening pace” than scientists have predicted (Bocks 9).

Pollan highlights these debates to show the extent to which, even in a court of law, a “standard definition of the adjective” is nearly impossible to arrive at (784).

Vuong “wanted to use the metaphor differently,” as he explains in a recent article on literary influence (par. 2).

For an indirect source (a source quoted in another source), use the abbreviation “qtd. in.”

“It can feel soulless,” Jia Tolentino observes (qtd. in Ransom).

MLA WORKS CITED LIST

FORMAT

Your complete list of references must include every source you’ve cited and will appear on a separate page at the end of your paper, titled **Works Cited**. List your references in **alphabetical order** by authors’ last names, or by the first meaningful word of the title (ignore *A* or *The*) if no author or editor is known. Two or more works by the same author are ordered alphabetically by the title of the work; the author’s name in the second and any subsequent listed work is replaced by three hyphens and a period (---). Begin each entry at the left margin; second and subsequent lines are indented five spaces (the Tab key can be used). Like the rest of your paper, this list is double-spaced throughout (with no extra spaces between entries).

MLA CORE ELEMENTS

The *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition introduces the concept of the MLA Core Elements in order to streamline and simplify the process of citation.

When writing a *Works Cited* entry for a source, include as many of the Core Elements listed below as are provided by the source, in the order below. If one of the types of information in the Core Elements list is not given by a source, simply omit that item. Note that the list below also indicates the punctuation that should follow each Core Element.

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Author

If an author is given, list the names inverted, with last name first, followed by first name(s) or initials as given on the title page (e.g., Shin, James). If there are two authors, list the first author with name inverted and the second author with first name followed by last name (e.g., Shin, James, and Jenny Brown). If there are three or more authors of a source, list the first author plus “et al.” (Latin for “and other”) (e.g., Shin, James, et al.).

Title of source

The title of each source should appear either in “quotation marks” or in *italics*, followed by a period. Place quotation marks around titles of sources which are part of a larger work (a *container*; see below) or which are not published independently (e.g., single essays, articles, short poems, short stories, chapters of books, songs, episodes in a series, or lectures in a course). Italicize titles of books, periodicals (i.e., journals, magazines, newspapers), movies, albums, websites, or other standalone sources. Capitalize the first letter in all words except articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), and the *to* in infinitives—unless one of them is the first word in the title or the first word following the colon of a subtitle (for example: “Voltaire’s Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West”).

Title of Container

The *MLA Handbook* defines a “container” as a full-length work that is comprised of smaller components such as essays or chapters. Italicize titles of these full-length or separately published works (books, journals, magazines, newspapers, plays, films, albums, radio/TV programs, paintings, sculptures, or website names). Note that some sources have more than one container, the most common example being an article published in an academic journal (container one) accessed via an online database (container two). In the Works Cited entry, information about the second container appears after the period that follows the “location” of the first container (see below).

Other Contributors

If translators or editors are listed, include these names with their designation spelled out (i.e., “translated by” or “edited by”).

Version and Number

Version indicates the edition of a work (if applicable). Number indicates the Volume and/or Issue in a numbered publication. Volume refers to a single year of publication, and Issue refers to a specific issue within that year. Write “vol.” for volume and “no.” for issue number. If you have in your hand a periodical with the numerical abbreviation 16.3, the 16 indicates that the periodical is in its 16th year of publication; the 3 refers to the fact that this is the third issue of that year. For this example, then, you would write “vol. 16, no. 3.” *Note that not all periodicals will have a volume and/or issue number; include only whatever information is available.*

Publisher

Include the full name of the publisher, but leave out words like “Inc.” or “Co.” Use the abbreviation “UP” for University Press. Note that no place of publication is necessary.

Publication Date

For books, if several copyright dates are given, use the most recent: it is the date of the edition you’re using. Ignore dates of new printings. For journals, use the year plus the season, month, or week of publication.

Location

Location refers to the location of your source, typically either within its container (i.e., giving page numbers) or online (giving website info). Include the page span in a Works Cited entry only for short works (articles, stories, poems) within a larger publication container. Include the abbreviation “p.” for a single page and “pp.” for multiple pages. Do not include “p.” or “pp.” in the in-text citation. If the source is not paginated, do not include any reference to pages. For page spans that begin and end within the same one-hundreds group, delete the hundreds signifier in the second number (e.g., pages 221 through 225 would be written as 221-25). Note that page numbers are given for entries in reference books.

For online sources, list the periodical database name in *italics* if you use a database (e.g., *Academic Search Complete*) followed by either the DOI (the stable Digital Object Identifier) if the source gives one or the website URL excluding the `http://` or `https://`.

USING THIS HANDOUT

To demonstrate how the MLA Core Elements can be applied to different types of sources, the examples below have been divided into four categories:

- (1) Books
- (2) Print Articles
- (3) Online Scholarly Sources
- (4) Other Online Sources

Find the model that most nearly matches the book, article, or other source you are citing. If you cannot find a suitable model (what follows is nowhere near a complete listing of source types), consult *The Capilano Guide to Writing Assignments* (2016 ed.) or the *MLA Handbook* (both available in the Library or the Writing Centre), or visit the MLA website at www.style.mla.org.

1. BOOKS

Note: Bibliographic information for books can be found on the cover, title page, and colophon page. The colophon page normally appears before the table of contents, and it supplies complete information about the publisher and the editions or re-printings of a book.

1.1 Book by one author:

Thesen, Sharon. *Oyama Pink Shale*. Anansi, 2011.

1.2 Book by two authors:

Stott, Jon C., and Ramond E. Jones, editors. *The Harbrace Anthology of Poetry*. 4th ed., Thomson, 2006.

1.3 Book by three or more authors:

Scholes, Robert, et al., editors. *Elements of Literature*. 5th ed., Oxford UP, 2015.

1.4 Chapter in a book:

Cole, Teju. "The White Savior Industrial Complex." *Known and Strange Things*, Random House, 2016, pp. 340-49.

1.5 Selection in an edited anthology or collection of essays, stories, or poems:

Westcott, Andrea. "A Matter of Strong Prejudice: Gilbert Markham's Self Portrait." *New Approaches to the Literary Art of Anne Brontë*, edited by Julie Nash and Barbara A. Seuss, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 213-25.

1.6 Introduction, foreword, preface, or afterword of a book:

Bereano, Nancy K. Introduction. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, by Audre Lorde, Crossing Press, 1984, i-xi.

2. PRINT ARTICLES

2.1 Articles from print journals published at varying time intervals (by year, by month, etc.):

Hurdle, Crystal. "Arithmetic." *Dalhousie Review*, vol. 80, 2001, pp. 416-17.

Stanley, George. "Beyond the Sublime: Reading James Liddy." *Irish University Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1998, pp. 92-109.

Montgomery, Charles. "Big Trouble in Chinatown." *Saturday Night*, Dec. 2001, pp. 21-32.

MacQueen, Ken. "Referendum Madness." *Maclean's*, 13 May 2002, pp. 42-43.

2.2 Article in a newspaper or newsletter:

Hall, Neil. "Project Coconut." *Vancouver Sun*, 2 Oct. 2004, p. A1.

If the article continues on non-consecutive pages, add + (e.g., A1+). The date should be as specific as provided and should follow this form: Day Month (abbreviated when longer than four characters) Year.

2.3 Review (titled):

Thesen, Sharon. "Earth's Dark Anvil." Review of *Time Capsule: New and Selected Poems*, by Pat Lowther. *Vancouver Review*, vol. 24, 1997, pp. 19-20.

2.4 Advertisement:

United Way. Advertisement. *Saturday Night*, Sept. 2001, p. 17.

The name of the product or company begins the citation.

3. ONLINE SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

3.1 Article in a scholarly journal found via an online periodical database:

Lindemann-Matthies, Petra, and Hendrik Brieger. "Does Urban Gardening Increase Aesthetic Quality of Urban Areas? A Case Study from Germany." *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*, vol. 17, 1 June 2016, pp. 33-41. *ScienceDirect*, doi:10.1016/j.ufug.2016.03.010.

In the above entry, the journal title is *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening* and the database title is *ScienceDirect*; both are italicized. Since this article is assigned a DOI, that number is given rather than the website URL. Libraries lease organized databases with their own search engines. You can use these databases in a library or from home if your computer is configured for remote access to a library. (For the latest list of databases, see the Capilano University Library home page under Periodical Databases.)

4. OTHER ONLINE ELECTRIC SOURCES

4.1 Online newspaper or magazine article:

Wong, Edward. "China's Last Wild River Carries Conflicting Environmental Hopes." *The New York Times*, 18 June 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/06/19/world/asia/china-climate-change-nu-river-greenhouse-gases.html?ref=world.

4.2 Webpage:

Modern Language Association. "Works Cited: A Quick Guide." *The MLA Style Center: Writing Resources from the Modern Languages Association*, 2016, style.mla.org/works-cited-a-quick-guide/.

4.3 Document within an edited website:

"Modernism and the Modern Novel." *The Electronic Labyrinth*, edited by Christopher Keep and Tim McLaughlin, June 2001, www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab.

Note that the above source has no author noted.

4.4 E-book:

Washuta, Elissa, and Theresa Warburton, eds. *Shapes of Native Nonfiction: Collected Essays by Contemporary Writers*. Kindle ed., U of Washington P, 2019.

Waxman, Samuel Montefiore. *Antoine and the Théâtre-Libre*. Harvard UP, 1926, www.questia.com.

4.5 Online video:

Stedman, Kyle. "Understanding MLA Style (8th edition, 2016 updates)." *YouTube*, 3 June 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjbMfL92b7g.

4.6 Tweet:

@urbanNDNs (Natalie Knight). "With all that's happening in the world (as ever) supporting local and grassroots efforts of all kinds is crucial. For Indigenous writers, the Indigenous Editors Circle is a strong initiative of resurgence that is looking to grow." *Twitter*, 3 Jan. 2020, twitter.com/urbanNDNs/status/1213139199173353477.

Use the full text of the tweet in place of the title and treat the username as the author name (including in parentheses the person's or organization's real name if different or unclear from the Twitter username).