Citing Sources: MLA Style

The MLA style of citation building was developed by the Modern Language Association and is commonly used in the humanities.

Examples of Works Cited and In-text Citation are based on the 2016 MLA Handbook, 8th ed. For additional examples and more details consult the full MLA manual kept at the Research Help Desk (Ref LB 2369.G53 2016). Some disciplines may require other styles, so check with your instructor for a style recommendation. For updated citation information consult https://style.mla.org.

General Guidelines:
MLA uses in-text citations (also known as parenthetical citations) to identify the source of your information, whether quoted or paraphrased. The in-text citation is brief information, referring the reader to your works cited list. It includes the author(s) last name (unless it appears in the narrative) and the page number. For quotations, include the page number, or for electronic (online) articles without page numbers, use a paragraph number. Here are a few examples:

Examples: In-Text (Parenthetical) Citations

One author: “...my secret is fresh ingredients” (Bell 81).

Two authors: Moore and Stuck make great claims for their results (27-28).

Three or more authors: “...light at the end of the tunnel?” (Hardee et al. 380).

Works with no known author: (“Laughter and Stress” 88)
Note: lengthy titles should be shortened

Multi-volume work: (Know 2: 450).
Note: the volume number (2) is followed by the page (450).

Personal Communications (e.g. e-mail, letters): (Forester).

Online article, no pages (note that there is a comma used): (Maynard, par. 4).

Indirect Sources are those quoted or cited in other sources. Use of the original source is preferred, but it may be unavailable. If what you quote or paraphrase is itself a quotation, cite the indirect source with the abbreviation qtd. in (quoted in)- (Miller qtd. in Boswell 450). The works cited list should include the source you are actually using, Boswell in this case.

The works cited list is an alphabetical list of all resources cited in your paper. There are several general guidelines to use, regardless of the type of resource:

- Double space between all lines. This guide shows entries single spaced to save paper.
- Use a hanging indent, with all lines after the first indented.
- List entries alphabetically (by authors’ last names).
- If author is unknown, alphabetize by first significant title word.
- Pay attention to punctuation.

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Elements of Entries in the Works Cited List – General Format:

1. Author/Editor/Compiler’s last name, first name. Comma after last name, period after complete name. If two or more authors, list them in the order they are listed in the publication.
2. Title and subtitle of short work (e.g. article or story) in quotation marks. Capitalize all significant words. Unless other closing punctuation, include a period before the closing quotation marks.
3. Title and subtitle of complete work (e.g. book, journal, or website) italicized. Capitalize significant words.
4. Additional contributors (such as editors or translators). Write out “translated by” or “edited by.”
5. Volume, issue and page numbers of periodical, if applicable. A comma should separate these numbers (e.g. vol. 121, no. 1).
6. Publication information for books (publisher and date of publication) (e.g. Harvard UP, 2011). For a website, publisher or sponsor of the site, if available (university, government agency).
7. For articles and websites, date of publication.
8. Pages or paragraphs of source, if numbered.
9. Name of article database, if applicable. Italicized.
10. Web address or DOI for online resources.
11. For online resources, date of access in this order: day Month year (e.g. 5 June 2008). This is optional unless there is no permanent date of publication provided.

Examples: Works Cited List

General Format [see p. 20]
Last Name, First Name, and First Last. “Title and Subtitle of Short Work.” Title and Subtitle of Complete Work, Other contributors (translators or editors), Version (edition), Number (vol. and/or no.), Publisher, Publication Date, Location (pages, paragraphs URL or DOI), Date of Access (if applicable).

Book – One Author [see p. 21]
Bell, Canny. Tender is the Knight. Cookbooks Galore, 2005.

Book – Online (read on the web) [see p. 47]

Electronic Book (read on an e-reader device) [see p. 34]
Note: page numbers can vary among different e-books and devices. Specifying the “version” of the book (e.g. Kindle ed.) is better than listing page numbers in this case.

Book – Two Authors [see p. 21]

Book – Three or more Authors [see p. 22]
Book – Editor(s) as Author [see p. 23]

Book – Corporate/organizational author (online) [see p. 25]

Book – Multi-Volume Work [see p. 39]

Book – Chapter or essay in a collection, with an editor and/or translator [see p. 38]

Encyclopedia – Signed Article [see style.mla.org/citing-entries-in-reference-works/]

Encyclopedia – Unsigned Article [see style.mla.org/citing-entries-in-reference-works/]

Encyclopedia (Online) – Signed Article [see style.mla.org/citing-entries-in-reference-works/]

Dictionary [see style.mla.org/citing-entries-in-reference-works/]

Journal Article – Print [see p. 28]

Journal Article – Online Journal [see p. 32]

Journal Article from a Library Database [see p. 31]

Magazine Article – Unsigned [see p. 24]
Newspaper article – Unsigned [see sec. 2.5.1, p. 110]
Note: If an article is not printed in consecutive pages, write only the first page number and a plus sign.

Full text newspaper article accessed in online database [see p. 42]

Article/essay republished in a collection [see p. 26]

Government Document – Corporate/organizational author [see p. 25]

Website – Signed [see style.mla.org/citing-web-pages/]

Website – Unsigned [see p. 17]

Personal email [see p. 29]
Forester, Amber. “Minority Women in Corporate Management.” Received by Your Name, 13 Jan. 2005.

Listserv source [see p. 29]
Note: “Title” is taken from the posted subject line. First date is day of posting. Last date is day of your access.

Twitter Post [see p. 24]
@realDonaldTrump (Donald Trump). “Who can figure out the true meaning of ‘covfefe’ ??? Enjoy!” Twitter, 31 May 2017, 3:09 a.m., twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/869858333477523458.

Streaming Video (YouTube, TED Talk) [see p. 44]

Film or Video (e.g. DVD) [see p. 24]