MLA Style Quick Reference

When writing, document all information and ideas gained from outside sources. You do this to

- credit your sources and avoid plagiarism,
- support your arguments with information from experts in the field, and
- share source materials with readers.

Your essay should be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11") with 1" margins on all sides. Use a clear font that is highly readable; 12 pt. Times New Roman font is recommended.

MLA has turned to a style of documentation that is based on a general method that may be applied to every possible source, to many different types of writing. The current system is based on a few principles, rather than an extensive list of specific rules.

When deciding how to cite your source, start by consulting the list of core elements. These are the general pieces of information that MLA suggests including in each Works Cited entry. In your citation, the elements should be listed in the following order: Author, title of source, title of container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, location.

Author
Begin the entry with the author’s last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name, as presented in the work. End this element with a period.


Title of source
The title of the source should follow the author’s name, in italics or quotation marks depending upon the type of source.

A book title should be in italics:


A website title should be in italics:


A periodical title (journal, magazine, newspaper article) should be in quotation marks:


A song title or piece of music on an album should be in quotation marks:


Title of container
Containers are the larger wholes in which the source is located. For example, if you want to cite a poem that is listed in a collection of poems, the individual poem is the source, while the larger collection is the container. The title of the container is italicized and followed by a comma, since the information that follows next describes the container.

*The eighth edition handbook recommends including URLs when citing online sources.

The container may also be a television series, which is made up of episodes.


The container may also be a website, which contains articles, postings, and other works.


In some cases, a container might be within a larger container. It is important to cite these containers within containers so that your readers can find your exact source.


Other contributors
Other contributors to the source should be credited—e.g., editors, translators—if their contributions are relevant or necessary to identify the source.


The above examples are taken from

Off campus or after hours use:
Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab, “The Owl,” at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

For assistance contact the PCC Library Team at 719-549-3305
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