

Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation

This handout begins with general guidelines about documentation in general, then it presents an overview of the MLA documentation system as described in the 2016 *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.).

What to Document

Whichever documentation system you use, be sure to document all sources that you have used in writing your paper. You will need to cite sources for:

- a. direct quotations from sources,
- b. paraphrases and summaries of ideas and information from sources,
- c. information and ideas that are not common knowledge or available in a standard reference work, and
- d. any borrowed material that might appear to be your own if there were no citation.

If you would like more information on what needs to be documented, be sure to ask your course instructor. Please also ask at the Writing Center or look on our Web site for our handout “Acknowledging, Paraphrasing, and Quoting Sources.” You may also want to consult pages 6-12 in the *MLA Handbook*, to learn more about what plagiarism is, why it’s a big deal, and how to prevent it.

Overview of MLA Documentation

The MLA documentation system is a parenthetical documentation system. That means you place citations in parentheses within your own sentences to indicate you have used ideas, information, and quotations from sources at that particular spot in your paper; the parenthetical information points to specific sources in an alphabetized list of works cited (it’s not called a “bibliography” in MLA), which appears at the end of your paper. Notes—footnotes or endnotes numbered consecutively throughout your paper—may be used for explanations or comments that the paper itself cannot accommodate or for a more lengthy bibliographic note.

The two most important things to learn about the MLA parenthetical documentation system are how to compose the list of works cited and how to cite these sources in your paper.

I. How to Create A Works Cited Page Following the MLA 8th Edition

General Formatting Information for Your Works Cited Section

Beginning on a new page at the end of your paper, list alphabetically by author every work you have cited, using the basic forms illustrated below. Title the page Works Cited (not Bibliography), and list only those sources you actually cited in your paper. Continue the page numbering from the body of your paper and make sure that you still have one-inch margins at the top, bottom, and sides of your page. Double-space the entire list. Indent entries as shown in the models below with what’s called a “hanging indent”: that means the first line of an entry begins at the left margin, and the second and subsequent lines should be indented half an inch from the left margin. Most word-processing programs will format hanging indents easily (look under the paragraph formatting options).

Introduction to the 8th Edition

In 2016, MLA substantially changed the way it approaches works cited entries. Each media type used to have its own citation guidelines. Writers would follow the specific instructions for how to cite a book, a translated poem in

an anthology, a newspaper article located through a database, a YouTube clip embedded in an online journal, etc. However, as media options and publication formats continued to expand, MLA saw the need to revise this approach. Since a book chapter can appear on a blog or a blog post can appear in a book, how can writers account for these different formats?

MLA's solution to this problem has been to create a more universal approach to works cited entries. No matter the medium, citations include these elements in this order with this punctuation:

1. Author.	Last name, First name.
2. Title of source.	<i>Italicized If Independent; "Put in Quotations Marks if Not."</i>
3. Title of container,	<i>Often Italicized,</i>
4. Other contributors,	Name preceded by role title (for example: edited by, translated by, etc.),
5. Version,	i.e. 2nd ed., revised ed., director's cut, etc.,
6. Number,	vol. #, no. #,
7. Publisher,	Name of Entity Responsible for Producing Source,
8. Publication date,	i.e. 14 Feb. 2014; May-June 2016; 2017,
9. Location.	i.e. pp. 53-79; Chazen Museum of Art; https://www.wiscience.wisc.edu/ (If possible, use a DOI (digital object identifier) instead of a url.)
10. Date of Access.	Optionally included when citing a web source.

If the source doesn't include one of these elements, skip over that one and move to the next. Include a single space after commas and periods.

The third category—"container"—refers to the larger entity that contains the source. This might be a journal, a website, a television series, etc. Sometimes a source can also appear nested in more than one container. A poem, for example, might appear in an edited collection that has been uploaded to a database. A television episode fits in a larger series which may be contained by *Netflix*. When a source is in a larger container, provide information about the smaller one (i.e. the edited collection or the TV series), then provide information for elements 3–10 for the larger container. For example, the following works cited entry is for a chapter from an economics textbook, entitled *Econometrics*, that is contained on UW-Madison's Social Science Computing Cooperative website:

Hansen, Bruce E. "The Algebra of Least Squares." *Econometrics*, University of Wisconsin Department of Economics, 2017, pp. 59-87. *Social Science Computing Cooperative*, UW-Madison, <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~bhansen/econometrics/Econometrics.pdf>.

Here is the breakdown of these elements:

1. Author.	Hansen, Bruce E.
2. Title of source.	"The Algebra of Least Squares."
3. Title of container,	<i>Econometrics,</i>
4. Other contributors,	
5. Version,	
6. Number,	
7. Publisher,	University of Wisconsin Department of Economics,
8. Publication date,	2017,
9. Location.	pp. 59-87.

3. Title of container,	<i>Social Science Computing Cooperative,</i>
4. Other contributors,	
5. Version,	
6. Number,	
7. Publisher,	UW-Madison,

8. Publication date,	
9. Location.	http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~bhansen/econometrics/Econometrics.pdf .
10. Date Accessed.	(This could be included, but this site is fairly stable, so the access date wasn't deemed to be important.)

One of the benefits of this system is that it can be applied to any source. Whether you're citing a book, a journal article, a tweet, or an online comic, this system will guide you through how to construct your citation.

A couple of notes:

- Books are considered to be self-contained, so if you're citing an entire book, items 2 and 3 get joined. After the author's name, italicize the title, then include a period and move on items 4-9.
- No matter what your last item of information is for a given citation, end the citation with a period.
- Also, if it is appropriate to include an access date for an online source, put a period after the full url in addition to one after the access date information.
- It is particularly important to include access dates for online sources when citing a source that is subject to change (like a homepage). If the source you are working with is more stable (like a database), it's not as critical to let your readers know when you accessed that material.

For more information about any of this, be sure to see the 2016 *MLA Handbook* itself.

Sample Works-Cited List by Type of Source

With some kinds of sources, you will never find an exact model to follow. Source types are always changing, and this is what motivated MLA's 2016 revision in the first place! However, in what follows you can find examples of how to format frequently cited source types.

n.b., Your list of works cited should be alphabetized by authors' last names. To help you find models for citing particular kinds of sources, this list is organized by source type, instead of alphabetically. Your list of works cited should be double-spaced throughout; the samples on pp. 4-6 below are single-spaced to save room in this handout; the sample list of works cited on p. 6 shows how yours should be formatted.

type of source	Works Cited
article from a scholarly journal, with page numbers, read online from the journal's website	Shih, Shu-Mei. "Comparative Racialization: An Introduction." <i>PMLA</i> , vol. 123, no. 5, 2008, pp. 1347-62. <i>Modern Language Association</i> , doi:10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1347. [PMLA provides DOI numbers, so this is used in this citation preceded by "doi:" instead of the url address. Also, given the enduring stability of PMLA's page, no access date has been included, but it could be if the writer preferred.]
article from a scholarly journal, with multiple authors, without page numbers, read online from the journal's website	Bravo, Juan I., Gabriel L. Lozano, and Jo Handelsman. "Draft Genome Sequence of <i>Flavobacterium johnsoniae</i> CI04, an Isolate from the Soybean Rhizosphere." <i>Genome Announcements</i> , vol. 5, no. 4, 2017, doi: 10.1128/genomeA.01535-16.
article from a scholarly journal, no page numbers, read through an online database	Mieszkowski, Jan. "Derrida, Hegel, and the Language of Finitude." <i>Postmodern Culture</i> , vol. 15, no. 3, 2005. <i>Project MUSE</i> , https://muse.jhu.edu/article/186557 .

<p>article from a scholarly journal, with page numbers, read through an online database</p>	<p>Sherrard-Johnson, Cherene. "‘A Plea for Color’: Nella Larsen’s Iconography of the Mulatta." <i>American Literature</i>, vol. 76, no. 4, 2004, pp. 833-69. <i>Project MUSE</i>, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/176820.</p> <p>Valenza, Robin. "How Literature Becomes Knowledge: A Case Study." <i>ELH</i>, vol. 76, no. 1, 2009, pp. 215-45. <i>Project MUSE</i>. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/260309.</p>
<p>article from a scholarly journal, by three or more authors, print version</p>	<p>Doggart, Julia, et al. "Minding the Gap: Realizing Our Ideal Community Writing Assistance Program." <i>The Community Literacy Journal</i>, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, pp. 71-80.</p> <p>Raval, Amish N., et al. "Cellular Therapies for Heart Disease: Unveiling the Ethical and Public Policy Challenges." <i>Journal of Molecular and Cellular Cardiology</i>, vol. 45, no. 4, 2008, pp. 593-601.</p> <p>[The Latin abbreviation "et al." stands for "and others," and MLA says that you should use it when citing a source with three or more authors.]</p>
<p>article from a webtext, published in a web-only scholarly journal</p>	<p>Butler, Janine. "Where Access Meets Multimodality: The Case of ASL Music Videos." <i>Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy</i>, vol. 21, no. 1, 2016, http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.1/topoi/butler/index.html. Accessed 7 June 2017.</p> <p>Balthazor, Ron, and Elizabeth Davis. "Infrastructure and Pedagogy: An Ecological Portfolio." <i>Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy</i>, vol. 20, no. 1, 2015, http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/20.1/coverweb/balthazor-davis/index.html. Accessed 7 June 2017.</p>
<p>magazine article, print version</p>	<p>Oaklander, Mandy. "Bounce Back." <i>Time</i>, vol. 185, no. 20, 1 June 2015, pp. 36-42.</p>
<p>magazine article, read through an online database</p>	<p>Rowen, Ben. "A Resort for the Apocalypse." <i>The Atlantic</i>, vol. 319, no. 2, Mar. 2017, pp. 30-31. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=aph&AN=120967144&site=ehost-live&scope=site.</p>
<p>newspaper article, read through an online database</p>	<p>Walsh, Nora. "For Frank Lloyd Wright's 150th, Tours, Exhibitions and Tattoos." <i>New York Times</i>, 27 May 2017, international ed. <i>ProQuest</i>, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/docview/1903523834/fulltext/71B144CD12054C76PQ/2?accountid=465.</p>
<p>short story in an edited anthology</p>	<p>Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Minister’s Black Veil." <i>Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Tales</i>, edited by James McIntosh, Norton, 1987, pp. 97-107</p>
<p>book, written by one author, print versions</p>	<p>Bordwell, David. <i>Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging</i>. U California P, 2005.</p> <p>Britland, Karen. <i>Drama at the Courts of Queen Maria Henrietta</i>. Cambridge UP, 2006.</p> <p>Card, Claudia. <i>The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil</i>. Oxford UP, 2005.</p> <p>Cronon, William. <i>Nature’s Metropolis</i>. Norton, 1991.</p> <p>Mallon, Florencia E. <i>Courage Tastes of Blood: The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailio and the Chilean State, 1906-2001</i>. Duke UP, 2005.</p>
<p>book, written by more than one author</p>	<p>Bartlett, Lesley, and Frances Vavrus. <i>Rethinking Case Study Research: A Comparative Approach</i>. Taylor & Francis, 2016.</p> <p>Flanigan, William H., et al. <i>Political Behavior of the American Electorate</i>. CQ Press, 2015.</p>
<p>book, an edited anthology, print version</p>	<p>Olaniyan, Tejumola, and Ato Quayson, editors. <i>African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory</i>. Blackwell, 2007.</p>
<p>book, edited, revised edition, print version</p>	<p>Douglass, Frederick. <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself</i>. Edited by William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely, revised ed., Norton, 1996.</p>

play in an edited collection, print version	Shakespeare, William. <i>The Comedy of Errors: A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare</i> . Edited by Standish Henning, The Modern Language Association of America, 2011, pp. 1-254. [Page numbers are included in this entry to draw attention to the play itself since this edition includes an additional 400 pages of scholarly essays and historical information.]
foreword	Bordwell, David. Foreword. <i>Awake in the Dark: Forty Years of Reviews, Essays, and Interviews</i> , by Roger Ebert, U of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. xiii–xviii.
chapter in an edited anthology, print version	Amodia, David, and Patricia G. Devine. “Changing Prejudice: The Effects of Persuasion on Implicit and Explicit Forms of Race Bias.” <i>Persuasion: Psychological Insights and Perspectives</i> , edited by T.C. Brock and C. Greens, 2nd ed., SAGE Publications, 2005, pp. 249-80. Hawhee, Debra, and Christa Olson. “Pan-Historiography: The Challenges of Writing History across Time and Space.” <i>Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric</i> , edited by Michelle Ballif, Southern Illinois University Press, 2013, pp. 90-105. Shimabukuro, Mira Chieko. “Relocating Authority: Coauthor(iz)ing a Japanese American Ethos of Resistance under Mass Incarceration.” <i>Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric</i> , edited by LuMing Mao and Morris Young, Utah State UP, 2008, pp. 127-52.
non-periodical web publication, with no author and no date of publication	“New Media @ the Center.” <i>The Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison</i> , U of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center, 2012, http://www.writing.wisc.edu/newMedia@theCenter.html . Accessed 8 March 2017. [The syntax for a non-periodical web publication is: author (if no author, start with the title); title of the section or page, in quotation marks; title of the containing Web site as a whole, italicized; version or edition used (if none is specified, omit); publisher or sponsor of the site (if none is mentioned, then just skip this); date of publication (if none is listed, just skip this); use a comma between the publisher or sponsor and the date; the source’s url address; date of access.]
non-periodical scholarly web publication, no date of publication	Stahmer, Carl, editor. “The Shelley Chronology.” <i>Romantic Circles</i> , University of Maryland, https://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/chronologies/shelcron . Accessed 26 March 2017.
non-periodical web publication, corporate author	Rhetoric Society of America. “Welcome to the website of the Rhetoric Society of America and Greetings from Gregory Clark, President of RSA!” <i>RSA</i> , Rhetoric Society of America, 2017, http://www.rhetoricsociety.org/aws/RSA/pt/sp/home_page . Accessed 27 March 2017. [The syntax for this entry is: corporate author; title, in quotation marks; title of the overall Web site, in italics; publisher or sponsor of the site; date of publication; the source’s url address; date of access. Since the material on homepages is subject to change, it is particularly important to include an access date for this source.]
e-mail message	Blank, Rebecca. “Re: A request and an invitation for Department Chairs and Unit Leaders.” Received by Brad Hughes, 30 August 2016.
tweet	@UW-Madison. “Scientists at @UWCIMSS used a supercomputer to recreate the EF-5 El Reno tornado that swept through Oklahoma 6 years ago today. #okwx.” <i>Twitter</i> , 24 May 2017, 2:23 p.m., https://twitter.com/UWMadison/status/867461007362359296 . [When including tweets in the works cited page, alphabetize them according to what comes after the “@” symbol. Include the full tweet in quotation marks as the title.]
government publication	National Endowment for the Humanities. <i>What We Do</i> . NEH, March 2017, https://www.neh.gov/files/whatwedo.pdf . [This is treated as a source written by a corporate author.]
signed encyclopedia entry	Neander, Karen. “Teleological Theories of Mental Content.” <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> , edited by Edward N. Zalta, spring ed., 2012, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/content-teleological/ .
an interview you conducted	Brandt, Deborah. Personal interview. 28 May 2008.

a published interview, read through an online database	García, Cristina. Interview by Ylce Irizarry. <i>Contemporary Literature</i> , vol. 48, no. 2, 2007, pp. 174-94. <i>EBSCOhost</i> . http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=f95943f6-5364-49e7-8b837341edc4b434%40sessionmgr104 . Accessed 26 March 2017.
film or DVD	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> . Directed by Ang Lee, performances by Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman, and Kate Winslet, Sony, 1999. [You only need to include performers' names if that information is relevant to your work. If your paper focuses on the director, begin this entry with the director, i.e., Lee, Ang, director. <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> . . . If your primary focusing is an actor, begin the entry with the actor's name, i.e., Thompson, Emma, performer. <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> . . .]
television broadcast	"Arctic Ghost Ship." <i>NOVA</i> . PBS, WPT, Madison, 10 May 2017. [PBS is the network that broadcast this show; WPT is the Wisconsin PBS affiliate in Madison on which you watched this show.]
media accessed through streaming network	"Self Help." <i>The Walking Dead</i> , season 5, episode 5, AMC, 9 Nov. 2014. <i>Netflix</i> , https://www.netflix.com/watch/80010531?trackId=14170286&tctx=1%2C4%2C04bba31e-60a0-4889-b36e-b708006e5d05-911831 .
visual art	Gleizes, Albert. <i>The Schoolboy</i> . 1924, gouache or glue tempera on canvas, U of Wisconsin Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI.
address, lecture, reading, or conference presentation	Desmond, Matthew. "Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City." 1 Nov. 2016, Memorial Union Theater, Madison, WI.

Sample Works-Cited List Arranged Alphabetically and Double-Spaced As Yours Should Be in Your Paper

Works Cited

Bordwell, David. *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*. U California P, 2005.

---. Foreword. *Awake in the Dark: Forty Years of Reviews, Essays, and Interviews*, by Roger Ebert, U of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. xiii–xviii.

Carter, Shannon, and Donna Dunbar-Odom. "The Converging Literacies Center: An Integrated Model for Writing Programs." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2009, http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/14.1/praxis/Carter_Dunbar-Odom/index.html. Accessed 26 March 2017.

Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis*. Norton, 1991.

Magny, Claude-Edmonde. "Faulkner or Theological Inversion." *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Robert Penn Warren, Prentice-Hall, 1966, pp. 66-78.

Mieszkowski, Jan. "Derrida, Hegel, and the Language of Finitude." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2005. *Project MUSE*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/186557>.

Shimabukuro, Mira Chieko. "Relocating Authority: Coauthor(iz)ing a Japanese American Ethos of Resistance under Mass Incarceration." *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*, edited by LuMing Mao and Morris Young, Utah State UP, 2008, pp. 127-52.

@UW-Madison. "Scientists at @UWCIMSS used a supercomputer to recreate the EF-5 El Reno tornado that swept through Oklahoma 6 years ago today. #okwx." *Twitter*, 24 May 2017, 2:23 p.m., <https://twitter.com/UWMadison/status/867461007362359296>.

Yergeau, Melanie, Kathryn Wozniak, and Peter Vandenberg. "Expanding the Space of f2f: Writing Centers and Audio-Visual-Textual Conferencing." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2008, <http://technorhetoric.net/13.1/topoi/yergeau-et-al/>. Accessed 26 March 2017.

II. Citing Sources Within Your Paper

Indicating within your paper where you found information or a particular idea is basically the same for print sources and electronic sources. When you quote or paraphrase a specific portion of text in a source, give enough information—most typically the author's last name and the page number—to identify the exact location of the borrowed material. The parenthetical information should not repeat information given in your text (e.g., if you mention the author's name in your text, *do not* include the name in the citation). If you are using more than one source from the author in your text, then you'll need to reference to both the source's title and the author's name either in your sentence or in the parenthetical citation. Use a comma between the last name and the title of the source if both appear in the parenthetical citation.

Parenthetical citations do *not* include the word "page" or "pages" or the abbreviations "p." or "pp."—just the page numbers themselves. If an electronic source uses paragraph or section numbers instead of page numbers, use the appropriate abbreviation (e.g., "par." as in the citation to Mieszkowski below; do not count paragraphs if they are not numbered in the electronic source).

For direct references, paraphrases, and quotations that are shorter than four lines, include the citation information in parentheses at the end of the sentence directly following any quotation marks and right before the sentence's ending punctuation. Use the block quotation format for quotations more than four lines long: indent one half inch from the left margin, double space the quotation, and *do not* use quotation marks. Place the parenthetical citation *after* the period (or other mark of punctuation) that closes the block quotation.

When referring to plays, poems, or modern prose works that call attention to other divisions, first include the page number in the parenthetical citation, then provide any other identifying information—abbreviating terms like “chapter” and “section” then including the appropriate number. See an additional example below.

kind of citation	example
summary or paraphrase, author’s name in your sentence	Shimabukuro explains the Americanization movement in California schools (140).
summary or paraphrase, author’s name in citation	In the decades before World War II, California schools participated in the Americanization movement (Shimabukuro 140-41).
quotation, author’s name in your sentence	Shimabukuro argues, “The FPC’s [the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee’s] relocation of authority, the naming and claiming of a resistant ethos in a time of war, serves as a key part of our legacy as Asian Americans” (146).
author name’s in your sentence, general citation to the source	Cronon intertwines economic and environmental history. [There is no need to name the book if you have only one work by Cronon in your list of works cited.]
two sources by the same author in your works-cited list	Frye connects Burgess’ <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> to romance tradition (<i>Secular Scripture</i> 110). And while this connection may be surprising given <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> ’s themes and content, Frye’s unique perspective on the nature of genres sheds light on this unusual combination (“Rhetorical Criticism: Theory of Genres”). [As per the second reference, there is no need for a page number when citing the entire source.]
two sources cited	New webtexts illustrate the rhetorical power and possibilities of converging literacies (Carter and Dunbar-Odom; Yergeau, Wozniak, and Vandenberg).
quotation from a play with page numbers	In <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Walter doesn’t hide his disdain for his sister’s attitude towards his mother’s money: “the line between asking and just accepting when the time comes is big and wide—ain’t it!” he levels at Beneatha (Hansberry 37; act 1, scene 1).
quotation from a play with division and line numbers	This is made clear by the Duke’s recommendation that the best response to grief is to move on (<i>Othello</i> 1.3.208-209).
quotation from a one-page poem	Amy Quan Barry asks piercingly, “What is it to know the absolute value / of negative grace . . .?” [The backspace symbol “/” is used to indicate a line break.]
quotation from a multi-page poem with line numbers	It is at this point that Eliot first introduces the women in the room “talking of Michelangelo” (line 14). [Don’t abbreviate “line” or “lines. In subsequent references to this source, just use the number.]
quotation: found in indirect or secondhand source	The philosopher Alain suggested that “admiration is not pleasure but a kind of attention . . .” (qtd. in Magny 66). [Only the source you read, the secondhand source—in this case, Magny—goes in your list of works cited.]
material found in indirect or secondhand source	Alain’s words seem to dissociate admiration from pleasure (in Magny 66).
electronic source that numbers paragraphs	According to Mieszkowski, “some of Derrida’s most important contributions on Hegel are in texts that never cite him by name” (par. 2).