Citation Guide: MLA 8th Edition

This is a brief overview of the Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style, 8th edition. In academic writing, when you borrow the words, facts, or ideas of others, you must “cite,” or give credit to, those outside sources.

Cite your sources every time you are:

-- quoting (enclosing someone’s exact words in quotation marks)
-- paraphrasing (putting the words/facts/ideas of others into your own words and sentence structure)
-- summarizing (using your own words to write a concise overview of an outside source’s main points).

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Cite Your Sources in Two Places:

On the Works Cited page, where you give complete citations. This is on a separate page after your essay.

In the body of your paper, where you place brief in-text citations (see pp. 3-4 of this guide).

Core Elements for an MLA Citation (for citations on the Works Cited page):

Aim to locate all 9 core elements. Use punctuation mark shown after each element. If an element is not provided, skip it.

1. Author.  
Last name, first name, middle initial. For multiple authors or no author, see p. 2 of this guide.

2. Title of Source.  
Italicize titles of stand-alone sources (books, websites, magazines, journals, newspapers, etc.). Put title in quotation marks if source is part of a larger work (chapters, short stories, a web page, articles, etc.).

3. Title of Container,  
When a source is “nested” in a larger whole, the larger whole is the “container.” A source may have two containers: an article found in a journal (container 1) that is housed in a database (container 2). In this case, add elements 1-9 to your citation for the smaller 1st container, followed by elements 3-9 for the larger 2nd container. If a source has even more containers, continue to add elements 3-9 to your citation to account for each additional container. A printed book doesn’t have a container—it is self-contained.

4. Other Contributors,  
Precede contributor’s name with “by.” Examples: edited by, translated by, illustrated by

5. Version,  
A specific version or edition of a source, e.g., unabridged or abridged version | 8th ed. | expanded ed.

6. Number,  
If source is part of a numbered sequence, e.g., vol. 1, no. 4 | vols. 1-2 | season 2, episode 1

7. Publisher,  
Organization responsible for creating the source. For university publishers, abbreviate University as U and Press as P. Omit business abbreviations such as corp. and co. Omit publisher for journals, magazines and newspapers and for websites with titles that are essentially the same as the publisher’s name.

8. Publication Date,  
Spell out May, June, & July; abbreviate September as Sept.; abbreviate all other months to three letters, e.g., 2 Feb. 2019 | Nov.-Dec. 2018 | 2007. Date of Access is optional, but include it as last element of citation if no publication date is given. Ask your professor!

9. Location.  
The location of a source, e.g., page numbers of an article, a DOI (digital object identifier) for an article, or a URL of a website. Page numbers format: p. 27 | pp. 45-56. Unless your instructor says otherwise, when possible cite a DOI (preceded by doi:) instead of a URL. If using a URL, omit the http:// and https://.

Example – MLA Citation for Works Cited page – An Article or Page on a Website

Byron, Ellen. “Families Find Ways to Help from Home During Pandemic.” WSJ.com, 16 Apr. 2020,

Examples—MLA Citations for the Works Cited Page

Citations should be double-spaced. After the first line of each citation, indent the other lines of the citation 0.5” from the left margin. See p. 5 for help.

Print Book, One Author

An Entry or Article in a Print Encyclopedia, Reference Book, or Dictionary

A Print Work in an Edited Collection or Anthology (e.g., an essay, chapter, poem or short story)

E-Book Found in an MCC Library Database
Gans, Joshua. The Disruption Dilemma. MIT P, 2016, EBSCOHost eBook Collection, ezproxy.mcckc.edu:2350/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=cfd49e5e-cc42-4beb-a6ec-85226f36e8dd%40sessionmgr104&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=nlebk&AN=1203028.

Article Found in an MCC Library Database (Has DOI – “digital object identifier”)

Article Found in an MCC Library Database (no DOI but has a URL)

Article or Page on a Website (Government agency)

Photograph from a Website

Online Video (such as YouTube, TED Talk, etc.)

See bottom of p. 1 for an additional citation example
In-text citations are brief acknowledgments of your sources that you place within the text of your paper wherever you borrow others’ words, facts or ideas. Use in-text citations when you are quoting (enclosing someone’s exact words in quotation marks); paraphrasing (putting the ideas of others into your own words and recreating the sentence structure of the original source); or summarizing a source. MLA in-text citations usually contain the author’s name and the source’s page number (see exceptions underlined below).

Each short in-text citation should have the same first word as its longer corresponding citation on the Works Cited list, which is on a separate page after the last page of your essay. This system provides your readers with a link to your complete citation information. See pp. 1-2 of this guide for information about citations for the Works Cited list.

**MLA In-Text Citation Basics:**

- The author’s name may appear in the sentence itself or, alternatively, in parentheses following the quotation, paraphrase or summary. Within the parentheses, the author’s last name goes before the page number.  
  **Example:** (Shakespeare 58).
- If no author is provided, use a shortened version of the title of the source within the parentheses or, alternatively, the complete title of the source within the text of your paper. The first word of the shortened title must be the same as the first main word (not A, An, or The) of the source’s complete title in the Works Cited list. For shortened titles, use the first or first few words of the complete title, ignoring the words A, An, The.
- Page numbers are placed in the parentheses, not within a sentence. **If page numbers are not provided**, as often occurs with web sources, do not include them. PDF articles may have page numbers, so use them if available.

**Sample In-Text Citations for the Works Cited citation example below:**


- **Paraphrase, Author in sentence**
  
  Food writer Jenny Linford points out that chocolate was enjoyed only in liquid form prior to the mid-19th century (174).

- **Paraphrase, Author in parentheses**
  
  Until the mid-19th century, chocolate was enjoyed only in liquid form (Linford 174).

- **Quote, Author in sentence**
  
  According to Linford, “Recent findings show that raw honey can kill more than 250 strains of bacteria, including the so-called superbug MRSA” (62).

- **Paraphrase followed by quote; Author in parentheses**
  
  Salt is considered a pantry staple, yet “only 6 percent of the salt produced in the world today is used for food purposes” (Linford 79).

**Note:** The closing period goes after the parentheses.

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*More in-text citation examples on page 4*
In-Text Citation Examples: (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase, No author</td>
<td>Fathers participating in a weekly program of reading to their children said that the activity improved their parenting skills (“Engaging Fathers” 27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase, No page number</td>
<td>One study found that reading to young children benefits not only their language skills, but also their psychological growth (Klass).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase, two authors</td>
<td>Researchers assert that marketing campaigns for e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine devices should not be something that youths regularly see in the world around them or online (Kamat and Van Dyke 75).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote, indirect source</td>
<td>Zemsky and Oedel point out that “the patterns of college choice are stitched deeply in the social and economic fabric of the nation (qtd. in Iloh 229).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-text Citation for an Indirect Source

A source that paraphrases or quotes another source is called an indirect source. Example: the article by Iloh that you found includes a quote by Zemsky and Oedel that you would like to use in your paper. When possible, the best practice is to find and cite the original source of the quote (the source containing the quote by Zemsky and Oedel). If the original source can’t be located, cite the source that you are looking at (the article by Iloh).

To cite Zemsky and Oedel within the text of your paper:

1. Name the original source of the information—Zemsky and Oedel—in the text of your paper immediately before you quote or paraphrase them.
2. Cite the indirect source, Iloh, in the parenthetical citation following Zemsky and Oedel’s words. The parenthetical in-text citation should look like this: (qtd. in Iloh 229).
3. Be sure to cite Iloh in the Works Cited list at the end of your paper (but not Zemsky and Oedel).

Block Quotes (for Long Quotations)

If a quote is more than four lines of your text (or more than three lines for verse/poetry): Block the quote off from the rest of the text by indenting the entire quote ½ inch (one tab) from the left margin. The introductory phrase you place before your long quotation usually ends with a colon. Do not enclose the block quote in quotation marks. See below:

Block Quote Example:

Nick describes his impression of Gatsby at their first meeting:

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. (Fitzgerald 48)
FORMATTING YOUR MLA-STYLE PAPER

Microsoft Word

Font = Times New Roman 12 pt.
Double Space

Margins = 1” all around

Automatic Last Name & Page Number at Top Right of Each Page

1. Set the font and line spacing (see pictures above).
2. Click Insert tab at top left, then Page Number at right.
3. Click Top of Page option, then Plain number 3 box.
4. Click once to the immediate left of the number 1.
   Type your last name & a space, Example: Jones 1
5. Highlight last name & page number, click Home tab, and change font to Times New Roman, size 12.
6. To close header, double-click below dashed line.

Hanging Indents (all lines of a Works Cited citation after the first line have a ½” indentation)

1. Begin the Works Cited list on the first line of a new, separate page of your paper, after your essay.
2. Click Align Center icon. Type the words Works Cited, then hit enter once.
3. Set hanging indents at 0.5”: click tiny arrow in lower right corner of Paragraph section > click Special pull-down menu > Hanging > click OK.
4. Type citations. Each citation should now indent its second and subsequent lines ½ inch. If you typed your citations before you set up hanging indents, just highlight them all and do step 3 above.
5. Alphabetize citations by first main word of citation.

Google Docs

Font = Times New Roman 12 pt.
Double Space

Margins = 1” all around

Automatic Last Name & Page Number at Top Right of Each Page

1. Set the font and line spacing (see pictures above).
2. Click Insert > Page Numbers.
3. Click on the first picture box, upper left corner (it shows page numbers 1 & 2 at top right of pages).
4. Click once to the immediate left of the number 1.
   Type your last name and a space, Example: Jones 1
5. To close header, double-click anywhere in white space below header.

Hanging Indents (all lines of a Works Cited citation after the first line have a ½” indentation)

1. Begin the Works Cited list on the first line of a new, separate page of your paper, after your essay.
2. Click “Center Align” icon. Type the words Works Cited, then press enter once.
3. Click “Left Align” icon. Click Format > Indent & Outdent > Indentation Options > . Next, under “Special Indent” select Hanging > Apply.
4. Type citations. Each citation should now indent its second and subsequent lines ½ inch. If you typed your citations before you set up hanging indents, just highlight them all and do step 3 above.
5. Alphabetize citations by first main word of citation.

Page design adapted from American River College Library
We Should Read Online Reviews with a Critical Eye

In today’s digital age, consumers seeking advice about a potential purchase need only find the item online and click “Reviews.” Results of a 2016 study show that 82 percent of U.S. adults do just that, with 65 percent of regular review readers saying that online reviews are “generally accurate” (Smith and Anderson). Other research details unethical practices in which third-party “marketers” pay reviewers for positive reviews (Botsman 146-47). Although online reviews are convenient and often beneficial, they may also be dishonest or biased, and that drawback should not be ignored.

Close to half of Americans feel that using online star ratings and reviews helps consumers to feel good about what they buy (Smith and Anderson). When it comes to the tone of online reviews, research shows that negative reviews most strongly affect shoppers’ purchasing practices (Beaton). Buyers are…

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Works Cited

