Citation Guide: MLA


- Copies are available at the SFU Library, call number: LB 2369 G53 2016
- This guide is available online at https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides/mla
- For example and practice sheets see the MLA website: https://style.mla.org/

This guide is based on the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 8th ed. and provides selected citation examples for common types of sources. For more detailed information please consult the print version of the MLA handbook.

Graduate students and professional writers might also need to consult the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, call number PN 147 G444 2008.

Keep track of your document references/citations and format your reference lists easily with citation management software.

Information about select software can be found at https://www.lib.sfu.ca/find/research-tools/citation-software

General notes on MLA 8 style

The MLA citation style is generally used in the humanities (English, Philosophy, Music etc.). While the 8th edition provides detailed guidelines on how to create in-text and reference citations, it does not include instructions on how to format your research paper. For proper MLA paper formatting guidelines, refer to the 7th edition of the MLA handbook & the MLA Style Centre website.

MLA requires that the entire paper be double-spaced, including all the lines in the list of works cited (7th edition - 4.2, 5.3.2).
All pages of the paper, including the list of works cited, need to be numbered consecutively and must appear in the top right-hand corner of the page after your last name (7th edition - 4.4, 5.3.2).

You need to cite and document any sources that you have consulted, even if you presented the ideas from these sources in your own words (7th edition - 5.1). You need to cite:

- To identify other people's ideas and information used within your essay
- To inform the reader of your paper where they should look if they want to find the same sources
- A citation must appear in two places in your paper:
  - In the body of your paper ("in-text citations")
  - In the list of works cited (at the end of your paper)

To introduce other people's ideas in your paper, use the following examples:

- Richardson argues, refers to, explains, hypothesizes, compares, concludes
- As Littlewood and Sherwin demonstrated, proved, ... etc.
- The electoral system that was adopted in Germany after the Second World War combined majority decision rule and proportional representation (Wattenberg and Shugart 280).

Spelling: Use a standard English language dictionary, such as Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary or Canadian Oxford Dictionary.

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**Approach to citation**

Today, a single document or publication is often produced and accessed in various formats and mediums (for example, a film may be viewed on Netflix, DVD, or digital download, or through a public viewing). Sometimes the medium of publication cannot be defined in simple terms. The 8th edition of the MLA style guide reflects this wide range of publication formats; rather than providing strict instructions on how to format a citation for specific types of sources, the guide now focuses on the process of scholarly documentation. Therefore, the MLA Handbook does not list specific rules on how to cite a DVD, a book, a journal article, etc., but instead outlines a universal set of general guidelines of citation and documentation that can be applied to any source type.

These guidelines provide a basic model for citations: writers create citations, not by looking for specific formulas for individual source types, but rather consulting MLA's list of core elements, and assembling them in the standard order.

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**Core elements**

The 8th edition of the MLA style guide identified "core elements" as basic pieces of information that should be common to all source types (DVDs, print or digital books, journal articles, comments on blogs, etc.) (pp. 20-54). The MLA core elements are as follows:
If a particular core element is not deemed relevant to a particular source type, it can be omitted from the citation. For example, a YouTube video may not be associated with a particular version, and the works cited citation will therefore not include a version number (p. 20).

Note on containers: A source is sometimes part of a larger work. For example, a journal article is part of a larger whole - the journal in which it was published. The journal, in turn, may be located in a database. For citation purposes, the larger whole (ex. journal or a database) is a container.

Once you understand the basic principles of citation, you can apply them to any source type, without concern to the actual format or medium of publication. While the MLA guidelines reflects this approach, we have developed specific examples for commonly used source types for you.

**Parenthetical (in-text citations)**

If you directly quote from, summarize or use the ideas or arguments from a book or article, then list the author's last name, followed by a space and the page number without any other punctuation (i.e., no commas) (pp. 54-58; pp. 116-127, 3.1-3.6).

"Corporal punishment was employed as a legally imposed penalty in Colonial America" (Forer 142).

If you incorporate the author's name in the text of your paper, only provide the page number in parentheses, for example:

Forer states that "corporal punishment was employed as a legally imposed penalty in Colonial America" (142).

If a quotation is more than four lines when typed into your paper, begin the quotation double-spaced on a new line that is indented by 2.5cm (1 inch). The quotation should be double-spaced. Do not use quotation marks. Also note that the period is placed before the parenthetical citation (pp. 76-77, 1.3.2). For example:

At the conclusion of *My Side of the Mountain*, Sam realized how much he had missed his family:

Then I jumped in the air and laughed for joy. I recognized my four year-old brother's pleasure song. The family! Dad had brought the family! Every one of them. I ran, twisting, and turning through the trees like a Cooper's hawk, and occasionally riding a free fifty feet downhill on an aspen sapling. Dad gave me a resounding slap, and Mother hugged me until she cried. I led them proudly up the mountain. (George 175)
Many electronic sources do not provide page numbers. Sometimes the source will have paragraph numbers that you can use for your parenthetical citation. Use the abbreviation "par." for a single paragraph or "pars." for multiple paragraphs. Don't count paragraphs yourself if they are not indicated on the document (p. 56; p. 96, 1.6.2).

Women talked of their aspirations relating to their clothes and of attempts to create images, which were perceived as successful. (Martin par. 20)

If there are no page or paragraph numbers, the MLA guide recommends that you incorporate the name of the author in the text of your paper:

Mitchell argues that there is a link between soda consumption and obesity.

You may indicate in your paper an approximate location of the cited passage:

In the final third of his article, Mitchell argues there is a link between soda consumption and obesity.

Conversely, you can may also include only author information in the parenthetical citation (p. 56):

There is a link between soda consumption and obesity (Mitchell).

If you cite multiple works by the same author, place a comma after the author’s last name in the parenthetical (in-text) citation and add the title (in full or a shortened version if it is long) and the relevant page reference, e.g., (Foucault, History of Madness 125) (p. 55; pp. 117-118, 3.2.1).

Works cited

At the end of your paper, you will list all your sources on a separate page entitled Works Cited (pp. 20-54; pp. 102-116). The works cited entries are composed of the "core elements", and are given in the order in which they are presented in the list above, along with the punctuation mark shown (unless it is the final element in the citation, in which case it should end with period). Elements may be omitted if they are deemed irrelevant or are absent. For example, if a work does not have an author, the works cited entry would start with the title of the source (p. 24).

The works cited list is arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. If there is no author, use the title of the source (p. 112, 2.7).

The works cited list is double-spaced throughout, both between and within entries. If a citation is more than one line, the second line is indented by 1.25 cm (0.5 inches) (p. 112, 2.7).

Use the format of the author's name as it appears on the title page of a work (e.g. "Mooney, Jayne," or "Danto, Arthur C.," or "Gibaldi, M. C.") (p. 21).
Newmeyer argues in favour of "the classical Saussurean position with respect to the relationship between knowledge of language and use of language" (682).
Works Cited
To cite a magazine article found in print
To cite a magazine article found online

Comments
• Give the date as presented in the source. Some periodicals may publish daily, weekly, monthly, or once every season (p. 45).
• Some sources, especially those published online, may be associated with more than one publication date. For example, a work online may also have been published in print previously. In cases where there are multiple publication dates, cite the one most relevant to your use of the work (pp. 42-43):
  o ex. if you are accessing an article online that is also published in print, cite the online publication date.
• If no author's name is given, begin the entry with the title.
• If the article was found online through an online database, include the name of the database in italics (e.g. CBCA Complete or MasterFILE Premier), and the date of access (p. 32; p. 53).

Newspaper article
Parenthetical (in-text)
(Kingston C6)
("Byword" A10) [Note: news article with no author]

Works Cited
To cite a newspaper article found in print
Kingston, Gary. "Canada's Coach Loves Waving the Flag." The Vancouver Sun, 4 July 2004, D2.
To cite a newspaper article found online
Comments

- If there is no author, use the title (shortened, if necessary) in place of the author in your in-text citations; start your Works Cited citation with full title (p. 24). For more information on how to abbreviate titles, refer to p. 117, 3.2.1.
- If the article is on consecutive pages, specify the page range (e.g. pp. 4-6). If the article is presented in non-consecutive pages (for example, if the article begins on page 5 and continues on page 15), follow the first page number with a plus sign (e.g. pp. 5+) (p. 110, 2.5.1).
- The city of publication of a locally published newspaper must either be in the newspaper title (e.g. The Vancouver Sun) or added to the title in square brackets (e.g. The Province [Vancouver]) (p. 111, 2.6.1) You do not need to provide city of publication if the paper is published nationally (e.g. National Post or The Globe and Mail).
- Specify the edition if indicated (e.g. "natl. ed."; "late ed.") (pp. 38-39).
- If the article was found online through an online database, include the name of the database in italics (e.g. Canadian Newsstream or PressReader), and the date of access (p. 32; p. 53).

Film, video, or television episode

Parenthetical (in-text)
Where possible, incorporate the title of the film, video, or television episode in the text of your research paper rather than using a parenthetical reference. For example:

Ichikawa's Burmese Harp, narrating the experience of Japanese soldiers stationed in Burma during the Second World War, was one of the first films to depict the wartime experience from the perspective of the Japanese army.

If you choose to use in-text citations with time-based media, such as film or video recordings, you will also need to cite the relevant time or time ranges. Times should be denoted as the hours, minutes, and seconds displayed on the media player, separating the numbers with colons (p. 57). For example:

Elinor’s frustrations and inner turmoil manifest in her response to Marianne's question (“Sense and Sensibility” 01:42:10--1:43:04).

Works cited

To cite film itself

The Burmese Harp [Biruma no tategoto]. Directed by, Kon Ichikawa, Nikkatsu, 1956.

To cite the director’s contribution


To cite the performer’s contribution

To cite an online video

Film without an author

To cite an episode from a television series


Comments
- It is not necessary to list performers, but performers or producers can be included if it seems relevant (p. 24; p. 38).
- For content accessed online, also include "Date of Access" to show when you accessed the online material (p. 53).
- Include the original release date for the film, video, etc.; dates should be expressed in the form you deem most appropriate (pp. 43-44). For example, you may choose to only write the year when citing a film, and write the full date when citing an episode of a television series.
- When working with authors with variant forms of names (ex. YouTube usernames), see p. 102 (2.1.1)
- For films, TV episodes, online videos, etc. with multiple publication dates, see p. 42.
- For audio recordings, see p. 28 & p. 39.

Book, single author
Parenthetical (in-text)
Caughie examines the confusion surrounding definitions of modernism in the humanities and social sciences (1).

(Danto 31)

Works Cited


Comments
- When providing a publisher's name, omit business words such as Company ("Co."), Corporation ("Corp."), Limited ("Ltd."), etc. In the case of academic presses,
replace "University press" with "UP"; if with the words are separated, replace them with "U" and/or "P". In all other instances, publishers' names should be provided in their entirety (p. 97, 1.6.4):
  o  e.g. U of Chicago P, MIT P, Oxford UP.
• If you are citing a work without page numbers, it is preferable to include the author's name and work in your essay instead of in a parenthetical reference. You can also cite simply the author information in the parenthetical reference:
  o  e.g. Their determination exceeds that of most participants (Libtim)

Book, multiple authors

Parenthetical (in-text)
(Messenger and de Bruyn 305-09) [Two authors]
(Unsworth et al. 107) [More than three authors]

Works Cited

Comments
• List the author's/editor's names in the order in which they are given on the book's title page (pp. 21 - 22).
• The first author's name should be written in the inverse (e.g. Unsworth, Len) (pp. 21 - 22).
• The names of the other authors can be written in natural language (e.g. Angela Thomas) (pp. 21 - 22).
• If there are three authors or more, give the name of the first author in the inverse followed by "et al." (pp. 21 - 22).
• A book may be produced by an individual or group whose role is not that of author (for example, editor or translator). In this case, follow the name of the individual(s) with a label that describes their role(s) (pp. 22-23):
• If citing multiple works by the same author, refer to p. 113 (section 2.7.2) of the MLA Handbook 8th Ed.

Book, corporate author

Parenthetical (in-text)
(CBC 228)
A study prepared by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation analyzed [...] (228).
Works Cited

*The CBC: A Perspective*. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1978 [Work published by organisation that is also the author]

Comments

- A corporate author is an agency, body or organization that commissions a publication in its name. The names of individual authors are not included on the publication's title page.
- If the corporate author is also the publisher, then the corporate name should only be included in the citation as publisher, and the citation should begin with the title of the work (p. 25; p. 104, 2.1.3). In parenthetical citations, the title of the work may be shortened (e.g. "The CBC: A Perspective" is shortened to "CBC" in the above example).
- If the corporate author's name begins with an article such as *The, A, or An*, omit the article in the citation.
- If the author's name is long, it is better to include the name in the text, so that the flow of the writing is not interrupted (see the second example above).
- If citing works by government agencies, refer to p. 104 (section 2.1.3) of the MLA handbook 8th Ed.

Book, no author or editor

Parenthetical (in-text)

(Book of Boy's Stories 20)

Works Cited


Comments

- When referring to the work in the body of your essay, use the title of the work in the in-text citation (pp. 55-56). Omit articles (e.g. *The, A, An*) in in-text citations (pp. 117-118, 3.2.1)
- In the list of works cited, alphabetize anonymous works by title (p. 24). Disregard articles (for example: *The, A, And*) when organizing your works cited list (p. 115, 2.7.4).

Book chapters & works in anthologies (works by different authors)

Parenthetical (in-text)

(Irwin and Cressey 141-46)

Works Cited

Comments
- If the book has a compiler instead of an editor, write "Compiled by" instead of "Edited by".

Online book (entire / chapter)
Parenthetical (in-text)
(Hartley 85)
(Cook 135)

Works Cited


Comments
- When citing an online book, include the same publication details as when citing a print book. In addition, include in italics the title of the database or the website where the book was retrieved and the URL (p. 34).
- You may also choose to include the date of access ("Accessed day/month/year") (p. 53).
- When citing a particular chapter, place the chapter title in quotation marks and between the author's name and the title of the book (see second example above).

Conference proceedings
Parenthetical (in-text)
(Brewin, Paul, and Monita 19)
(The Workshop for )

Works cited

Proceedings without an editor
*10th International Workshop on Accelerator Alignment, February 11-15, 2008, Tsukua, Japan*. Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, SPIRES-HEP.
One presentation in the proceedings


Comments

- When citing a published conference proceeding in your paper, provide the same information as when citing a book but also include additional information such as the title and date of the conference.
- If citing a single presentation at a conference, provide the author and title of the presentation and details about the conference proceedings in the same format as citing a chapter in a book (see the third example above).
- If you are citing an anonymous work, use the title of the work (or an abbreviated form of it) in the parenthetical (in-text) citation and alphabetize by the title of the work in the Works Cited list.

Custom courseware

Comments

- Custom courseware packages are compilations of journal articles, book chapters and other materials selected by your instructor. The MLA manual does not give specific advice about citing these materials, so you will have to use your judgment and come up with your own solution.
- If you need to cite a source from a Custom Courseware package, we recommend that you check with your instructor.

However, here are two possible approaches to citing this type of material:

Find the full, original citation
Find the full citation where the article, chapter, etc. was originally published, and cite accordingly. The full citations may be included on the first page of the course pack. If the full citation is not included within the course pack, try finding the citation via Citation Finder, Library Search, Catalogue Search, or a database.

Treat the Courseware package as an anthology
Treat the article, chapter, etc. as if it was part of an anthology, or edited book. If you take this approach, credit the instructor who did the compilation as a book editor/compiler.

You will probably not have the page numbers, since the Custom courseware is not a true publication and is not paginated throughout.

You will also have to include the name of the compiler, the title of the Courseware, the name of the course (e.g. CMNS 210), the semester (e.g. Spring 2006) and the publisher (Simon Fraser University).

Bear in mind that someone trying to find the article/chapter from a course pack you cited might not have access to the same course pack.
Encyclopedias and dictionaries

Parenthetical (in-text)

(Bergmann 502)

("Cronstedtite")

Works cited


Comments

• Citing an encyclopedia article or dictionary entry is similar to citing a chapter in an anthology in a book.
• Include the author's name (if available), the article or entry title, the title of the reference work.
• If the work was accessed online, include the database used and the URL. You may also choose to include access date.
• If the article or entry is unsigned, provide the title first.

Indirect sources

Parenthetical (in-text)

As Marcel Proust reminisced: "There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those . . . we spent with a favourite book (qtd. in Wolf, 6)."

Works cited


Comments

• Whenever possible, take material from the original source, rather than citing an indirect source (p. 124, 3.4)
• If the original source is not available, cite the indirect (secondary) source, i.e. the one you have in hand ("Wolf")
  o "qtd." stands for "quoted."
• You may document the original source ("Proust") in a footnote; provide a number for a footnote (p. 124, 3.4), e.g.: ¹See Marcel Proust, On Reading (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 3, qtd. in Wolf, 6.
• If you create a footnote for the original source, you will also need to create an entry for the original source in the list of Works Cited.
Lecture, speech, reading or address
Parenthetical (in-text)

(Crespi)

In his discussion of the evolution and nature of the fossil record, Professor Dunlop emphasized. . . .

Works cited


Comments

• When citing an oral presentation, like a class lecture, give:
  o the speaker's name
  o the title of the presentation in quotation marks, if known
  o the name of the sponsoring organization
  o the date
  o the venue
  o the location. The city may be omitted if part of the venue name (e.g. Vancouver Convention Centre) (p. 50).

• Provide a descriptive label (Address, Lecture, Keynote speech, Reading) to indicate the type of presentation after the location (p. 52).

• If you are citing a class lecture, provide the lecture title in quotation marks after the professor's name, the course name and course number after the lecture title and add the word "Class lecture" (without quotation marks) after the location.

• If your class lecture does not have a title, provide the course name and course number after the professor's name and write "Class lecture" (without quotation marks) after the location.

Tables

Place the citation immediately below the table:


Figures

Place the citation immediately below the figure

A photograph by the author of the book:

Fig. 1. Italian manhole cover, photograph from Mia Fuller, "Preservation and Self-Absorption," Italian Colonialism, edited by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
Citing a photograph in book reprinted from another source:

Fig. 2. Wladek Cygianiewicz Zybszko, photograph from Augustus Sherman, Augustus Sherman Collection, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, Ellis Island; reprinted in Erica Rand, The Ellis Island Snow Globe, Duke UP, 2005, 93.

Comments

• When including a table in your paper, label and number the table (e.g. Table 1, Table 2) and provide a title for the table that is descriptive of the table's content. Include the source of the table in a caption immediately below the table.
• All other illustrative visual material (e.g., a picture, map, graph or chart) except musical illustrations included in your paper should be labeled "Fig," assigned a number and given a caption.
• Musical illustrations are labeled "Ex." instead of 'Fig."
• If complete bibliographical information about the source of the table or illustration is provided in the caption, and the source is not mentioned in your paper, you do not need to include an entry for the source in the list of works cited.
• Cite tables and figures according to regular MLA rules except:
  o Use commas instead of periods when citing tables and figures, except for the period at the end of the citation.
  o Format the author's name with the given name before the family name, (e.g. Mia Fuller, not Fuller, Mia).

Website

Parenthetical (in-text)

Author information integrated into the text

Quinion explains that this use of the phrase is not redundant.

(Dyches)

("Biggest war")

Works cited


Comments

• If there is no author, use the title (shortened, if necessary) in place of the author in your in-text citations. For more information on how to abbreviate titles, refer to p. 117, 3.2.1.
• When citing a website in Works Cited, provide as much as possible of the following information (5.6.2):
  o Author's name. If no author is listed, start with the title of the document (p. 24; pp. 55-56).
  o Title of the document (in quotation marks or italicized) (pp. 68-70, 1.2.2).
  o Title of the overall website (italicized, if distinct from the title of the document) (pp. 68-70, 1.2.2).
  o Publisher or sponsor of the site; if the website title is essentially the same as that of its publisher, publisher information may be omitted from the reference (p. 42).
  o Date of publication.
• Include the URL of the webpage (p. 48; p. 110, 2.5.2).
• Include the date of access (p. 32; p. 53).
• If there are no page or paragraph numbers, the MLA guide recommends that you incorporate the name of the author in the text of your paper. You may also cite author's name in parentheses without a page or paragraph number, if you prefer (p. 56).
• Include a URL only if the site is too difficult to find without it, or if an instructor requires it. Only break a URL between two lines after a single or double slash. Do not use a hyphen to connect the URL between the two lines (5.6.1).