MLA Style: Beginner’s Guide

Modern Language Association (MLA) is a documentation style used for writing papers and citing sources. It is frequently used in the humanities and liberal arts.

The following information is a simplified guide to MLA style. It is based on the Seventh Edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

For additional resources on MLA style, see the How to Write a Research Paper section of the PCC library home page (http://www.pima.edu/library).

Part A In-Text Citations (Parenthetical Citations)

In-text citations (or parenthetical citations) point your reader to specific entries on the Works Cited or References page. These are located throughout the body of your paper, and are used whenever you quote, paraphrase, or summarize information from a source listed on your Works Cited page. The in-text citation is generally located at the end of the sentence, or as close as possible to the text in which you quote, paraphrase, or summarize information from a source.

In-text citations include:
- Last name(s) of the author(s) – see the examples below for how to handle citations for different situations, such as different number of authors.
- Page number of the article or book you are citing – always in parentheses.

You can cite references either within the text, or at the end of a sentence using parentheses:
- Author name as part of a narrative: Smith and Jones dispute the Committee’s conclusion (10).
- Citation within parentheses: Some researchers strongly dispute the Committee’s conclusion (Smith and Jones 10).
- Source cited within an article Clark’s study (as found in Smith & Jones, 10), indicates that...(In this situation, your Works Cited page will contain the article by Smith & Jones. Clark is merely credited in the text of your paper.)

Examples:
One, two, or three authors: (Jones 7), (Dunn and Diaz 44), (Lott, Bok, and Till 9)
Four or more authors: (Phipps et al. 45) OR (Phipps, Jones, Soto, and Blake 45)
No author (for an article): (“Economy Perks Up” 11) “use first few words of the Title (in quotes)
No page number: (Jones) OR “Jones states that…”

Part B Formatting a Works Cited Page

The Works Cited or References page is an alphabetical list of all the sources you cite in your paper. Every source you want to use in your paper must be listed on the works cited page.

Here are some basic rules to follow when making your Works Cited page:
- The Works Cited page should be placed at the end of your paper.
- The Works Cited page should begin on a new page.
- The Works Cited page should be double spaced and the second line of each entry should be a hanging indent (see example on right). To get this in MS Word:
  o Select all text, and then right-click it.
  o From the pop-up menu, select Paragraph.
  o To double-space the text, under Spacing, Line Spacing, select Double.
  o To add a hanging indent, under Indentation, Special, select Hanging. This indents the lower lines of each entry 0.5” from the left.
- Alphabetize each entry/reference on your Works Cited page by author’s last name, or if the author’s name is not given, by the title of the first work.

Next, create individual entries/references for each of your sources according to the proper MLA citation format...
This section briefly explains how to cite the most commonly used resources as part of an MLA Works Cited page. For more information, contact a PCC Librarian, or find the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th ed.) at your PCC campus library.

General rules
- If your source lacks one of the ingredients in the recipe, you can ignore that ingredient and continue. For instance, if your book doesn't list an author, you can skip it and go on to the title.
- Pay close attention to italicized and capitalized text.
  - Books Titles (as well as journal, magazine, newspaper, encyclopedia, and database titles) should be italicized and capitalized.
  - Article titles should be in "quotation marks".
- For correct information, such as the book title, cities, and publisher, consult the title page of the book (not the book's cover). The copyright date is found on the next page, next to the © symbol, for example, © 2009

Medium of Publication
In the recipes below, you will also notice a place for the “Format” of your source. The “Format” is the medium of publication. For more on formats, see MLA 5.7.

Here are the most common formats you would use:

- **Print** – any printed book, magazine, journal, encyclopedia, etc.
- **Web** – websites, scholarly articles from online databases, online newspaper and magazine articles.

1. **FORMATTING FOR AUTHOR NAMES**

When listing the author(s) of a source, a number of general rules should be followed across all publication formats. In general, author last names are listed, followed by their first name, and middle initial. Use name(s) on title page of book or article.

Refer to the adjacent examples for different author conditions.

| One Author | Lopez, Maria. |
| Two Authors | Lopez, Maria, and John Fox. |
| Three Authors | Lopez, Maria, John Fox, and Amy Moran. |
| Four or More Authors | Lopez, Maria, et al. ("et al." means “and others.”) |
| Organization as Author | Pima Community College. |
| No Author | <skip the author and begin with title> |

2. **BOOKS**

**PRINTED BOOKS**

Author(s). Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Print.

**ELECTRONIC BOOKS (E-BOOKS)**

Author(s). Title of the Book: Subtitle of the Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Source. Web. Date you accessed it.

- The Source is the name of the database where the e-Book is located, and should be italicized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Book</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</table>
- An edited book is a collection of articles or chapters, often written by various authors. It has an editor instead of an author.
- Use the example above if you are citing the book as a whole. To cite one of the articles in the book, see section 2, “Article or Chapter in a Book.”
3. ARTICLE OR CHAPTER IN A BOOK  (Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, and Anthologies)

WIDELY-USED, PRINTED REFERENCE BOOKS:


SPECIALIZED REFERENCE BOOKS OR ARTICLES IN ANTHOLOGIES:


Electronic reference books and anthologies (found in library databases):

Author(s). “Title of the Article.” Title of Overall Website, Edition. Publisher or Sponsor. Date of publication. Web. Date you accessed it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Article</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article in a widely used encyclopedia or dictionary</td>
<td>Doyle, Jeffrey Scott. “Handgun.” World Book Encyclopedia. 2007 ed. Print. ✓ Widely used reference books have a simplified format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic encyclopedia or dictionary article from a library database</td>
<td>&quot;de Kooning, Willem.&quot; Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009. Web. 20 July 2009. ✓ Publication date is same as edition, in some cases. If no specific date is given, look for the copyright year at the bottom of the page.</td>
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* For articles in the Gale Literary Criticism Series (e.g. Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC) and Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)), see our handout titled MLA STYLE: GALE LITERARY CRITICISM SERIES for guidelines on formatting references in either print or electronic format.

4. ARTICLE IN A JOURNAL, MAGAZINE, OR NEWSPAPER

Electronic articles (found in library databases):


✓ Use the PDF version of the article (if available) to get the correct page range.
✓ If page information is unavailable, use the abbreviation “n. pag.”

Printed articles:

Author(s). “Title of the Article.” Title of the Journal Volume#.issue# (Year published): Page range. Print.
The table below has some other common formats you may come across. If your source isn’t listed, refer to MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers for additional examples for things like performances, works of art, maps, legal sources, government documents, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview that you conducted in person</strong></td>
<td>Olsen, Lute. Personal interview. 23 Feb. 2007.</td>
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