“This edition of the MLA Handbook is designed to help writers think about the sources they are documenting, select the information about the sources that is appropriate to the project they are creating, and organize it logically and without complication” (4).

Guiding Principles of MLA Style

“This edition, by contrast, is not centered on publication formats. It deals instead with facts common to most works—author, title, and so on. The writer examines the source and records its visible features, attending to the work itself and a set of universal guidelines” (3).

“Remember that there is often more than one correct way to document a source” (4).

“Make your documentation useful to readers” (4).

“Good writers understand why they create citations. The reasons include demonstrating the thoroughness of the writer’s research, giving credit to original sources, and ensuring that readers can find the source consulted in order to draw their own conclusions about the writer’s argument” (4).

Steps to Comprehensive MLA Citations

1. “Examine the work itself for the facts about its publication” (13).

2. Create documentation after deciding that your sources are relevant and credible (19).

3. “A citation should provide a road map leading to the original source while interrupting the reader’s engagement with the text as little as possible” (19).

4. “To satisfy the two requirements of completeness and brevity, documentation in MLA style has two parts. The first part is a detailed entry in a list of works cited; the second is a citation in the text, a minimal reference that directs the reader to the entry” (19).

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

The Basics

The purpose of in-text citations is to point your reader to the correct source listed on your Works Cited page. In-text citations should hold just enough information for an interested reader to locate the source, and little enough information that an uninterested reader is not distracted by it.

In-Text Citation Options

According to Heusch, et al., “public report cards administered by health insurance plans are similarly available nationwide” (1274).

OR

The nationwide availability of “public report cards administered by health insurance plans” is a relatively new development (Heusch, et al. 1274).

Corresponding Works Cited Entry


Special Cases

In all of these examples, it is most useful to introduce the source in the text of your paper.

- Two works by different authors with the same last name: indicate the difference by including the initial for the first name. For example, (H. Clinton) or (B. Clinton).
- Two works by the same author: use a small portion of the titles of the works to differentiate. For instance, (Gladwell, Outliers 43) or (Gladwell, Tipping 92).
- No author, or the author is an organization (so the title appears first on your Works Cited page): use only a portion of the title in parentheses
- Paraphrase ideas from two sources in one sentence: contained in one set of parentheses, list them properly in order separated by a semi-colon
CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: AUTHORS

One author:
Begin entry with author’s last name then a comma follow by their first name and a period.

Two authors:
Include names in the order they are presented in the work with the first author’s last name appearing first and the second author’s name in normal order.

Three or more authors:
Reverse the order of the first author’s name then follow it with a comma and “et al.” (meaning, “and others”).

Corporate author
List the name of the corporation, government agency, etc. as the author.

Descriptors:
The term author basically refers to the individual(s) responsible for the work. In some cases, you may use a work with a creator other than the author.

Editor(s)

Translator

Media

Pseudonyms (including usernames, are given as author names)
Example: @jk_rowling. “Indeed, I’m intending to exercise my free vote in this referendum to decry the lack of democracy round these parts.” Twitter, 14 June 2016, 10:40 a.m., twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/742722903033171968

No author
If no author is listed, skip that element and begin the entry with the work’s title.
CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: TITLE

The Basics
Standardize capitalization and punctuation between the main title and subtitle. Use quotation marks if the source is a portion of a larger work and italics if the source stands on its own. For **untitled sources**, provide a generic description in neither quotation marks nor italics. Capitalize the first word in the description, along with any proper nouns. You may, for a tweet, duplicate the entire message to act as the title of the source. Similarly, for emails, the subject is recommended.

Examples

**Book**

**Collection of essays/poetry/stories**

**Essay in a collection**

**Article in a magazine**

**Web site**

**Posting on a web site**

**Television series**

**Episode of a television series**
“Cancer Man.” *Breaking Bad*, created by Vince Gilligan, season 1, episode 4, AMC, 2008.
CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: CONTAINER

The Basics

If your source is part of a larger whole, think of the whole as the container. The container is usually italicized and followed by a comma because the information that follows it will describe the container. For instance, for a page on a web site, you would designate the name of the web site as the container; similarly, for an article in a newspaper, the name of the newspaper would act as the container.

Examples

Poem in a Collection

Article in a Newspaper

Article in a Journal

Post on a Blog
Summerson, Cameron. “How to Make Your Samsung Galaxy Phone Feel More Like Stock Android.” How-To Geek, 15 June 2016. howtogeek.com

Facebook Status
Have a Gay Day. “Thank You to Everyone That has Changed Your Profile Photos to a Candle.” Facebook, 15 June 2016.

Episode on a Streaming Service
**CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: VERSION**

**The Basics**

If your source indicates that it is a version of work released in more than one form, such as an edition, indicate this in your citation.

**Examples**

**Book**


**CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: NUMBER**

**The Basics**

Your source may be part of a larger set of items. If, for example, you consulted one volume in a multivolume set, one issue or volume of a journal, or one episode in a television series, you should include that information to point your reader back to the original source.

**Examples**

**Multiple Volumes**

**Journal Article**

**Comic Book**
CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: PUBLISHER

The Basics

The publisher is responsible for making a source available. This information can usually be found on the title page of a book, the bottom of a website accompanying a copyright symbol, etc. You can eliminate the name of the publisher if one is not available or if the name of the web site is essentially the name of the publisher.

Examples

Books

Films

Websites

CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: DATE

The Basics

Specify the most recent publication date or update for web sites. Write out the date as it appears in your source; if the month, day, and year are available, then include them.

Example

Poem in a Collection
CORE ELEMENTS OF CITATION: LOCATION

The Basics
A work’s location will depend on the medium of publication. For print sources, list the page number (p.) or numbers (pp.). Include the URL or web address to indicate the location of an online source.

Examples

Journal Article

Post on a Blog

THINGS TO NOTE

Other Contributors
Individuals besides the author may receive credit for the existence of a source. If their contribution is important to your research or will help a reader identify the source, include their name preceded by a description of their role. For example:

adapted by  directed by  edited by  illustrated by
introduction by  narrated by  performance by  translated by

URLs and DOIs
When giving a URL, copy it in full from your web browser, but omit http:// or https://. Avoid citing URLs produced by shortening services (like bit.ly), since such a URL may stop working if the service that produced it disappeared.

Articles in journals are often assigned DOIs, or Digital Object Identifiers. A DOI will continue to lead to an object online even if the URL changes. When possible, cite a DOI (preceded by doi:) instead of a URL.

Example: doi:10.1016.j.bbrc.2015.02.146
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