

MLA Style Guidelines – 8th Edition

The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) published the 8th Edition of *The MLA Handbook* in 2016.

Please note: your institution or instructor may be using the updated 9th Edition of MLA. Be sure to carefully review your syllabus, assignment instructions, and professor expectations to determine which edition you should be using. If you need to use the 9th Edition of *The MLA Handbook*, you can consult the [Brainfuse MLA Style Guide – 9th Edition](#) for help.

[Example Essay](#)

You can download a sample essay adhering to MLA Style (8th Edition) here:

<https://www.brainfuse.com/curriculumupload//1514393238703.pdf>

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General Layout

Title Page: MLA does not require a title page. Instead, MLA requires a **heading** on your first page. This should include your name, your instructor's name, the course title, and date (Day Mon Year or Mon Day Year). Place the heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page using double-spaced text. After the heading should be your title using **Title Case** (standard capitalization). A heading and title will look as follows:

First Last

Instructor

Course Name/Number

Date [ex: 28 Sept 2020 -OR- Sept 28 2020]

Title in Title Case: No Special Formatting Required

Page Numbering: Add page numbers, along with your last name, to the top, right-hand corner of each page beginning with the first page of text. Begin with your last name, followed by a space with a page number. Number all pages consecutively using Arabic numerals.

Text Style: Use a readable font (Times New Roman is the recommended standard) in 12 point size. The font should use default color (black) and remain consistent throughout your paper.

Spacing:

Margins: 1 inch on all sides.

Indent: The first line of a paragraph should be indented by a half inch.

Headings: Headings are not required in MLA.

Double-space text throughout.

Noun Capitalization: Only true proper nouns (name, place, organization, etc) should be capitalized. Apply a “minimalist” principle when determining what constitutes a proper noun or what should be capitalized.

Numbers: MLA uses words for numbers that can be written in one or two words (e.g. two, thirty-five, one hundred). In addition:

- Any number that begins a sentence should be written out.
- A hyphen should be used with compound numbers or fractions (e.g. forty-five, two-fifths, etc.).
- Do not mix written numbers with symbols; instead, write out the symbol (e.g. nine percent).

Titles of Other Works

When introducing sources, quoted material, or other published works you will have to appropriately title them. Depending on length or source of the work, different font rules apply. Larger works that contain sections, chapters, or smaller works within them are typically *italicized* (like the name of *The MLA Handbook* mentioned above).

Italicized Titles:

- Book
- Website
- Online database
- Magazine
- Play
- TV/Movie

For titles of smaller sources, you would use quotation marks. Some (not all) examples are listed below:

“Quoted Titles:”

- Book chapter
- A poem, essay, or other small work from a collection
- Specific episode of TV/podcast or similar
- A single digital source such as a Tweet, blog post, or similar

Laws, specific books, and certain music that are already catalogued do not follow these rules listed above and do not require italics or quotes. Review specific rules for these sources.

Quotations

Quotes from sources should be concise, used sparingly, and have direct significance to the argument or topic being discussed. When crafting quotes, use double quote marks around “content.” Single quotation marks such as this ‘example’ are used on quoted material within a source you quote.

Quotes should strive to blend in seamlessly with text, adding emphasis to arguments or ideas. You should not end paragraphs with a quote since there should be analysis of the quote after its introduction. There are certain instances where you will have to quote large sections of texts called **block quotes**.

Block quotations are quotes of more than four lines. They should be indented one inch from the left margin, double-spaced, and printed without quotation marks. The parenthetical citation for block quotes appears after the final period, using standard MLA format for parenthetical citations (author, page or line number). Block quotations of works such as poetry should aim to keep the original formatting of the text as much as possible. For example:

High on a bright-rayed emerald throne sublime
 I see a white-robed figure. Her white hand
 Points to where commerce, spreading far and wide,
 Shapes her broad course across the boundless tide,
 And scatters plenty's blessing o'er the land;
 (Rankine, lines 5-9)

For poetry quotes less than four lines, use “/” to designate new lines between prose and keep the quote material in-text.

Use of **[brackets]** in quotes designates missing information or implied meaning in the quote that you include to provide clarification.

When you start a quote in the middle of a sentence or leave off the end of a sentence use **ellipses “...”** to identify the left-out material. In most cases, this is done to omit irrelevant material to your argument or discussion.

Tables and Figures

Any images or figures used in-text should be included next to its relevant discussion. However, do not break up any paragraphs or put these items in the middle of a sentence. Each figure or table should be numbered, starting with “Figure 1” or “Table 1,” and continuing upwards.

Tables: When including a table, these generally note **data sets (think numbers)**. If used, tables should be referred to in text and placed near the text reference (see table 1). Tables should always be left-aligned. The table number and title (using Title Case) should precede the table and be double spaced, with the source and any notes following the table.

Table 1

Example Table Using MLA Format

Citation Style	Format	Example
Parenthetical	(Author Page)	... (Freeman 10).
Signal Phrase	Author. . . (Page)	Wallace . . . (232).

Source: Modern Language Association, *The MLA Style Handbook* . . .

Figures: In MLA, figures include any images, illustrations, or visuals that are not tables or examples (applies only to musical illustrations). The figure should be referenced in text and place as near to the text as possible (see figure 1). The figure number (Figure or Fig. may be used), figure title, and source are all written on the same line and should remain double-spaced.

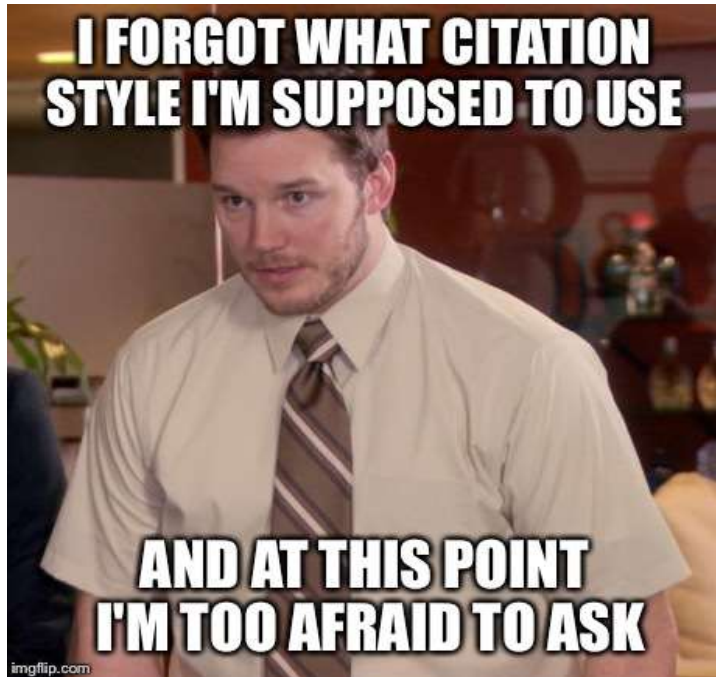


Figure 1. A format meme from Source Details . . .

In-Text Citations

In-text citations are citations within the body of the paper that point to a Works Cited entry on a list at the end of the paper. Some of the main reasons for citations outside of plagiarism is to give your readers the ability to inform their own arguments and review in the future.

In MLA style, in-text citations need to be clear and brief. They are a way to link the cited material directly to the works cited page. In-text citations should be included anytime you reference the work of another individual or organization. However, you do not need to include a citation if you are *only* referring to a work generally, such as introducing a title in your paper. The basic format for MLA in-text citations is **(Author Page)**. Note that MLA does not require a comma between these source elements. For example:

As a result of the authors revelation, we are led to believe that the dog was a cat all along (Smith 29).

In-text citations can be included in your paper in two different ways, so long as you provide the proper elements after the mention of your sourced material.

1. You can provide a citation directly after quoted material, for example:

She describes it as, "...[a town with] no artful towers or cornices, just walls built out of wood and cheap brown local bricks" (Jemisin 9).

2. Alternatively, you can include an author's name in the sentence, meaning that you do not need to repeat it in your parenthetical statement. This is known as a **Signal Phrase** and is used to signal the source for your reader. In this case, you only need to include the page number in the parenthetical citation. For example:

Jemisin describes a town, "...[with] no artful towers or cornices, just walls built out of wood and brown local bricks" (9).

When using a citation, the period should be placed **after** the citation, so that it is included in the sentence it refers to.

Digital Sources: When referencing web pages, blogs, or other online media, page numbers are not normally provided. While standard MLA format is (Author Page), this can be shortened to just (Author) for digital sources. If you provide a direct quote, check to see if your professor requires a paragraph number; if it is required, use "par. #" in place of the page. As an example:

In fact, a recent online survey noted that "twenty percent of students prefer e-books to physical textbooks" (Greenberg par. 2).

Sources Without an Author: If no author is given, replace the author in the in-text citation with a shortened title of the work. For articles, the title should be in italics ("Short Title"); for books, the short title should be italicized. For example:

Despite this convenience, another online survey found that thirty-five percent of students do not like required texts that include a "supplemental digital material unavailable on the used book marketplace" (*"Textbooks and Students"*).

There are other special rules to consider when dealing with specific sources. Format for in-text citations are unique in the following circumstances:

- **Two different sources by one author:** In these instances, include the “Short Title” of the work in the citation to avoid confusion. For example:
 - (Smith, *Writing Lyrics* 100) - *Note that this is a book*
 - (Smith, “The New Musical” 22) - *Note that this is an article*
- **Two authors with the same name:** Include the first initial to distinguish between the two authors. For example:
 - (R. Smith 100)
 - (B. Smith 8)
- **A source with two authors:** Includes names separated by “and.” For example:
 - (Cruz and Kim 10)
- **A source with three or more authors:** Only include the first list author’s last name, and replace the remaining authors with “et al.” Be sure to include the period with “al.” For example:
 - (Yoo et al. 218)
- **A source without an author:** Replace the author component with the short title of the work. For example:
 - (*Memoirs of a Stage Manager* 303)
- **A website or blog:** If the digital source does not include page numbers, only include the author or the short title if no author is provided. For example:
 - (Smith et al.)
 - (*Just Add Words*)
- **Works with non-standard page numbering:** use the numbering noted in the source for your citations if it is non-standard (such as page B2 in a newspaper or Roman numerals for a preface). For example:
 - (Johnson B2-B4)

Works Cited

The Works Cited page is the collection of all the sources you referenced in your text.

The *MLA Handbook* now focuses on **elements** of a citation that are easier to universally apply to a large range of sources. The elements are categorized as **core or optional elements**. If you encounter an element that is missing or doesn’t apply to your source, simply don’t include it in your citation.

Your Works Cited page should be formatted as follows:

- The words “Works Cited” (no quotations) is centered at the top of a new page and is not bolded, italicized, or underlined.
- Entries that are more than one line should have a hanging indent. (Every line except for the first line is indented by 0.5 inches.)
- Every line proceeding the first should be double-spaced.
- Capitalize each word in titles except for articles, prepositions, or conjunctions (the same as within the paper). However, the initial letter in the title’s first word should always be capitalized.
- Italicize the titles of full-length works and put shorter works in quotations, as shown earlier in formatting titles.
- Alphabetize the list of entries by the first author’s **last name**.

Table 2

Core & Optional Elements of Works Cited Entries (MLA)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Author	Title of Source	Title of Container	Other Contributors	Version	Number	Publisher	Publication Date	Location	Optional Elements

MLA no longer requires writers to indicate the format of a source (Web, print, DVD, etc.). Table 2 displays the order of each element in a works cited entry. Below is an explanation of every element and its rules. As stated, if your citation does not include one of these items, simply omit it from your entry.

1) Author:

- Begin each entry with the author’s last name, followed by a comma, the rest of their name as it appears in the work, and a period.
- If there is more than one author, list them in the order they are presented in the work.
- If there are more than three authors listed, list the first name presented in the work, and follow it up with “et. al.”
- If there is no specific author, an editor or a translator may be used in his/her place if it applies.

2) Title of source:

- Titles should be written out in full, including subtitles (separated by a colon).
- A title is placed in quotations if it is part of a larger work. For example, an article in a magazine or a newspaper would be put in quotations.
- A title is italicized if it stands on its own as a complete work. For example, a whole book, magazine, or website would be put in italics. Titles follow the same rules as they do in-text.

3) Title of container:

- The container is what “holds” the source. In other words, it is the place where the source is located and where you found it, such as a website hosting videos or forums. It’s also known as where you have accessed this information, like through a streaming service.
- The title of a container is always italicized and followed by a comma.
- If the container is part of another “larger” container – for example, if you were to cite an episode of a television series which is the sole property of HBO – you would list the larger container at the end of the citation, listing subsequent relevant information if necessary.

4) Other contributors:

- Other contributors who played a prominent role in composing or releasing the work, like an editor, translator, or uploader should be included in the citation.
- Each contributor’s name is written out in full and preceded by a description of their role. Ex: “uploaded by”, “translation by” or other similar terminology.

5) Version:

- If available, list the version or edition of a work.

6) Number:

- If you are citing a multivolume work, indicate the volume number.
- If you are citing a journal, indicate both the volume and issue number of the journal.
- If you are citing an episode in a series, indicate the episode number.
- Romans numerals in volume names such as “Volume V” need to be rewritten as “5” or other appropriate Arabic numerals.

7) Publisher:

- The publisher is the organization responsible for making a work available to the public.
- Books, films and television series, websites, and blogs should all have their publisher included in the citation.
- Publishers may be omitted for periodicals, a work published by its author or editor, and websites who are not responsible for the content made by creators (for example, YouTube, Twitter).

8) Publication date:

- If available, cite the date a source was published.
- Dates should be written out “Day Month Year”. The day and month may be excluded if it is not immediately relevant to your work.

9) Location:

- Cite page numbers if a work is part of a larger, published collection.
- Cite full URLs for websites, try to find the most concise URL location of the website.
 - Do not include “http://” or “https://” with any of your URLs
- Physical locations like a museum or venue should be cited if relevant to your work (such as if you were asked to visit one of these locations and analyze items).

10) Optional elements:

- Optional elements that may be mentioned in a citation include original year of publication, location of publication, “unusual” medium of sources, prior publication information, and date of access (date of retrieval).

You can skip any information that is missing from a particular source. As a result, this basic template becomes completely customizable based on the medium of your source. You can also use specific elements to tailor your citation to a section of a work. If you only discuss one episode of a series, or even one aspect of the production, be specific with what elements would best cite this.

Works Cited Examples

Below are some example citations for common sources that you might use in your papers. The “core element” number is included next to each component of the citation for reference. Table 2 has been included below again for easy reference.

NOTE: Do not include the element numbers in your actual Works Cited page; they are included below for easy reference only.

Table 2

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Author	Title of Source	Title of Container	Other Contributors	Version	Number	Publisher	Publication Date	Location	Optional Elements

An article in a scholarly journal:

Becker, H.N., Alexander, J.W., Atreya, S.K. et al. (1) “Small lightning flashes from shallow electrical storms on Jupiter.” (2) *Nature* (3), vol. 584 (5), 5 Aug 2020 (8), pp. 55-58 (9).

A book:

Jemisin, N.K. (1) *The Fifth Season*. (2) Orbit (7), 2015 (8).

An article in a magazine or newspaper:

Collins, Caitlyn. (1) “Productivity in a pandemic.” (2) *Science* (3), vol. 369 (5), no. 6504 (6), 7 Aug 2020 (8), pp. 603 (9).

An article or page on a website:

Ouellette, Scot P., Lee, Junghoon, and John V. Cox. (1) “Division without Binary Fission: Cell Division in FTsZ-less Chlamydia.” (2) *Journal of Bacteriology* (3), American Society for Microbiology (7), Aug 2020 (8), www.jb.asm.org/content/202/17/e00252-20 (9).

A whole website:

Bailey, Hugh. (1) *OBS Open Broadcaster Software* (2). 2012-2020 (8), www.obsproject.com/ (9).

A video:

Ellis, Lindsay. (1) “The Constructed Languages of JRR Tolkien: It’s Lit” (2) *YouTube* (3), uploaded by Storied (4), 16 Jul 2020 (8), www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFlyQk_uVAI (9).

A TV show:

Rodenberry, Gene, creator. (1) “The Best of Both Worlds (Part 2)” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, season 3, episode 26 (2), CBS (3), 18 Jun 1990 (8), *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/title/70158329 (9).

A blog:

Josifovic, Igor, and Judith de Graaff. (1) *Urban Jungle Bloggers* (3). 2013-2020 (8), www.urbanjunglebloggers.com/ (9).

An individual blog post:

Josifovic, Igor and Judith de Graaff. (1) “Green Hotspots in New York City.” (2) *Urban Jungle Bloggers* (3). 2013-2020 (8), www.urbanjunglebloggers.com/green-hotspots-in-new-york-city/ (9).

A tweet:

@chartdata. (1) “@iamcardib and @theestallion’s #WAP hits #1 on the global Spotify chart for the first time with a new daily high in streams (4.77 million).” (2) *Twitter* (3), 12 Aug 2020, 7:12 am (8), twitter.com/chartdata/status/1293505572659224577 (9).

Need additional assistance?

Access a live tutoring session from your Brainfuse homepage to connect with a writing tutor who can help you with MLA format. Alternatively, visit https://www.mla.org/style_faq1 for more specific information. You may also consult the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

Information adapted from MLA Handbook. 8th ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 2016.