The Pearson Guide to the 2021 MLA Handbook
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Quick Start Guide

To use MLA style to document a source, follow these steps.

1. Evaluate your source

You have found a passage in a report, and you want to use part of it in a research project:

   Increasingly, the arts have become more widely established and accepted as health-promoting practices in the United States and around the world. As the U.S. healthcare system moves toward greater integration of physical and behavioral health, arts-based interventions should be considered among potential complementary approaches for managing pain and preventing and treating substance abuse disorder.

The passage supports your argument, and the report is authored and published by a U.S. government organization, so you decide to use it in your project.

2. Gather information about the source

   Author:
   National Endowment for the Arts

   Title:
   *Arts Strategies for Addressing the Opioid Crisis: Examining the Evidence*

   Container (information about where you found the source; in this case, an online report that is downloadable as a PDF):

3. Create your documentation

A citation in MLA style has two components. The first is an entry in a list of works cited that appears at the end of your paper or project:


The second component is an in-text reference. Any quotation, paraphrase, or summary of words or ideas from a source needs to be noted in the body of your paper, as in this example:

There is growing evidence that the arts have healing powers, and that music, in particular, can help prevent and treat substance abuse and even manage chronic pain (National Endowment 7).

Every citation in MLA style builds on this basic pattern. This guide provides additional details to help you feel confident about using MLA documentation in your writing and other research projects.
Visual Guide to an MLA Citation

author
title
Gay, Roxane. “A Year Without Our Work Friends.”

container

An MLA citation has three basic parts—the author’s name, the title of the source, and the container.

Author’s name. In this example, the author is an individual, Roxane Gay.

Title of source. If a work is part of a larger whole (such as an article in a magazine, an essay in an anthology, or a poem in a collection), its title is placed inside quotation marks, as shown in the example above. Titles of self-contained or stand-alone works (such as novels) are italicized.

Container. A container is the larger whole in which the source is found. A container can be a journal, a website, a database, a newspaper, and so forth. In this example, the container is The New York Times website. (You can tell this article comes from an online newspaper because the citation includes a URL. Print newspapers include a page number instead.) Note that sources can (and often do), include more than one container.

This guide includes information about many details of the MLA works-cited format. If you remember these three basic parts, you can apply them to create a citation for just about any type of source.
What Is MLA Documentation Style?

MLA is an abbreviation for Modern Language Association, an organization of teachers and scholars in language and literature. As a scholarly organization, MLA establishes standards and guidelines that authors and editors follow in their writing. These standards, or conventions, are designed to create uniform, consistent ways of handling the details of format and style used in published research.

The MLA Handbook is a guide to writing with sources that has been used by students and teachers in rhetoric and writing courses for many years. In 2021, MLA published the ninth edition of the Handbook, offering updated advice and models for documenting the wide range of constantly evolving sources that writers encounter today. Whether you need to cite a journal article from a database or a post from Instagram, this guide, based on the 2021 edition of the MLA Handbook, will keep you current and up to speed with the latest guidelines.

MLA style can be contrasted with APA or Chicago style. MLA is used primarily in English and the humanities; APA is used in the social sciences (including psychology and communication); and Chicago style is used in history and the arts. Other common documentation styles used in college courses include APSA (political science), CSE (natural sciences), and IEEE (engineering and computer science).

As a college student, you are expected to apply high standards to your own writing and research. You are a member of a scholarly community, and you are participating in academic conversations in your classes and in your writing. Learning to use MLA style is one way to show your readers that you take yourself seriously as a writer and a researcher, and demonstrating
your mastery of the elements of MLA style helps build credibility for your work.

During your college career, you may need to learn two or three different documentation styles. While the details vary from one style to another, the general principles of documenting sources and giving credit to others for their words and ideas form the foundation of any academic style. Learning MLA style will help you adapt to other styles you may be asked to use in other courses.
The Basic Principles of Documenting

Any time you borrow the words or ideas of others, you need to document the source from which you are borrowing. Documenting is a way of giving credit for ideas and expressions that others have created.

Academic writing is a kind of conversation. You are sharing your ideas with your readers, and you are also engaging in a conversation with the sources you read and use in your work. In a social setting, you wouldn’t tell someone else’s story and pretend it was your own; in an academic environment, you are similarly responsible for noting when you are using someone else’s words or ideas. The basic principles of documentation also apply to visual sources, like photographs and videos, and to music and other media as well.

Many college students are very aware of and concerned about plagiarism. Campus orientations and first-year-experience courses often devote substantial time to explaining the possible penalties for plagiarizing, including failing grades and even suspension. This chapter covers some of the basics to help you know how best to document sources and avoid plagiarizing unintentionally. The most important principle is this: When in doubt, document!

UNDERSTANDING PLAGIARISM

Purchasing a paper from an online research-paper service and turning it in as your own. Cutting and pasting sections from a friend’s research essay into yours. Copying chunks of material from a website and inserting them into your own paper. All of these are obvious, intentional acts of plagiarism that you would never willingly commit. Blatant, intentional plagiarism of this kind is relatively rare—and also rather easy to detect. Teachers can
access online sources just as instantly as students, and it doesn’t take much effort to find original passages that have been copied into a student’s paper.

But what about subtler, unintentional plagiarism? How can learning to use MLA and other documentation styles help you avoid that? Most students who wander into unintentional-plagiarism territory do so for one of two reasons: Either they forget to take good notes and keep track of their sources, or they misrepresent someone else’s ideas as their own by failing to document properly.

The Ethics and Conventions of Academic Research

At the beginning of a research project, you are likely to be working quickly to find and collect sources you might use. Whether you use a paper notebook, digital files, or bookmarked websites—or all of the above—be sure to immediately capture all the information you need to cite each source. That way, you won’t put yourself in a bind later when you have that perfect quote for your project, but you don’t remember where it came from.

Digital note-taking apps such as Microsoft OneNote can be helpful. You can save, tag, and organize articles, web pages, images, audio, video, and other materials, and store them along with the information about the author, title, publisher, dates, and so forth—all in one place. If you prefer to work on paper, by downloading and printing copies of sources, be sure to note the author, title, and source of the publication on each printout.

When taking notes or capturing information from online sources, be especially careful to note the exact location as you find each source. Copy the complete URL for each online source from your browser bar and paste it into your notes. Mark words that are copied directly from a source by putting quotation marks around them, or by highlighting them in a color, or in a different typeface. You want to be sure to differentiate words you have borrowed directly from sources and words that represent your own notes or summaries.

Being meticulous and detail oriented as you gather sources is one way you are participating in the academic community. Academic research and scientific knowledge can grow and develop because researchers build on the work of others. One of the foundations of academic research is a respect for the work that others have done to pave the way. Taking a little time to record
information about a source when you find it can save you a lot of time later, too.

**QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, AND SUMMARIZING**

Sources can be used in a research paper or project in several different ways. If you want to use the exact words you found in a source, use quotation marks to indicate which words are borrowed from the source. If you want to capture the general ideas from a source but use your own words, use what is known as a *paraphrase*. Paraphrasing means restating someone else’s ideas in your own words. A paraphrase is usually about the same length as the original source. If you want to capture the main idea of a source in a concise restatement, use a summary. Summaries are usually much shorter than the original source. Sometimes you might even summarize an entire article in a single sentence.

Direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries all need to be documented. Even if you restate another author’s ideas in your own words, you still need to credit that author as the original source of the ideas and concepts you are using.

Consider some different ways you might use the excerpt below, from the report by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

> Increasingly, the arts have become more widely established and accepted as health-promoting practices in the United States and around the world. As the U.S. healthcare system moves toward greater integration of physical and behavioral health, arts-based interventions should be considered among potential complementary approaches for managing pain and preventing and treating substance abuse disorder.

Suppose you decided to restate the NEA’s ideas in this sentence and include it in your paper:

> In the context of U.S. healthcare practices, using the arts to promote physical and mental health can help people manage pain and addiction.
Do you need a citation? All of the ideas have been rewritten in your own words. But in the absence of a visible citation, this sentence would be plagiarism. The ideas are borrowed from the NEA, and you need to signal that to your readers. You could do this in several ways.

- Add an introductory signal phrase and parenthetical citation:

  signal phrase names author

  The National Endowment for the Arts asserts that, in the context of U.S. healthcare practices, using the arts to promote physical and mental health can help people manage pain and addiction (7).

  parenthetical citation gives location

You are still using a summary written in your own words, but you clearly signal that the ideas come from the NEA, and the in-text reference at the end tells readers exactly which page in the NEA source you were consulting at the time.

- Incorporate a direct quotation and a signal phrase:

  The National Endowment for the Arts, an agency dedicated to connecting Americans with the benefits of creativity, argues that the healthcare system should incorporate “arts-based interventions” as a possible tool for “managing pain and preventing and treating substance abuse disorder” (7).

In this passage, the introductory phrase clearly signals that the ideas are drawing on the work of the NEA, and the quotation marks indicate the words that have been copied exactly from the original source. The parenthetical reference at the end tells readers that the quoted words may be found on page 7 in the NEA source.

- Incorporate a longer direct quotation and name the author in a parenthetical citation:

  Americans may benefit from therapies that incorporate creative approaches. One report documenting the use of music as treatment asserts: “As the U.S. healthcare system moves toward greater integration of physical and behavioral health, arts-based interventions
should be considered among potential complementary approaches for managing pain and preventing and treating substance abuse disorder” (National Endowment 7).

Here, the phrase “one report” clearly tells readers that you are drawing on someone else’s ideas. The quotation marks show which words are copied from the source, and the author’s name and page number are included in the parenthetical reference at the end.

MLA style gives you several options for integrating sources into your paper and documenting them clearly and efficiently. If you are unsure about whether your sources are documented properly, ask a friend to read a draft of your paper and underline or highlight any places where you have borrowed ideas or words from another person. If your friend can’t see which ideas are yours and which are borrowed, then you need to make some revisions using some of the strategies in this section.

For all of the examples shown here, you would also need to include a complete citation for the NEA source at the end of your paper, like this:

UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

As you draw on sources in your paper—quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing them—follow these tips for using language that is respectful to your source authors and readers.

- Refer to a person’s identity only if doing so is relevant to the context:

  The female coach, who led her team to a national championship, had been underestimated by her male counterparts.

- Avoid generalizing about a person or group:

  Muslims believe that . . .
  A Muslim belief is that . . .

- Use language that reflects a person’s or group’s identity preferences (using person-first language or identity-first language, depending on context).

  - person-first:
    person with ADHD
    persons with disabilities
  
  - identity-first (that is, the person communicates that they identify as such):
    queer person
    gender fluid person

- Check your style.

  Review your writing for words that identify people in terms of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other descriptors. Check your dictionary to determine whether to capitalize or lowercase a term (e.g., Black, atheist, etc.). If your dictionary offers both options, choose one and use it consistently.

- Use inclusive pronouns.

  Not everyone identifies as female or male. For this reason, it’s a
good idea to avoid pronouns, such as *his* or *her*, that may exclude a portion of your readers. You can fix this by rewriting your sentence so that it does not contain pronouns:

- Each player has *his* or *her* own style.
- Each player has a unique style.

Another option is to use the singular pronouns *they* or *their*:

- Each player has *their* own style.

- Do not make assumptions.

While it may be easy to think that readers are “just like us,” the reality is audiences are diverse in terms of identity, beliefs, and other factors. For this reason, avoid terms (such as *we* and *our*) that exclude:

- “As a culture, *we* . . .”
- “Our values dictate that . . .”

Further, when describing people, especially persons with disabilities, avoid using terms that convey a judgment of their experience (such as *suffers from)*:

- *suffers from a mental illness*
- *has been diagnosed with a mental illness*

- Check your work for offensive words.

Because language changes constantly and in relation to human experience, Merriam-Webster identifies a “new word of the year” each January. Over time, the connotations (suggested meanings) of words change. For example, as the editors of MLA 9e point out, the disparaging term “Gypsy” was once widely used to describe the Romani (or Roma) people. Avoid such terms unless 1) they reflect the language of an original source (set them in quotation marks); or 2) they are essential to your point (in this case present the first letter followed by dashes).
Documenting sources is a mindset as well as a process. A research mindset involves careful attention to each source you find: What is this? Who wrote it? Does it have an agenda or a commercial purpose? Can I trust this information?

Research, inquiry, and critical thinking are vital strategies for any field or discipline. Information literacy is a highly valued set of interrelated skills that you will want to cultivate throughout your college career and beyond. These topics extend far beyond what can be covered in this brief guide to MLA documentation. But we can outline a basic process that you can apply and adapt to your own workflow and writing style as you conduct research and document sources. This three-step process follows the model outlined by the MLA in the ninth edition of its handbook. Notice that, in this model, documenting sources is not something to be done at the end of the process, when formatting a final list of works cited; it is something to be kept in mind from the very beginning of any research process.

1. THINK: EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES

Using search engines and databases, you can find many sources quickly on just about any topic imaginable. But how do you know if those sources are trustworthy? How can you assess their value as sources for an academic project?

Two criteria to apply when evaluating sources are relevance and credibility. A source is relevant if it is closely related to your topic, fits your approach, and helps to support your purpose. A source is credible if it meets standards of trustworthiness and reliability in the academic community.
Relevance. To evaluate a source for relevance, you sometimes need to read at least a portion of the source first. The title and other information about the source will give you some indication and will help you eliminate sources that don’t fit your aims. Scholarly journal articles often include abstracts, and those can help you assess relevance. An abstract is a one-paragraph summary or overview of the article. In most cases, reading the abstract will provide you enough information to make a preliminary judgment about a source’s relevance.

As you read more sources, you will develop a clearer picture of your own topic and approach; your improved focus will in turn help you to narrow a list of potentially relevant sources. Keep in mind that a source may be relevant to one topic or purpose but not to another. The goal is not to come up with a massive list of sources; the goal is to filter out a short list of sources that you can cite and use to support the specific thesis or idea you are presenting in your project.

Credibility. To evaluate a source for credibility, you need to learn as much about the source as you can.

- **Who is the author?** Can you identify an author? What do you know about the author? What are the author’s credentials or qualifications to speak on the topic? What is the author’s perspective? How prominent is the author’s voice in the conversation about your topic? To what extent has the author been excluded because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or ability?

Keep in mind that your project will benefit from sources that represent a diversity of authors with varying backgrounds and perspectives, including those who have historically been excluded because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

- **Where is the source published?** Is the publication sponsored by a commercial entity? Is the source advocating a particular viewpoint? Selling a product?

Wikipedia provides a useful case study in credibility. As you may know, Wikipedia is “openly editable.” This means that Wikipedia is collaboratively written by anonymous volunteers. While you can assume that Wikipedia entries are generally accurate and informative, you usually do not want to cite Wikipedia as a source in a college research project. Does this mean you should not use Wikipedia at all? Not necessarily. You may want to consult Wikipedia as a starting point, for general information or background on a
At the end of most Wikipedia entries, you will find a list of references. Many of the works listed there will be credible, peer-reviewed, scholarly sources. Wikipedia can thus guide you to credible sources that are appropriate works to cite in a college project.

Library databases, scholarly journals, published books, and documents published by government agencies are usually the most preferable types of sources in terms of credibility. A peer-reviewed article found by searching a database in your college library is almost always going to be more credible than a source you find through a quick Google search.

When evaluating online sources, pay special attention to the URL (the web address, visible in your browser, usually at the very top of the page). Website addresses that end in “.com” are commercial, which means they are tied to a company, product, or other commercial entity. Website addresses that end in “.edu” (educational or university sites) or “.org” (nonprofit associations) are often more credible than commercial sites. Government sources are usually identifiable by their “.gov” addresses. New domain names (like “.tv” or “.academy”) are appearing now, making this evaluation more difficult, but the lesson is similar: Pay attention to who is sponsoring or paying for the content that is published on a website.

For example, the website of the American Medical Association is probably a more credible source for information about treatment for a specific disorder than a site sponsored by a pharmaceutical company. The website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a U.S. government agency, is a far more credible source of information about vaccinations than the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC.org), an organization that describes itself as “advocating for the institution of vaccine safety.”

Sometimes, sites with a clear political agenda, like NVIC.org, are designed to look like credible sources, even to the extent of presenting themselves as government agencies. Read very carefully, and do some research to learn as much as you can about an organization that sponsors a website. (As you would discover, the NVIC is one of the most prominent anti-vaccine organizations in the nation—not a credible source for a college paper, unless you were writing about the anti-vaccine movement and wanted to use NVIC as an example.)
Your instructor may ask you to provide a list of sources or an annotated bibliography for a research project. This is often an excellent way to explore and discuss your sources before drafting your project. For each source, think about how it is useful for the specific argument and purpose of your project, and how it is credible. Be prepared to write a few sentences or explain your thinking about why each source is relevant and credible. Following is an example of an entry from an annotated bibliography:


This article, by an associate dean and professor at Arizona State (who has published several articles on the topic), offers specific ways for teachers to help students see racism in the works they read. This piece works well with the article on antiracist pedagogy (from *Medium*, by Jerome Cranston).

2. SELECT: GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SOURCES

Once you have evaluated a source and determined that it is relevant and credible for your purposes, the next step is to collect information you can use to create a citation. MLA specifies a template of nine core elements that can be used to create a citation for any type of source:

**Author and Title**

1. author
2. title of source

**Container**

3. title of container
4. other contributors
5. version
6. number
7. publisher
8. publication date
9. location
Chapter 4 of this guide will look at each of these core elements in more detail. Every category in this list may not always be relevant to a specific source. At this stage of the process, simply gather as much information as you can about the source, using these elements as a guide.

For books, most of the information you need to collect can be found on the title and copyright pages. For journals, consult the cover or title page, table of contents, and any copyright pages. You may also need to look at the first and last pages of an article for additional details needed to construct your citation.

For websites, you may need to look at the “about” page or other sections of the site to identify the publisher or sponsor of the site. If you found a source through a library database, be sure to record the information from the database as well as the other information listed here. Most databases have a “cite this” button of some kind that you can use to create a working citation (which you may have to revise later).

For any online sources, be sure to copy the DOI, permalink, or URL directly from the address bar of your browser window and save it so you can go back to it quickly if you need to gather more information about a source later. You will also need to include the DOI, permalink, or URL in your citation.
3. ORGANIZE: CREATING YOUR DOCUMENTATION

The purpose of citations is to credit other authors whenever you borrow their words or ideas, and to guide readers to the sources you have used in your project. Your citations should include enough information so that readers can quickly understand the nature of the sources you are using, and can find them for themselves if they wish.

A citation in MLA style has two components. The first is an entry in a list of works cited that appears at the end of your paper or project:


The second component is an in-text reference. Any quotation, paraphrase, or summary of words or ideas from a source needs to be noted in the body of your paper, as in this example:

There is growing evidence that the arts have healing powers, and that music, in particular, can help prevent and treat substance abuse and even manage chronic pain (National Endowment 7).

The in-text reference in parentheses tells readers that the quoted words come from page 7 in the NEA source. The works-cited entry provides complete information about the source, so readers can find it themselves.

Chapters 4 and 5 in this guide provide more details on creating works-cited entries and in-text citations for different types of sources.
THE CORE ELEMENTS

The creation of a works-cited list can seem overwhelming at times. There are many nuances and details to attend to. Beneath the details, however, lies a simple pattern. Every works-cited entry in MLA style includes three main parts:

1. the author’s name
2. the title of the source
3. information about where the source can be found

Everything else is just a variation on this basic pattern. If you collect these basic pieces of information and arrange them in your works-cited list, you will have a good foundation for a complete and correct works-cited page for your project.

Here is a basic template for any works-cited entry:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Author.</td>
<td>Last name, first name, followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Title of source.</td>
<td>Title in italics or quotation marks, followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTAINER</td>
<td>Information about where the source can be found, in print or online, and other details, usually italicized and followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To account for many different types of sources, information about the “container” can be divided into smaller parts, for a total list of nine possible items that might be included in a works-cited entry.

| 1. Author. | Last name, first name, followed by a period. |
| 2. Title of source. | Title in italics or quotation marks, followed by a period. |
| CONTAINER |  |
| 3. Title of container, | The title of the book, journal, website, or other larger work within which the source can be found, usually italicized and followed by a comma, |
| 4. Contributor, | The name of the translator, editor, or other person who worked with the author to create the source, followed by a comma, |
| 5. Version, | Edition number; updated, revised, adapted, or other information about a specific version; followed by a comma, |
| 6. Number, | Volume and issue numbers for journals, or similar information for multivolume books, followed by a comma, |
| 7. Publisher, | The name of the publisher or sponsoring organization, followed by a comma, |
| 8. Publication date, | The date of publication or most recent update, followed by a comma, |
| 9. Location. | A page number, DOI, URL, or other locator, followed by a period. |
Template for works-cited entries

You do not need to include information for all nine elements for every source. Most sources will include some but not all of the items under “container” (numbers 3 through 9 in the template).

Example: Book

| 1. Author. | Lahiri, Jhumpa. |
| 2. Title of source. | *Whereabouts*. |
| **CONTAINER** | |
| 3. Title of container, | |
| 4. Contributor, | |
| 5. Version, | |
| 6. Number, | |
| 7. Publisher, | Alfred A. Knopf, |
| 9. Location. | |

Example: Article in a scholarly journal

| 1. Author. | Inaou, Asao B. |
| 2. Title of source. | “Teaching Antiracist Reading.” |
| **CONTAINER** | |
| 3. Title of container, | *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, |
| 4. Contributor, | |
| 5. Version, | |
| 6. Number, | vol. 50, no. 3, |
| 7. Publisher, | |
| 8. Publication date, | 2020, |
Example: Article in an online newspaper

| 1. Author. | Nguyen, Viet Thanh. |
| CONTAINER | |
| 3. Title of container, | The New York Times, |
| 4. Contributor, | |
| 5. Version, | |
| 6. Number, | |
| 7. Publisher, | |
| 8. Publication date, | 31 May 2021, |
In some types of sources, a container may be located “inside” of another container. For example, an article in a journal (container 1) may be found in a database (container 2). The same template applies; include information about both containers using the same format.

Example: Article in a scholarly journal found in a database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Author.</th>
<th>Denial, Catherine J.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Title of source.</td>
<td>“Feminism, Pedagogy, and a Pandemic.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTAINER 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Title of container,</td>
<td><em>Journal of Women’s History</em>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Contributor,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Version,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Number,</td>
<td><em>vol. 33, no. 1</em>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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(*Project MUSE* is the name of a popular database used by researchers in the humanities and social sciences.)
DETAILED GUIDELINES

Author

For sources with a **single author**, list the last name, followed by the first name.

_Abrams, Stacey. While Justice Sleeps. Doubleday, 2021._

For sources with **two authors**, the second author’s name is listed in standard order.


For sources with **more than two authors**, list only the first author’s name, and add “et al.” (an abbreviation for “and others”).


For **works that are edited**, such as anthologies and essay collections, add the word “editor” or “editors” following the name of the primary editor(s) for the work.


Documents produced by government agencies and other organizations are often published with no author names listed. You can treat sources like this as a **corporate author**, listing the name of the organization or agency in place of the author.

Government sources can be a challenge to cite because they are often published by agencies that are part of larger agencies. In this case, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences is part of the National Institutes of Health, which is in turn part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The citation in this example is designed to match most closely what appears on the title and copyright pages of the document. You could cite this source in other ways, depending on which agency you wanted to emphasize.

For sources that list no author of any kind, omit the author and cite the work by its title. (Do not use anonymous as an author name.)


Note that if you were comparing different translations of Beowulf and wanted to emphasize the role of the translators, you could also cite this source as


Films and videos often have directors and producers rather than authors or editors.

**Soto, Angel Manuel, director. Charm City Kings.** HBO Max, 2020.

**Title of source**

Titles of works that are complete and self-contained, like books, films, journals, and websites, are placed in italics.


Notice that in this example, an access date is included at the end of the citation. Access dates may be used for online sources that are updated frequently or that do not include a visible date of publication.

Titles of shorter works that are part of larger works, like articles in journals, chapters in books, or blog entries on a website, are placed in quotation marks.


Some titles may have unusual punctuation or capitalization. These titles should be standardized in a works-cited list. A website title that displays online as “medievalfragments” should be listed as Medieval Fragments.

For social media sources like Instagram and Twitter, you can use the first line of the post as the title for the source. For Twitter, use the entire tweet as the title.


Title of container

Sources that form part of a larger whole, like articles in a journal, essays in a book, and so forth, are said to be in a “container.” MLA uses the term “container” to refer to any print or digital work that includes, or “contains,” a number of other works. A database like JSTOR is a container that holds millions of individual sources (journal articles, books, and primary sources). A scholarly journal is a container holding many individual articles.

Titles of containers are usually italicized.


In this example, you will find two containers. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* is the name of a journal, and *SpringerLink* is the name of a database. The article is contained inside the journal, which is contained by the database.


In this example, *Uncertain Archives* is a book that is a container for the essay by Mimi Onuoha.

Contributor

A contributor may be a person who worked as a translator, narrator, director, performer, illustrator, editor, or other role different from author.

Esquivel, Gloria Susana. *Animals at the End of the World.*

**Version**

A version may include a *revised or updated edition of a book,* or a *special version* of a work, such as a director’s cut of a film, or a special edition of a video game.


**Software and mobile applications** ("apps") are often released in numbered versions.


**Number**

Some books are published in multivolume sets; include the volume number in a citation.


**Scholarly journals** are typically numbered by volume and issue or number. Include both the volume and issue numbers in a citation.

Television series are usually numbered by season and episode.


Publisher

The name of the publisher of a book can usually be found on the title page or copyright page. When listing publisher names, abbreviate University Press as “UP” and omit words like “Company,” “Inc.,” and “Ltd.”


The name of the publisher of a website may be found on a home page or “about” page, in most cases. Look for the name of a publisher, sponsoring organization, or university.


You do not need to include the name of a publisher for journals and newspapers, for works like blogs that are published by the author, or for websites with titles that are identical to the name of the publisher.

Publication Date

Include the most recent relevant date in your citation. If you are citing a newspaper or magazine published both in print and online, cite the date of the version you consulted.

Note the format for dates in MLA style: 19 Feb. 2021.


Comments on blogs or web pages sometimes include a time as well as a date of posting.


Location

For print sources, include a page number or a range of page numbers. For one-page sources, use “p.” and for multiple pages use “pp.”


For a range of page numbers, include only two digits for the second number, unless more are needed for clarity.

1–27
115–36
256–307
1412–15
For **e-books**, it is usually not possible to cite a location that is useful across different devices and file types. E-books are generally cited like print books. You do not need to include “Kindle” or “Nook file,” but you do need to include the same information you would in a citation for a printed book.


Because locations and numbering systems vary from device to device, do not cite a location number or percentage indicator for an e-book in place of a page number. If you need to refer to a specific location in an e-book, cite a stable chapter number or part number that would be consistent for users of different devices: (ch. 2) or (part 3), for example.

For online sources, include a **DOI**, permalink, or URL. A DOI, a digital object identifier, is the permanent number assigned to a source by its publisher. Because these are more reliable and stable than permalinks or URLs, the DOI is the preferred way to cite a location for an online source.


If you cannot find a DOI, look for a stable link or a **permalink**. Look for a “cite this” or “share” button on the website. These will often generate a stable or permanent link that you can copy into your citation.


If you cannot find a stable or permanent link, copy the URL (web address) from your browser and include that as the location. Do not use URLs from link-shortening sites like Bitly, because these may change or disappear. You can omit “http://” or “https://” from URLs, but keep them in if you would like to provide a hyperlink for your readers. Be sure to end the citation with a period.

In MLA style, a works-cited list and in-text citations work together to guide readers to your sources. An in-text citation, usually the author’s name and a page number, is placed in parentheses in the body of your text, often next to the quoted words or ideas used from a source. The in-text citation points readers to the corresponding entry in your works-cited list where they can find complete information about the source.

The following example shows how the in-text citation and works-cited entry for the same source work together.

**IN-TEXT CITATION**

There is growing evidence that the arts have healing powers, and that music, in particular, can help prevent and treat substance abuse and even manage chronic pain (National Endowment 7).

**WORKS-CITED ENTRY**


MLA style allows for flexibility in your in-text citations. If the author is named in your sentence, you do not need to repeat the author’s name in the citation. Here are several options you can use to create in-text citations:
• Add an introductory signal phrase and parenthetical citation:

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, there is growing evidence that the arts have healing powers, and that music, in particular, can help prevent and treat substance abuse and even manage chronic pain (7).

• Incorporate a direct quotation and a signal phrase:

The independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, argues that “arts-based interventions,” are a potential tool for “managing pain and preventing and treating substance abuse disorder,” and should be baked into the country’s healthcare system (7).

• Incorporate a longer direct quotation and name the author in a parenthetical citation:

Americans may benefit from therapies that incorporate creative approaches. One report documenting the use of music as treatment asserts: “As the U.S. healthcare system moves toward greater integration of physical and behavioral health, arts-based interventions should be considered among potential complementary approaches for managing pain . . .” (National Endowment 7).

For quotations longer than four lines, use what is called a “block quotation.” Indent the entire quoted passage one-half inch, and do not enclose it in quotation marks. Include a parenthetical citation after the ending period.
Regarding the relationship between music and pain management, the National Endowment for the Arts reports:

Of the 17 studies that measured analgesic use, ten studies (59 percent) reported a statistically significant positive effect. For example, a study in Iran found that, compared with a control group (n = 30), participants who listened to researcher-selected music during urological or abdominal surgery (n = 30) had lower postoperative pain levels and lower consumption of narcotic drugs. (18)

The basic pattern for in-text citations is relatively simple: (author page number). Note that there is no punctuation between the author’s name and the page number. But there are a few situations in which you may need to include additional information to avoid confusion.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Two or more sources by the same author

Include a short form of the source’s title in the citation.

(Lahiri, Whereabouts 3)
(Lahiri, “Casting Shadows” 19)

Two or more authors with the same last name

Add the first initial to your citation.

(N. Nguyen 7)
(V. T. Nguyen 13)

Sources with two authors

Include both authors’ last names, separated by “and,” plus a page number.

(Roman and Kohlstedt 54)
Sources with three or more authors

Include the first author’s name followed by “et al.” and the page number. There is no comma between the author’s name and “et al.”

(Losh et al. 64)

Sources with no author listed

Identify the source by a short version of the title that appears in the works-cited list.

In-text citation

(Beowulf 134)

Works-cited entry


Sources without page numbers

Many websites and online sources do not include page numbers. If the source includes numbered paragraphs, use the abbreviation par. or pars. If the source includes numbered chapters or sections, use the abbreviations sec. (secs.) or ch. (chs.) to refer to those. If the citation begins with an author’s name, place a comma after the name.

(De Landa, par. 5)
(Brookings, pars. 6–7)
(Lovelace, ch. 17)
(Davidson, secs. 3–5)

If a source has no page numbers or other numbered parts or chapters, do not count paragraphs or create your own numbering system. Simply refer to
the source as a whole and describe in the body of your text as much as you can about the specific location within the source you are citing.

**Audio and video sources**

For audio and video sources, cite a specific location using a time code, which will usually be displayed in a media player. Use the format hour:minute:seconds with colons separating each element.

(“The Incident” 00:03:15-17)
MLA documentation style is designed to provide flexible guidelines for citing many types of sources, in both print and digital forms. Using the basic template for works-cited entries, you can construct a citation for any type of source.

Finding sources that are relevant and credible for a college research project requires time and thought. A basic Google keyword search may provide a long list of potential sources, but it is often not the best strategy for finding appropriate scholarly sources. This chapter introduces a few useful strategies for searching and citing online sources.

**GOOGLE SCHOLAR**

Google Scholar is a specialized search engine that allows you to search for scholarly literature in many disciplines. Searching Google Scholar will provide you with very different results than a similar search in an open Google query. Google Scholar focuses on peer-reviewed and academic sources, and provides credible sources for a college research project. To learn more about Google Scholar, go to scholar.google.com/intl/us/scholar/about.html.

In many cases, a Google Scholar search will deliver results from another database, as in this example:

LIBRARY DATABASES

At many colleges and universities, students pay a technology fee as part of their tuition bill, and a portion of this fee goes to provide subscriptions to library databases. Your school’s library provides a gateway to specialized sources in many academic disciplines that go far beyond what you can find through an open Google search.

Your library probably offers tutorials and consultation sessions to help you learn to use specialized databases. In many cases, you can make an appointment to work with a librarian to get started on a research project. Your writing class may also be invited to a special workshop or training session at the library. It’s a good idea to take advantage of these opportunities. Library databases can be a little intimidating at first, but with practice you will be able to find high-quality sources for research projects on academic topics.

On your library website, look for a link to “Articles and Databases.” You can usually search by discipline, by topic, or use a specific database. You may find dozens or even hundreds of individual databases, each focusing on a specific field or topic. Some good databases to start with for general searches include:

- **Academic Search Complete.** Provides access to full-text magazines and scholarly journals in multiple subjects.

- **CQ Researcher.** Provides full-text reports and analysis of current events and controversial issues.

- **MLA International Bibliography.** Indexes journal articles, books, and dissertations on language, literature, folklore, linguistics, and related topics.

- **Project MUSE.** Provides full-text access to scholarly journals in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

- **PsycINFO.** Indexes journals, dissertations, book chapters, and technical reports in psychology, psychiatry, and related disciplines.

Consult your library’s list of databases to learn more and identify specific databases to use in your projects.
Images, photographs, maps, advertisements, video, and audio sources need to be documented using the same basic guidelines for citing print sources in MLA style. Include as much descriptive information as necessary to help readers understand the type and nature of the source you are citing. You can include a descriptive phrase in place of, or following, a title (see the following map and advertising examples), or you can add a descriptor such as “Transcript,” “Address,” or other term (see the following video example) at the end of the citation.

Painting


Art Exhibit


Photograph

Carter, Kennedi. “Work #15.” Kennedi Carter’s Portfolio,

Map

“Charleston, West Virginia.” Map. Google Maps, 2021,
https://goo.gl/maps/K8S6AZ7tdefGw1gx5.

Video

Inaugural poem.
Podcast Episode


Advertisement


CITATIONS IN MULTIMEDIA PROJECTS

You may be asked to deliver your research project in a form other than a printed essay or research paper. Slide presentations, oral reports, websites, and videos are common forms you may use to deliver a research presentation. How do you cite sources in these multimedia projects? The MLA Handbook offers a few suggestions.

Slide Presentations (PowerPoint or Keynote)

Include brief citations on each slide that incorporates text, images, or data from another source, and add a works-cited list on a slide at the end.

Videos

Include overlay text at the bottom of the screen to provide information about source material, and include complete citations in the closing credits.

Web Pages and Sites

Link citations to online sources, and include a works-cited list as an appendix or linked page to provide complete citations.
7

Sample Works-Cited List
Works Cited


Covington, Megan, and Nadrea R. Njoku. “Answering the Call: The Role of HBCUs in Engaging Black Women’s Identity Politics.” Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and


LaVan, Helen, and W. M. Martin. “Ethical Challenges in Workplace Bullying and Harassment: Creating Ethical Awareness and


National Endowment for the Arts. Arts Strategies for Addressing the


ndzube?view=slider#9.

/simphiwe-ndzube.


Pineda, Dorany. “Roxane Gay Joins Master Class to Teach Writing for


and_human_health_508.pdf.


Please note:

• Entries in the works-cited list are arranged in alphabetical order, by author’s last name (or by title, for works with no author), and double spaced.

• When an entry flows onto a second line (or more), indent second and subsequent lines one-half inch from the left margin (referred to as a “hanging indent”).

• To list more than one work by the same author, list the author’s name for the first entry and then replace the name in the second and following citations with three hyphens followed by a period (“---.”).