

Center for Academic Support

MLA Documentation Style (Adapted from *MLA Handbook* Ninth Edition)

GENERAL FORMATTING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are common manuscript conventions used by instructors and universities that have been documented by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and are referenced in the first chapter of the *MLA Handbook*.

Note: You should always follow directions from your instructor regarding formatting your assignments since there may be differences in style that are unique to those projects.

- **Margins:** All margins should be one inch (1") wide; this includes top, bottom, and both sides of the text
- **Font:** Any easily readable typeface is acceptable. Many instructors prefer fonts like Times New Roman, Georgia, or Arial. Keep the font consistent throughout the manuscript.
- **Font Size:** Anywhere between 11 and 13 points unless specified otherwise by the instructor. Keep the font size consistent throughout the manuscript.
- **Title:** List your name, your instructor's name, the course name and number, and the date separate, double-spaced lines. Align this information to the left margin and make sure the first line is one inch from the top margin. The title of the manuscript should be one double-spaced line after the date and centered in the middle of the page. Do not put a period at the end of your title.
- **Page Number:** In the top right-hand corner of the page, include your last name and the page number, including the first page. This running head and page number should be half an inch from the top of the page and flush right with the right margin. Do not use an abbreviated "p" or "p#" before number.
- **Body of the Manuscript:** The start of the manuscript should be one double-spaced line after the title. The first line of each paragraph should be indented (a half inch or one press of the "Tab" key). Make sure all text is double-spaced.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS GUIDELINES

An in-text citation in a paper points the reader to the full citation on the "Works Cited" page. Typically, the in-text citation (also called parenthetical reference) includes the author's last name and page number if applicable. If sources don't have authors listed or page numbers, other methods are used to connect the parenthetical reference to the works-cited entry.

When punctuating in-text citations, periods go after the parentheses, not before.

Below are examples of in-text citations along with the page number of the MLA Handbook where additional information can be found.

Author's Name Mentioned in Text—If the author's name is mentioned in the text of the paper (which can be referred to as a narrative citation"), then only a page number (if available) is required in parentheses (*MLA Handbook* 230).

Baker states that the cause of death was accidental (24).

Author's Name NOT Mentioned in Text—If the author's name does not appear in the text of the paper, both author's name and page number (if available) are required in parentheses (*MLA Handbook* 231).

The cause of death was accidental (Baker 24).

Note: In MLA style, there is no comma between the name and page number in a parenthetical reference.

Work by Coauthors—Name the authors either in the text or include their last names in the parenthetical reference along with the page number (if applicable) (*MLA Handbook* 232).

Patterson and Linden agree that the gorilla Koko acquired language more slowly than a normal speaking child (89).

The authors agree that the gorilla Koko acquired language more slowly than a normal speaking child (Patterson and Linden 89).

Work by Three or More Authors—Name the first author and mention the coauthors in the text, or put the first author's last name followed by et al. (Latin for "and others") in parentheses (*MLA Handbook* 233).

Ultimately, Terrace and his co-authors concluded that "most of Nim's utterances were prompted by his teacher's prior utterance" (891).

Ultimately, the authors concluded that "most of Nim's utterances were prompted by his teacher's prior utterance" (Terrace et al. 891).

Work by Corporate Author—Name the corporate author in the text of the paper or put an abbreviated version in the parentheses (*MLA Handbook* 233).

According to a study by the National Research Council, the population of China around 1990 was increasing by more than fifteen million annually (15).

The population of China around 1990 was increasing by more than fifteen million annually (Natl. Research Council 15).

Works Listed by Title, Not Author or Work from a Website, No Author—

Mention the full title in the text or use a shortened form of the title in the parentheses (*MLA Handbook* 237).

An innovative approach to encouraging children to read is discussed in *Choose A Book And Read To Your Barber, He'll Take A Little Off the Top*, which appeared on NPRED's website.

The innovative program encourages children to read to their barber while they get a haircut (*Choose*).

Work in an Anthology—Put the name of the author of the work (NOT the editor of the anthology) in the text or in the parentheses:

At the end of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," Mrs. Mallard drops dead upon learning that her husband is alive. In the final irony of the story, doctors report that she has died of a "joy that kills" (25).

Mrs. Mallard drops dead upon learning that her husband is alive. In the final irony of the story, doctors report that she has died of a "joy that kills" (Chopin 25).

Authors with the Same Last Name—If the works-cited list includes works by two or more authors with the same last name, use each authors' full name in the text of the essay. For the parenthetical citation, use the first initial of the author being cited to distinguish which each reference. If the initials are the same as well, use the full first name in the parenthetical citation (*MLA Handbook* 234).

Adrian Desmond states that both Lucy and Koko have been reported to lie (201).

Both Lucy and Koko have been reported to lie (A. Desmond 201).

Both Lucy and Koko have been reported to lie (Adrian Desmond 201).

Long Quotations—If a quotation is more than four lines in your paper, set it apart from the text by beginning a new line and indenting one inch. Type it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks (the example below has been single spaced to conserve space). The following is an example of a long quote. Note that the end punctuation is different than an in-text reference—the period comes before the parenthetical citation. Note also that a full sentence followed by a colon generally introduces a long quotation (*MLA Handbook* 256).

At the conclusion of the *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

WORKS CITED LIST GUIDELINES

Each source that is referenced within the body of your paper using in-text citation should be listed in a "Works Cited" page that appears at the end of the paper. If you consulted sources, but did not reference them within the text using in-text citation, you may want to change the title to "Works Cited and Consulted." **Proper source attribution is important in avoiding plagiarism.**

Below are the general formatting guidelines for a "Works Cited" page in MLA style:

- Beginning on a separate page at the end of your paper, list in alphabetical order all the sources you reference in the paper, and give full publishing information for them.
- Title the list "Works Cited," unless there is only one source; then it should be titled Work Cited. Double-space all citation entries.
- Put one space after periods that separate parts of a reference citation.
- If URLs go beyond one line, divide them in a logical place, typically before punctuation marks; do not add a period at the end of a URL.
- Italicize the titles of books, magazines, and journal

NOTE: MLA publishes citations in a **hanging indent format**, meaning the first line of each entry starts at the left margin and the subsequent lines are indented half an inch.

Roach, Mary. *Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2022.

MLA style utilizes specific core elements of a source to format the works-cited entries. These core elements are: **author, title of source, title of container, contributor, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location.**

Not all core elements will be relevant to all sources, but the order, formatting, and punctuation of these elements (as seen in the template on the next page) is the same for every source.

NOTE: A "container" is a source that contains another source. For example, a website can contain a specific article, post, or comment that you might reference in your paper. Some sources are self-contained, like a novel or film, meaning they do not need to include all information listed in the core elements template.

Certain sources you reference may have multiple containers. For example, an essay could be published in a print book, and that book can be published on a website as a PDF. In this situation, both the print book and the website are containers of source (the essay).

The following image depicts the MLA core elements template. Note that each element ends with the correct punctuation mark that should be used after it:

1 Author.	1) Author. Last Name, First Name
2 Title of Source.	For two authors, list their names in the order they appear in the work with the first author's name listed as Last Name, First Name and the second author listed as First Name Last Name:
3 Title of Container,	Dorris, Michael and Louise Erdrich.
4 Contributor,	For three or more authors, list the first author's name as Last Name, First Name followed by the phrase "et al."
5 Version,	Charon, Rita, et al.
6 Number,	2) Title of source.
7 Publisher,	If a source is part of a larger work (story in an anthology, webpages, articles, etc.), then the title should be in quotation marks.
8 Publication Date,	If the source is self-contained (books, films, websites, etc.), then the title should be italicized.
9 Location.	

3) Title of container,

The title of the container may be: the book in which a story appears, a television series, web site, periodical, etc. These titles are normally italicized.

4) Other contributors,

Sometimes other people contribute to a work without being the primary creator. For example, an audiobook may be performed by a narrator, an anthology can have multiple editors, and a website can be responsible for uploading a video.

When listing contributors, precede each name (or group of names) with a description of their role. For example: directed by, edited by, narrated by, etc.

5) Version,

Sources that are released in more than one form will need an indication of what version is being referenced. For example, books are often published in different "editions" (abbreviated as ed.) such as a revised edition or e-book editions.

6) Number,

This element is often associated with journal articles, specific types of books, and detail media that has seasons or episodes. Use "vol." for volume and "no." for journal articles or book numbers. Use "season" and "episode" for television shows, podcasts, etc.

7) Publisher,

The publisher is whatever entity is responsible for making the source available to the public in its current form. For example, a book may have a publishing company and a movie may have a studio or company responsible for distribution. Websites, too, may have institutions or agencies responsible for their publication (news websites, government organizations, etc.)

8) Publication date,

This refers to the date that the current version of your source was published, edited, or revised. For example, a second edition of a book may have a different publication date from the first edition of a book.

Works online often have more than one date. Use the date that is most relevant to your paper. For example, the most recent revision date.

NOTE: If an online source does not have a publication date, you will list the date of access AFTER the "Location" element (see below). Formatted as: Accessed 27 August 2016.

Dates are written as day month year: 27 August 2016.

9) Location.

This element refers to where the source information referenced can be located. This could include page numbers; DOIs, permalinks, or URLs; the place where a work was viewed or heard; or the numbering system provided by the source.

Use "p." for page number or "pp." for a range of pages in a print source.

For an electronic source, use the URL or web address. Ensure that you copy the link in full the address bar in your browser. If a DOI or digital object identifier is given, use it instead of the URL. Ensure the DOI begins with the following:

<https://doi.org/>

NOTE: When a source has more than one container, your citation entry will repeat any relevant elements from the "Container" portion of the template.

For example, an article (source) published in a journal (container) that is published in a database (container) would be formatted like this:

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante."

The Georgia Review, vol. 64, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*.

www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

WORKS CITED EXAMPLE ENTRIES

NOTE: To conserve space in this handout, the following entries are single-spaced; however, in your paper they should be double-spaced (see last page of handout for a model).

Books, Periodicals, Journals

Article from an online database through the MWSU library such as *Academic Search Elite*. This example has three authors.

Iversen, Thor Olav, et al. "Measuring the End of Hunger: Knowledge Politics in the Selection of SDG Food Security Indicators." *Agriculture & Human Values*, vol. 40, no. 3, Sept. 2023, pp. 1273-86. *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10418-6>.

PDF of an Online Journal

Fisher, Margret. "The Music of Ezra Pound." *Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 80, nos. 3-4, Apr. 2006, pp. 139-60. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40859548. PDF download.

Book

O'Reilly, Bill and Martin Dugard. *Killing the Rising Sun: How America Vanquished World War II Japan*. Henry Holt and Co., 13 Sept. 2016.

Book with Author and Editor

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Edited by David W. Blight, Bedford, 1993.

E-Book

O'Connor, Patricia. *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*. E-book ed., Riverhead Books, 2009.

Essay or Chapter in an Anthology or Textbook

Swanson, Gunnar. "Graphic Design Education as a Liberal Art: Design and Knowledge in the University and The 'Real World.'" *The Education of a Graphic Designer*, edited by Steven Heller, Allworth Press, 1998, pp. 13-24.

Republished Work, with Original Publication Date

Franklin, Benjamin. "Emigration to America." 1782. *The Faber Book of America*, edited by Christopher Ricks and William L. Vance, Faber and Faber, 1992, pp. 24-26.

Article in a News Publication or Magazine, without Page Numbers

Parker-Pope, Tara. "How to Age Well." *The New York Times*, 2 Nov. 2017, www.nytimes.com/guides/well/how-to-age-well.

Editorial or Opinion

Editorial Board. "How to Tell Truth from Fiction in the Age of Fake News." *Chicago Tribune*, 21 Nov. 2016, www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-fake-news-facebook-edit-1120-md-20162218-story.html.

Dictionary

"Content, N. (1)." *Merriam-Webster*, 2020, www.merriam-webster.com/

"Content, N. (4)." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster, 2003, p.269.

Digital and Social Media

E-Mail and Text Messages

Bryant, Elaine. E-mail to the author. 21 June 2016.

Lemuelson, Erik. Text message to the author. 3 May 2018.

Blog Post

Hayes, Terrence. "The Wicked Candor of Wanda Coleman." *The Paris Review*, 12 June 2020, www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/06/12/the-wicked-candor-of-wanda-coleman/.

A Page on a Website

Lundman, Susan. "How to Make Vegetarian Chili." *eHow*, www.ehow.com/how_10727_make-vegetarian-chili.html. Accessed 6 July 2025.

Television Episode on a Website

"I, Borg." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, season 5, episode 23, Paramount Pictures, 1992. *Paramount+*, www.paramountplus.com.

Film

Jurassic Park. Directed by Steven Spielberg, Universal Studios, 1993.

Song or Piece of Music

Beyoncé. "Pretty Hurts." *Beyoncé*, Parkwood Entertainment, 2013,
www.beyonce.com/album/beyonce/?media_view=songs.

Lopez, Jennifer. "Vivir mi vida." Sony Music Latin, 2017. *Spotify* app.

Image from Website

"Abraham Lincoln image." *Biography.com*. 19 Sept. 2016,
biography.com/people/abraham-lincoln-9382540.

Social Media

World Wildlife Fund. "Five Things to Know on Shark Awareness Day."
Facebook, 14 July 2020,
www.facebook.com/worldwildlifefund/videos/745925785979440/.

Lilly [@uvisaa]. "[I]f u like dark academia, there's a good chance you've seen my tumblr #darkacademia." *TikTok*, 2020,
www.tiktok.com/@uvisaa/video/6815708894900391173.

Thomas, Angie. Photo of *The Hate U Give* cover. *Instagram*, 4 Dec. 2018,
www.instagram.com/p/Bq_PaXKggPw/.

Priyanka [@priyankachopra]. "When you face what scares you, that's when you start building the life you've always wanted. - #HappyDusshera." X, 12 Oct. 2024, 10:09 p.m.,
https://twitter.com/priyankachopra/status/1844968574177141231?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet.

Podcast Episode

Wagstaffe, Johanna, and Rohit Joseph, hosts. "Do You Know Your Native Plants?" *10 Minutes to Save the Planet*, episode 6, CBC Listen, 14 July 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/cbc-podcasts/1395-10-minutes-to-save-the-planet/episode/15997348-do-you-know-your-native-plants>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2024.

YouTube

"8 Hot Dog Gadgets put to the Test." *YouTube*, uploaded by Crazy Russian Hacker, 6 June 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBlpjSEtELs.

NOTE: For more examples of how to cite work from websites and social media, see pages 324-327 of the *MLA Handbook* Ninth Edition.

Other Sources

Interview Conducted by Researcher/Writer (Unpublished)

Shaw, Lloyd. Personal interview. 21 Mar. 2016.

Personal Communication

Santiago, Robert. Personal communication with author. 11 Feb. 2017.

Live Presentation (Lectures, Talks, Conference Presentations, and Speeches)

Atwood, Margaret. "Silencing the Scream." Boundaries of the Imagination Forum. MLA Annual Convention, 29 Dec. 1993, Royal York Hotel, Toronto.

A Final Note: Students often use online citation formatting sites such as easybib.com and sonofcitation.com. AI software from *Grammarly* and *ChatGPT* is also commonly used to create work cited pages, in-text citation, and format papers. These sites and apps may not be up-to-date with the latest MLA style. It is your responsibility as a student to know whether what you turn in is correct or not.

MLA Format Example Pages (9th ed.)

The following examples show a first page and a work cited page of an MLA style student paper. Note the format is specific to student papers NOT professional papers.

Note: You should always follow directions from your instructor regarding formatting your assignments since there may be differences in style that are unique to those projects.

Aspen English

Professor Dib

Special Topics in Literature

30 April 2022

Putting the “Comm” in Comics: A Communication-Theory-Informed Reading of Graphic
Narratives

The analysis of literature is traditionally reserved for critical theories common in English circles, such as poststructuralism, feminism, or Marxism. These approaches serve as lenses with which readers can interpret writing and even society. Such analyses provide excellent opportunities for learning and deconstruction, but what happens when a piece of literature demands more? What happens when an additional element—pictures—are mixed through the words we are so familiar with studying? In recent decades, a growing interest in studying graphic novels as a form of literature has given us the opportunity to find out. Due to their relationship with the reader, multimodality, and form, comics and graphic novels necessitate a reading practice that considers communication theory as well as critical theory.

Works Cited

- Baden, Denise, et al. "Access over Ownership: Case Studies of Libraries of Things." *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 17, Sept. 2020, pp. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177180>.
- Boshart, Nic. "Brave New Book World: Digital Printing and Electronic Readers Will Save Publishing, Not Kill It." *Alternatives Journal*, vol. 37, no. 3, May 2011, pp. 22–23.
- Culley, Jennifer. "I Feel the Need, the Need to Weed! Maintaining an E-Book Collection." *The Southeastern Librarian*, vol. 63, no. 1, spring 2015, pp. 1–5.
- "Encyclopedia Britannica to End Print Editions." *CBS News*, 13 Mar. 2012, www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/encyclopaedia-britannica-to-end-print-editions/.
- Enis, Matt. "Labs in the Library: High-Tech, Specialized Collaboration Spaces Center the Academic Library as a Hub for Interdisciplinary Learning." *Library Journal*, Apr. 2019, pp. 18–21.
- Felsenthal, Edward. "The Business of Our Future." *Time*, Apr.-May 2022, p. 46.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES**Websites:**

<https://style.mla.org/>
<https://owl.purdue.edu/>

Books:

MLA Handbook. 9th ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 2021.