

How to Reference Properly: MLA Style

The Modern Language Association (MLA) requires a list of Works Cited at the end of a paper and references in brackets in the text of the paper, referring to entries on the Works Cited list. Cite only sources to which the paper refers, not every work examined. Entries in the Works Cited list should be arranged alphabetically by principal authors' surnames and by titles of anonymous works. Each entry should usually include name(s) of author(s), full title of work, place of publication, publisher, date of publication and, for periodical articles, volume, issue and inclusive page numbers.

Identifying Sources Properly

Throughout your essay, you must acknowledge whenever you quote from another work, use someone else's ideas expressed in your own words, or present evidence necessary to your argument. To do this properly, MLA style requires you to include information in parentheses that identifies the source (typically, the author's last name and page number). The following are examples of how to do this:

Put after all punctuation except last punctuation mark

... Machiavelli contended that human beings were by nature "ungrateful" and "mutable" (Johnson 1240), and Montaigne thought them "miserable and puny" (Johnson 1343).

Author name in sentence

Tannen has argued this point (178-85).

Author name not in sentence

This point has already been argued (Tannen 178-85).

Two or three authors

... (Jakobsen and Waugh 210-15).

More than three authors

... (Lauter et al.).

Title but no author name

... ("Fresco").

Handling Quotations In Your Text

Author's Name

MLA format follows the author-page method of citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in your works-cited list (see Works Cited, below). The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence.

Examples:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

Sometimes you may have to use an indirect quotation, that is, a quotation that you found in another source that was quoting from the original. For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source.

Examples:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd.in Weisman 259).

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which a quotation is taken. For instance, if two or more authors have the same last name, provide both authors' first initials (or even her or his full name if different authors share initials) in your citation. If you cite more than one work by a particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the other works by that same person.

Examples:

Two authors with the same last name:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

Two works by the same author:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

Short Quotations

To indicate short quotations (four or fewer typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks and incorporate it into your text. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference in the works-cited list. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.

Examples:

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there/ That's all I remember" (11-12).

Long Quotations

Place quotations longer than four typed lines in a free-standing block of typewritten lines, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented one inch from the left margin, and maintain double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.)

Examples:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)

In "Sources," Adrienne Rich explores the roles of women in shaping their world:

The faithful drudging child
the child at the oak desk whose penmanship,
hard work, style will win her prizes
becomes the woman with a mission, not to win prizes
but to change the laws of history. (23)

Adding or Omitting Words In Quotations

If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put square brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

Example:

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

If you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or word by using ellipsis marks surrounded by brackets.

Example:

In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale [...] and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).

Note: If there are ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work, do not put brackets around them; only use brackets around ellipsis marks to distinguish them from ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work.

How to Prepare a List of Works Cited

Center the title **Works Cited** at the top of a page at the end of the paper. Do not indent the first line of each citation, but indent all subsequent lines 1/2 inch. Always double space the **Works Cited**.

Multiple publications by the same author

Frye, Northrup. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

---. The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.

---, ed. Sound and Poetry. New York: Columbia UP, 1957.

Books

One author

Tatar, Maria. Off with Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

Two or three authors

Welsch, Roger L., and Linda K. Welsch. Cather's Kitchens: Foodways in Literature and Life. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1987.

More than three authors

Quirk, Randolph, et al. A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman, 1985.

Corporate author

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Campus Life: In Search of Community. Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

Edited work

Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square-Pocket, 1992.

Tannen, Deborah, ed. Gender and Conversational Interaction. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

Translated work

Homer. The Odyssey. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Viking, 1996.

One work in an anthology/without author/title within title

"A Witchcraft Story." The Hopi Way: Tales from a Vanishing Culture. Comp. Mando Sevillano. Flagstaff: Northland, 1986. 33-42.

Second or later edition

Newcomb, Horace, ed. Television: The Critical View. 5th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.

Signed article in an encyclopedia

Le Patourel, John. "Normans and Normandy." Dictionary of the Middle Ages. Ed. Joseph R. Strayer. 13 vols. New York: Scribner's, 1987.

Unsigned article in a well-known encyclopedia

"Mandarin." The Encyclopedia Americana. 1994 ed.

Periodical Articles

Journal article with volume, issue number(s), year, and pages

Barthelme, Frederick. "Architecture." Kansas Quarterly 13.3-4 (1981): 77-80.

Magazine article without volume or issue number

Perlstein, Rick. "Abridged Too Far?" Lingua Franca Apr.-May 1997: 23-24.

Newspaper article with nonconsecutive pages

Goldberg, Vicki, "Photographing a Mexico Where Silence Reigned." New York Times 23 Mar. 1997, late ed., sec. 2: 39+.

Internet resources

MLA recommends inserting the date of access before the location <URL>.

Professional site

Romance Languages and Literatures Home Page. 1 Jan. 1997. Dept. of Romance Langs. and Lits. U of Chicago. 8 July 1998 <<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/romance/>>.

Work at a scholarly project or site

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. Twice-Told Tales. Ed. George Parsons Lathrop. Boston: Houghton, 1883. 1 Mar. 1997 <<http://www.tiac.net/users/eldred/nh/ttt.html>>.

Article in an electronic journal

Calabrese, Michael. "Between Despair and Ecstasy: Marco Polo's Life of the Buddha." Exemplaria 9.1 (1997): 22 June 1998 <<http://web.english.ufl.edu/english/exemplaria/calax.htm>>.

A work from an online service

Fox, Justin. "What in the World Happened to Economics?" Fortune 15 Mar. 1999: 90-102. ABI/INFORM Global. ProQuest Direct. Regional Community Coll. Lib., Little Rock. 2 Mar. 1999 <<http://www.umi.com/proquest/>>.

Article in an encyclopedia

"Fresco." Britannica Online. Vers. 97.1.1. Mar. 1997. Encyclopedia Britannica. 29 Mar. 1997 <<http://www.eb.com:180/>>.

Online posting

Whenever feasible, cite an archival version of the posting.

Piez, Wendell. "Sustained Reading vs. Synchronic Access." Online posting. 23 Jan. 1997. Humanist Discussion Group. 29 June 1998 <http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists_archive/Humanist/v10/0238.html>.

Adapted from the University of Wisconsin and Purdue University web sites.