



IUPUI University Writing Center

“Because writers need readers”

Cavanaugh 427

274-2049



MLA Documentation Style

The approach to using any documentation style is to follow the style guides rather than trying to remember everything. Researchers in the fields of English and other modern languages use the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Thus, students in introductory writing classes are often required to use MLA style. The basic conventions of MLA documentation style are listed below, first rules for in-text citations of quoted or paraphrased material and then the rules for the bibliography page (called Works Cited in MLA).

In-Text Guidelines for MLA

Give the author credit in the text in the following ways:

- Use the author’s last name, either in the sentence introducing the borrowed material or within parentheses at the end of the quotation or paraphrase. (See examples below.)
- Use quotation marks before and after the author’s words in a short quotation, *always*.
- If the quotation is long (over four lines or 40 words), indent the whole quotation one inch from the left margin and omit the quotation marks.
- Use page numbers, within parentheses, telling the location of the quotation or paraphrase.
- The information in the in-text citation should be enough to get the reader to the right item on the Works Cited page and to the right page in the original book or periodical article. It’s especially helpful if you manage to use the author’s name in your introduction to the borrowed material and give the page number in the citation after. This way, the two parts of the in-text citation serve as “visual bookends,” clearly indicating just how much of the paragraph you are crediting to the original author. This introduction is called a *signal phrase* or a *lead-in*.

Inexperienced writers often slip into unintentional plagiarism by failing to distinguish clearly between quotation and paraphrase. Here’s a technique you may find helpful:

Read the passage in the source you are using. Then close the book and try to write the idea in your own words. When you have finished, open the book and compare the original with your version word by word. If there are sequences of words that are identical, make a conscious decision either to change the words so that you have not copied phrases, or use a word-for-word quotation and use quotation marks. In either case, give credit to the author for the ideas.

Examples of In-Text Citations in MLA

A source with one, two, or three authors

Koko is considered an exceptional ape (Smith 25).

Patterson and Linden agree that the gorilla Koko acquired language more slowly than a normal speaking child (83-90).

As it turned out, Koko acquired language more slowly than a normal speaking child (Patterson and Linden 83-90).

(Note: Include all their names either in your text or in parentheses).

A source with more than three authors

Despite the short-term devastation nuclear war would cause, many scientists fear that “the disruption of the global ecosystem” would ravage human life for centuries (Turco et al. 37).

(Note: Include the first author’s last name, the abbreviation “et al.” and the page number).

When two or more works by one author are used in the same text

To Will and Auriel Durant, creative men and women make history “forgivable” (*Dual Autobiography* 406).

(Note: Include a short form of a particular title in the text, along with the page number[s]).

Source with a corporate or anonymous author

In a hearing before the United States Atomic Energy Commission, many expressed “grave concern and anxiety” about the development of the hydrogen bomb (229).

(Note: Cite by the full corporate name, where possible including that name in your own text as introductory material or, as a parenthetical insertion, at the end of your sentence).

A quote of a quote found in your source (in other words, an indirect source)

Sir Bernard Lovell notes that overly narrow and regimented computerized research in astronomy is damaging to “the free exercise of that happy faculty known as serendipity” (qtd. in Roszak 115).

(Note: Include “qtd. in” (“quoted in”) before the name of your source).

Quoting or paraphrasing from a play

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Polonius advises Laertes to “give thy thoughts no tongue” (1.3.59).

(Note: Cite a play with act, scene, and line numbers).

Quoting or paraphrasing from poetry

In “Song of Myself,” Whitman identifies himself with the “procreant urge of the world” (line 45).

(Note: Cite a poem by the line (and section) numbers, or for poems without numbered lines, by the title. Do not cite poetry by the page number).

Quoting or paraphrasing from media sources

Cinematographer Nestor Almendros does some of his finest work in capturing the rural Texas landscapes in *Places in the Heart*.

(Note: Cite either the title or the name of the person chiefly responsible for that work (or both), depending upon your own emphasis)

Interview information – Use an appropriate signal phrase, e.g., “According to,” to incorporate information gathered in an interview. If the person you interviewed is not widely known, explain his or her credentials in your essay. Following the paraphrased or quoted material, use a transitional phrase to indicate you are no longer referring to the interview information:

According to psychologist George Adams, post-traumatic stress disorder afflicts a large number of war veterans. However, many experts question this opinion.

- \$ Title the page Works Cited (with no quotation marks around the word, and no bold and italics).
- \$ Arrange the sources in alphabetical order—by the last name of the first author listed on the source or (if no author is given) by the first important word of the title (not *a*, *an*, or *the*).
- \$ The Works Cited page and its entries should be double-spaced.
- \$ Use hanging indent. The first line of each entry starts at the left margin, but all subsequent lines are indented ½ inch. Most computer programs can provide this formatting automatically.
- \$ **For each entry:**
 - **First**, type the author=s last name, first name, and if available, middle initial. Do not list degrees, like M.D. or PhD. If multiple authors are given, list them after the first but keep normal word order.
 - **Next**, type the title of the article or book, followed by a period. If it=s a book, use italics to indicate it is a book title. If it=s an article, type the title in quotation marks. Capitalize all words, **except** articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions and the *to* of infinitives. Any first word of the title and subtitle (even if *a*, *an*, *from*, or *to*) should also be capitalized.
 - **Then**, give the facts of publication:
 - * For a book, these are the city of publication followed by a colon, then the publisher, followed by a comma, and then the year of publication.
 - * For an article, these are title of the journal, magazine, or newspaper underlined or in italics, followed by information that enables someone reading the list to find the right publication date and page. For scholarly journals, the volume number is also given (sometimes issue number too), with the date in parentheses, followed by a colon and the inclusive page numbers. For magazines, simply give the date (day, month, and year if it=s a weekly like *Time*), then a colon and the page numbers. In MLA, the page numbers are simply numbers, not preceded by *p*, *pp*, or *pg*.

Works Cited Examples for MLA

Book Sources:

Book by one author

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

Book with two authors

Gesell, Arnold, and Frances L. Smith. *Child Development: An Introduction to the Study of Human Growth*. New York: Harper, 1949.

Book with more than three authors

Gilman, Sander, Helen King, Roy Porter, George Rousseau, and Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria beyond Freud*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.

or

Gilman, Sander et al. *Hysteria beyond Freud*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.

Book with corporate author

United States Capitol Society. *We the People: The Story of the United States Capitol*. Washington: National Geographic, 1964.

Book with no author named

Encyclopedia of Photography. New York: Crown, 1984.

A work with an editor

Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. Ed. Kenneth S. Lynn. New York: Rinehart, 1959.

Two or more books by the same person

Alma, Jean. *Ferry Boats and Fairy Tales*. New York: Greentree, 1996.

---. *Origin of the Fairy Tale*. New York: Greentree, 1998.

An essay in a collection of essays

Krutch, Joseph Wood. "What the Year 2000 Won't Be Like." *Finding a Voice*. Ed. Jim W. Corder. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1973. 21-36.

Periodical and Newspaper Articles:

An academic journal with continuous pagination for each volume number

Delbruch, Max. "Mind from Matter." *The American Scholar* 47 (1978): 339-53.

An academic journal whose pages start anew with each issue

Posen, J. Sheldon and Joseph Sciorra. "Brooklyn's Dancing Tower." *Natural History* 92.6 (1983): 30-37.

A weekly or monthly magazine

Miller, Tyler. "The Vietnam War: The Executioner." *Newsweek* 13 Nov. 1978: 70.

Amelar, Sarah. "Restoration on 42nd Street." *Architecture* Mar. 1998: 146-50.

An article in a newspaper

Strout, Richard L. "Another Bicentennial." *Christian Science Monitor* 10 Nov. 1978: 27.

An anonymous article

"Drunkproofing Automobiles." *Time* 6 Apr. 1987: 37.

Other Sources:

A government publication

United States Dept. of Labor. Bureau of Statistics. *Dictionary of Occupational Title*. 4th ed. Washington: GPO, 1977.

A radio or television program

(Note: the citation may be written to emphasize a performer, the director, or anyone else associated with a show's production by having that person's name appear first. The standard form is to begin with the title of the program.)

Cheers. "Give Me a Ring Sometime." Dir. And Prod. James Burrows. Perf. Ted Danson, Shelley Long, Woody

Harrelson, John Ratzenburger, George Wendt, and Rea Perlman. NBC. 30 Sept. 1982.

An interview

Silber, John R. Personal interview. 5 June 1993.

Film

(Note: the citation may be written to emphasize a performer, the director, or anyone else associated with a film's production by having that person's name appear first. The standard form is to begin with the title of the film.)

It's a Wonderful Life. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Mitchell.

RKO, 1946.

Citing Electronic Sources

Citing Electronic Sources in Text:

According to the [MLA Style homepage](#), "works on the World Wide Web are cited just like printed works." Basically, this means that you need to provide, in text, enough information to direct readers to the works cited page ([MLA Style](#)). The author or organization of the text should always be referred to clearly in text, but since most electronic documents do not have "fixed" page numbers, no page numbers are generally used. However, please note the following examples:

Electronic Sources without Page, Paragraph, or Screen Numbers

Writing is a social act (Smith).

or

Joe Smith has shown that writing is a social act.

Electronic Source that Uses Fixed Page Numbers:

Joe Smith suggests that writing is a social act (1).

Electronic Source that Uses Paragraph Numbers:

Smith argues that writing is a social act (par. 5).

Electronic Source that Uses Screen Numbers:

Smith contends that writing is a social act (screen 2).

Citing Sources on the Works Cited Page:

Online Library Service

Fox, Justin. "What in the World Happened to Economics?" [Fortune](#) 15 Mar. 1999: 90-102. [Academic Search Elite](#).

EBSCOhost. IUPUI University Lib., Indianapolis. 2 Mar. 1999

<<http://www.epnet.com/ehost/indiana/ehost.html/>>.

Complete Scholarly Project or Information Database

The History Channel Online. 1998. History Channel. 19 June 1998 <<http://historychannel.com/>>.

Document within a Scholarly Project or Information Database

“This Day in History: August 20.” The History Channel Online. 1998. History Channel. 19 June 1998

<<http://historychannel.com/thisday/today/980820.html>>.

A Professional or Personal Site

Romance Languages and Literature Home Page. 1 Jan. 1997. Dept. of Romance Langs. and Lits., U of Chicago. 8

July 1998 <<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/romance/>>.

An Article in a Scholarly Journal

Denning, Peter J. “Business Designs for the New University.” Educom Review 31.6 (1996). 23 June 1998

<<http://educom.edu/web/pubs/review/reviewArticles/31620.html>>.

An Article in a Newspaper or on a Newswire

“Endangered Species Act Upheld.” AP Online 22 June 1998. 6 July 1998 <<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/w/>

AP-Court-Endangered-Species.html >.

An Article in a Magazine

Kinsley, Michael. “Now Is the Summer of Too Much Content.” Slate 20 June 1998. 25 June 1998

<<http://www.slate.com/98-06-20/Readme.asp>>.

A Review

Ebert, Roger. Rev. of The Truman Show, dir. Peter Weir. Chicago Sun-Times Online 5 June 1998. 16 June 1998

<<http://www.suntimes.com/output/ebert1/05show.htm>>.

An Anonymous Article

“Fleeting Consciousness.” US News Online 26 June 1998. 1 July 1998

<<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/980629/29brai.htm>>.

An Editorial

“Controlling Deadly Trade.” Editorial. Christian Science Monitor: Electronic Edition 26 June 1998. 30 June 1998
<<http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1998/06/26/f-p16s1.htm>>.

A Letter to the Editor

Kung, Cleo. Letter. New York Times on the Web 28 June 1998. 29 June 1998 <<http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/Letters/lkung/html>>.

An Abstract

Bullough, Vern L. “Medieval Concepts of Adultery.” Arthuriana 7.4 (1997): 5-15. Abstract. 26 June 1998
<http://dc.smu.edu/Arthuriana/Abstract/Ab_list1.htm>.

A Work from an Online Service

“Table Tennis.” Compton’s Encyclopedia Online. Vers. 2.0. 1997. America Online. 4 July 1998. Keyword:
Compton’s.