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MLA Documentation Style – 7th edition

One approach to using a documentation style is to follow 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, 7th edition*.

The purpose of documentation is three-fold: to give credit to one's sources, to establish the credibility of one's sources, and to provide a path to each individual source. In fact, the writer's job is to offer enough information on the works cited page and in the text so that readers can find the sources themselves.

There are two basic elements of documentation: the works cited page and the in-text citations. Each source that is used in the body of the paper should be listed on the works cited page, and, conversely, each source on the works cited page should be referenced in the body of the paper.

The Works Cited Page

- Center the title Works Cited (with no quotation marks around the word, and no bold and italics) at the top of the page.
- 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*).
- Double space everything on the works cited page.
- Use hanging indent for the entries. The first line of each entry starts at the left margin, while all subsequent lines of each entry are indented ½ inch. Most computer programs can provide this formatting automatically.
- Create the works cited page as a separate page, following the last page of the body of the document and paginated with the rest of the paper. That is, if the paper ends on page 5, the works cited page would be identified as page 6.

In general, each entry in the works cited contains several parts: author, title, publication information, medium of publication, and—for electronic sources only—date of access. Specific examples are shown below. Pay particular attention to formatting and punctuation.

Guidelines for the Works Cited Page

Print Sources – General Guidelines

For each book or article:

- **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 is a book, use italics to indicate it is a book title. If it is an article (or portion of a book, e.g. a chapter), 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 details of publication:
 - For a book, these details are the city of publication (state also if the city could be in various states, like Columbus or Springfield) followed by a colon, then the publisher (in the shortest possible wording), followed by a comma, and then the year of publication. Finally, designate the medium of publication (print).
 - For an article, these details are title of the journal, magazine, or newspaper in italics, followed by information that enables someone reading the list to find the right publication date and pages. For scholarly journals, the volume and issue numbers are included, 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 is a weekly like *Time*), then a colon and the page numbers. Finally, designate the medium of publication (print).

Print Sources - Examples

Book with one author

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of the Book*. City where published, and if necessary for clarity, the state abbreviation: publisher's name, publication date. Medium of publication.

Ludlum, Robert. *The Bourne Supremacy*. New York: Bantam, 1986. Print.

Book with two authors

Lastname, Firstname, and Firstname Lastname. *Title of Book*. City where published: publisher's name publication date. Medium of publication.

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

Book with more than three authors

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

or

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

Book with corporate author

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

Book with no author named

Encyclopedia of Photography. New York: Crown, 1984. Print.

Work with an editor

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

Two or more books by the same person (use three hyphens and a period for the subsequent items; alphabetize by author then title)

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

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

Essay in a collection of essays

Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Book*. Ed. followed by editor's name. City where published and, if necessary for clarity, the state abbreviation: publisher's name, publication date. Pages of article. Medium of publication.

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. Print.

Article in an academic journal

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

[Note: this is from volume 92, issue 6, year 1983, pages 30-37.]

Article in a magazine (weekly)

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

Article in a magazine (monthly)

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

Article in a newspaper

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

Anonymous article

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

Article in a reference book

"Japan." *The Encyclopedia Americana*. 2004 ed. Print.

Brochure, pamphlet, or press release

The Center for Research and Learning. *Undergraduate Research Opportunities*. Indianapolis: IUPUI, n.d. Print.

Government publication

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

[Note: all U.S. government publications come from the Government Printing Office, abbrev. GPO.]

Electronic Sources – General Guidelines

Whenever possible, follow the guidelines for print sources (author, title, publication information), followed by specific information about the electronic path. That additional information must include the date on which you accessed the site as electronic sources may change and/or disappear. MLA 7th edition does not require a URL as this designation is often unwieldy and difficult to enter, and the other information provided should lead the reader to the source. For more information on this, consult the handbook, section 5.6.

For each source:

- **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 work (be it e-book, online article, or web page) followed by a period. If it is a website or book, use italics for the title. If it is an article, type the title in quotation marks. Capitalize all words, except articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions and the *to* of infinitives. However, any first word of the title and subtitle (even *a*, *an*, *from*, or *to*) should also be capitalized.
- **Third**, include publication information: version or edition, sponsor of the site, date of publication, medium of publication (web).
- **Finally**, list the date you accessed the source. Give day of the month, month, and year.

Work cited only on the web

Lastname, Firstname. "Title of the work." *Title of the overall Web site*. Version or edition used. Publisher or sponsor of the site; if not available, use N.p. Date of publication (day, month, and year); if nothing is available, use n.d. Medium of publication (Web). Date of access (day, month, year).

"Hourly News Summary." *National Public Radio*. Natl. Public Radio, 20 July 2007. Web. 20 July 2007.

Article in a scholarly journal

Author's last name, first name. "Title of the article." *Title of the Magazine* Volume. Issue (Date published): pages in original version. Medium. Date of access.

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

Work from an online service

Tolson, Nancy. "Making Books Available: The Role of Early Libraries, Librarians, and Booksellers in the Promotion of African American Children's Literature." *African American Review* 32.1 (1998): 9-16. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 June 2008.

Entire internet site

Name of editor if given. "Title of the Work." *Title of the overall Web site, if different from title of work*.

Publisher or sponsor of the site; if not available, use N.p. Date of publication (day, month, and year); if nothing is available, use n.d. Medium of publication (Web). Date of access (day, month, year).

Godwin-Jones, Robert, ed. *Nineteenth-Century German Stories*. Foreign Language Department, Virginia Commonwealth U. 1999. Web. 10 Jan. 2002.

Other Sources – Examples (e.g. films, interviews, lectures)

Radio or television program

“Give Me a Ring Sometime.” *Cheers*. Dir. and Prod. James Burrows. Perf. Ted Danson, Shelley Long, Woody Harrelson, John Ratzenburger, George Wendt, and Rhea Perlman. NBC. 30 Sept. 1982. Television.

[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 episode.]

Film

It’s a Wonderful Life. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Mitchell. RKO, 1946. DVD.

[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. In this example, RKO is the name of the movie studio.]

Interview conducted by the writer of the paper

Silber, John R. Personal interview. 5 June 1993. [Substitute *telephone interview* if that was the case. No additional medium is indicated.]

Advertisement

Air Canada. Advertisement. CNN. 15 May 1998. Television.

[Note: cite the name of the product, company, or institution that is the subject. Follow with the word “advertisement.” Add publication information and medium used.]

Lecture, speech, or address

Walker, Owen. “The Magic of Found Music.” Berkshire High School. Berkshire, Ohio. 15 May 2007. Speech.

[Note: give the speaker, title, meeting and sponsoring organization, location, date, and medium.]

In-Text Citations

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).
- *Always* use quotation marks before and after the author’s words in a short quotation (less than four lines or 40 words).
- Use page numbers, within parentheses, telling the original location of the quotation or paraphrase.
- 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. Double space such indented quotes. Unlike other citations, place page numbers in parentheses *after* the period.
- Confirm that the in-text citation directs 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 which follows. 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*, a *lead-in*, or an *attributive tag*.

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

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).

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

[Note: include both names or all three names either in your text or in parentheses.]

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.]

Two or more sources in a single parenthetical reference

Both Durant and Johnson believe creative men and women are important in history (Durant 406; Johnson 23).

Source with a corporate or anonymous author

In 1992 it was apparent that the American health care system, though impressive in many ways, needed “to be fixed and perhaps radically modified” (Public Agenda Foundation 4).

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

[Note: Cite by the full corporate name; when possible include that name in your own text as introductory material. In that case, only a page number is needed in parentheses. When giving the name of a corporate author in parentheses, shorten terms that are commonly abbreviated, e.g. Natl. for National.]

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.]

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 number.]

Poem

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.]

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

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

[Note: 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.]

Electronic sources

Give enough information to direct readers to the works cited page (MLA Handbook). 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).

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