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MLA DOCUMENTATION STYLE

As described in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, MLA documentation uses in-text parenthetical references to briefly identify sources. Full documentation appears in a “Works Cited” or “Sources Cited” section at the end of the document. Footnotes are used only to comment on material in the text.

A parenthetical reference usually includes the author’s surname and the exact page number of the borrowed material:

Researchers at the University of Guelph report that the antibody IgY, found in egg yolk, is effective as an oral passive immunization against various gastrointestinal pathogens (Kovacs-Nolan and Mine 39).

Readers seeking the complete citation for Kovacs-Nolan and Mine can easily move to the “Works Cited,” listed alphabetically by author:


This complete citation includes page numbers for the entire article.

MLA Parenthetical References

For clear and informative parenthetical references, observe these guidelines:

♦ If your discussion names the author, do not repeat the name in your parenthetical reference; simply list the page number:

Bowman et al. explain how their recent study indicates an elevated risk of leukemia for children exposed to certain types of electromagnetic fields (59).

♦ If you cite two or more works in a single parenthetical reference, separate the citations with semicolons:

(Jones 32; Leduc 41; Gomez 293–94)

♦ If you cite two or more authors with the same last name, include the first initial in your parenthetical reference to each author:

(R. Jones 32)

(S. Jones 14–15)

♦ If you cite two or more works by the same author, include the first significant word from each work’s title, or a shortened version:

(Lamont, *Biophysics* 100–01)

(Lamont, *Diagnostic Tests* 81)

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If the work is by an institutional or corporate author or if it is unsigned (that is, author unknown), use only the first few words of the institutional name or the work’s title in your parenthetical reference:

(American Medical Assn. 2)

("Distribution Systems" 18)

To avoid distracting your readers, keep each parenthetical reference as brief as possible. One method is to name the source in your discussion and to place only the page number in parentheses.

For a paraphrase, place the parenthetical reference before the closing punctuation mark. For a quotation that runs into the text, place the reference between the final quotation mark and the closing punctuation mark. For a quotation set off (indented) from the text, place the reference two spaces after the closing punctuation mark.

As you will see in the following examples, documenting electronic sources is often trickier than documenting printed sources. More often than not, internet sources do not name authors, so special identification techniques are required. Also, electronic documents seldom number pages or provide other types of reference numbers. Therefore, MLA format recommends avoiding parenthetical references to electronic sources. Instead, the MLA Handbook suggests direct references in the text.

**MLA WORKS CITED ENTRIES**

The Works Cited list includes each source you have paraphrased or quoted. Double-space the list for academic papers in the humanities. In all other situations, single-space within each entry and double-space between entries. Key the first line of each entry flush with the left margin. Indent the second and subsequent lines five spaces (1.25 cm [\(\frac{1}{2}\)“]). Use a one-character space after any period, comma, or colon.

Following are examples of complete citations as they would appear in the Works Cited section of your document. Shown below each citation is its corresponding parenthetical reference as it would appear in the text. Note capitalization, abbreviations, spacing, and punctuation in sample entries.

**MLA Works Cited Entries for Books.** Book citations should contain the following information (found on the book’s title page and copyright page): author, title, and facts about publication (city, publisher, date). In some cases, other information will be available: editor or translator, edition, and volume number. MLA format underlines or italicizes the titles of books (and other publications).
1. Book, Single Author—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Broadhead 17)

Identify the province or state by Canada Post or U.S. Postal Service abbreviations. If the city of publication is well known (Toronto, Vancouver, etc.), omit the province or state abbreviation. If several cities are listed on the title page, give only the first.


*Parenthetical reference:* (Broadhead 17)

When citing more than one work by an author, do not repeat the author’s name; simply key three em-dashes followed by a period. List the works alphabetically by title.

2. Book, Two or Three Authors—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Aronson, Katz, and Moustafa 121–23)

Shorten publishers’ names, as in “Simon” for Simon & Schuster or “Yale UP” for Yale University Press. For page numbers having more than two digits, give only the final two digits for the second number.

3. Book, Four or More Authors—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Beebe et al. 14)

“Et al.” is the abbreviated form of the Latin *et alii*, meaning “and others.”

4. Book, One or More Editors—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Gunn 34)

For more than three editors, name only the first, followed by “et al.”

5. Anthology Selection or Book Chapter—MLA

Terminello, Verna, and Marcia G. Reed. “E-mail: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly.” *E-mail: Communicate Effectively.* Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003. 1–16.

*Parenthetical reference:* (Terminello and Reed 14)

Page numbers in the Sources Cited entry cover the selection cited from the anthology or book.

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6. Article, Magazine—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Johnston 35)

No punctuation separates the magazine title and date. The abbreviation “p.” or “pp.” is not used to designate page numbers. If no author is given, list all other information:


When an article does not appear on consecutive pages, give only the number of the first page, followed immediately by a plus sign.

7. Article, Journal with New Pagination Each Issue—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Ackerman 56–63)

Because each issue for that year will have page numbers beginning with “1,” readers need the number of the issue. The “119” denotes the volume number; the “4” denotes the issue number. Omit “The” or “A” or any other introductory article from a journal or magazine title.

8. Article, Journal with Continuous Pagination—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Norcliffe 104)

When page numbers continue from issue to issue for the full year, readers do not need the issue number, because no other issue in that year repeats these same page numbers. (Include the issue number if you think it will help readers retrieve the article more easily.) The “84” denotes the volume number.

9. Article, Newspaper—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Mingail C1)

When a daily paper has more than one edition, cite the specific edition after the date. Omit any introductory article in the newspaper’s name (not The Globe and Mail). If no author is given, list all the other information. If the newspaper’s name does not contain the city of publication, insert it, using brackets: Northern Miner [LaRonge, SK].

**MLA Works Cited Entries for Other Sources.** Miscellaneous sources range from unsigned encyclopedia entries to conference presentations to government publications. A full citation should give this information (as available): author, title, city, publisher, date, and page numbers.

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10. Encyclopedia, Dictionary, Alphabetic Reference—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (“Communication”)

Begin a signed entry with the author’s name. For any work arranged alphabetically, omit page numbers in the citation and the parenthetical reference. For a well-known reference book, only an edition (if stated) and a date are needed. For other reference books, give the full publication information.

11. Report—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (MacHutchon, Himmer, and Bryden 29)

If no author is given, begin with the organization that sponsored the report; e.g., Canadian Professional Sales Association (CPSA). For any report or other document with group authorship, include the group’s abbreviated name in your first parenthetical reference—e.g., (Canadian Professional Sales Association [CPSA] 49)—and then use only that abbreviation in any subsequent reference—e.g., (CPSA 78).

12. Conference Presentation—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Smith 109)

The previous example shows a presentation that has been included in the published proceedings of a conference. For an unpublished presentation, include the presenter’s name; the title of the presentation; and the conference title, location, and date, but do not underline or italicize the conference information.

13. Interview, Personally Conducted—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Turner)

14. Interview, Published—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Lescault 218)

The interviewee’s name is placed in the entry’s author slot.
15. Letter, Unpublished—MLA

*Parenthetical reference:* (Singh)

16. Questionnaire—MLA

*Parenthetical reference:* (Sakamoto)

17. Brochure or Pamphlet—MLA

*Parenthetical reference:* (Nissan)

If the work is signed, begin with its author.

18. Lecture—MLA

*Parenthetical reference:* (Jack)

If the lecture title is not known, write Address, Lecture, or Reading but do not use quotation marks. Include the sponsor and the location if available.


*Parenthetical reference:* (B.C. Ministry of Highways 49)

If the author is unknown (as shown), list the information in this order: name of the government, name of the issuing agency, document title, place, publisher, and date.

20. Document with Corporate Authorship—MLA

*Parenthetical reference:* (Canada Post 5)

Author (if known), title (in quotes), sponsoring organization or publisher, date, page numbers.

For any work that has group authorship (corporation, committee, task force), cite the name of the group or agency in place of the author’s name.
MLA Works Cited Entries for Electronic Sources. In general, citation for an electronic source with a printed equivalent should begin with that publication information (see relevant sections above). But any citation should enable readers to retrieve the material electronically whether or not a printed equivalent exists.

22. Online Database Source—MLA

Parenthetical reference: (Sahl 83)

For entries with a printed equivalent, begin with complete publication information, then the database title (underlined), the “Online” designation to indicate the medium, service provider, and date of access. The access date is important because frequent updatings of databases can produce different versions of the material.

For entries with no printed equivalent, give the title and date of the work in quotation marks, followed by the electronic source information:


Parenthetical reference: (Argent 4)

If the author is not known, begin with the work’s title.

23. Computer Software—MLA

Parenthetical reference: (Microsoft Office 2003)

Begin with the author’s name, if known. Name the electronic format and standard publishing information.

24. CD-ROM—MLA

Parenthetical reference: (Cavanaugh 8)

If the material is also available in print, begin with complete publication information, followed by the name of the database (underlined), “CD-ROM” designation, vendor’s name, and electronic publication date. If the material has no printed equivalent, list its author (if known) and its title (in quotation marks), followed by the electronic source information.
25. Internet (Bulletin Board, Discussion List)—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Templeton)

Begin with the author’s name (if known), followed by the title of the work (in quotation marks), publication date, “Online posting” designation, name of discussion group, name of network, and date of your access. If appropriate, include the online address at the end of the entry, after the word *Available.* The parenthetical reference should not include a page number as none is given in an online posting.

26. Email—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Konecsni)

Cite personal email as you would print correspondence. If the document has a subject line or title, enclose it in quotation marks. For publicly posted email (for a newsgroup or discussion list), include the address and the date of access.

27. Web Source (Online Article or Posting)—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Chung)

Name the author (if known) followed by the title of the work (in quotation marks), posting date, “Online” designation, date of access, and URL. In place of (or in addition to) the web address, include the name of the website.

28. Web Source (Homepage, Personal Site)—MLA


*Parenthetical reference:* (Carroll)

Name the site owner, then the title of the site. (If no title is available, add a description, such as “Homepage,” neither underlined nor in quotation marks.) Provide the revision or copyright date, if available. Name the organization that sponsors the site, if available, and provide the access date and the URL.
29. Web Source (Homepage, Professional Site)—MLA


Parenthetical reference: (itWorldCanada)

Name the site author or creator, then the title of the site. (If no title is available, provide a descriptive phrase and indicate “Homepage,” neither underlined nor in quotation marks.) Provide the date of the latest posting, if that’s available. Name any organization or institution associated with the site. Provide the access date and URL.

30. Web Source (Secondary Page)—MLA


Parenthetical reference: (Evers)

Name the author or creator if available. Place the title of the topic or article in quotation marks. Underline or italicize the page title, if it’s named. Name any organization or institution associated with the site. Provide the date of the latest posting, if that’s available, along with the access date and URL.

31. Magazine Article, Online—MLA


Parenthetical reference: (Gatehouse)

Name the author. Place the article title in quotation marks. Underline or italicize the magazine’s name. List the date and page, if indicated. Provide the access date and the URL.

32. Journal Article, Online—MLA


Parenthetical reference: (Kitts)

Name the author. Place the article title in quotation marks. Underline or italicize the journal’s name. Provide the issue or other identifying number. (The year of publication goes in parentheses.) Give the page numbers, if known. Provide the access date and the URL.
**33. Newspaper Article, Online—MLA**


*Parenthetical reference:* (Kerr)

Name the author. Place the article title in quotation marks. Underline or italicize the newspaper’s name. List the date, edition, and section and page, if indicated. Name the database, if applicable. Give the access date and the URL.

**MLA Sample Works Cited Page**

Place your Works Cited section on a separate page at the end of the document. Arrange entries alphabetically by author surname. When the author is unknown, list the title alphabetically according to its first word (excluding introductory articles). For a title that begins with a digit (“5,” “6,” etc.), alphabetize the entry as if the digit were spelled out.

**Discussion of the Following “WORKS CITED”**

1. Centre the Works Cited title at the top of the page, 2.5 cm to 5.1 cm (1” to 2”) from the top paper edge. Single-space within entries; double-space between the entries. Order the entries alphabetically.

2. Indent five spaces (1.25 cm [1/2”]) for the second and subsequent lines of an entry.

3. Treat unpublished correspondence and interviews as shown. See Example 14, above, for the treatment of published interviews.

4. The organization’s title may be abbreviated if it is included in full, later in the entry. Place quotation marks around article or chapter or secondary page titles. Underline or italicize periodical, book, or website titles. Capitalize the first letter of keywords in all titles and subtitles. (Capitalize the first letters of articles [“The”], prepositions [“For”], or conjunctions [“And”] only if they are the first or last word in a title.)

5. For government reports, name the sponsoring agency and include all available information for retrieving the document. For electronic sources, name the article and the website titles. For sources listed by the same author or sponsoring agency, list the entries alphabetically by the title of the article, book, website, or periodical.

6. Use a period and one space to separate a citation’s three major items (author or sponsor, title, publication data). Leave one space after a comma or colon.

7. Do not cite a magazine’s volume number, even if it is given, but cite a journal’s volume number (see Example 8, above). Use no punctuation to separate magazine title and date.

8. Include the volume number and issue number for a journal that has new pagination in each issue. For page numbers of more than two digits, give only the final two digits for the second number.

9. Use three-letter abbreviations for months with five or more letters.

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WORKS CITED


Modern Language Association style calls for (1) brief in-text documentation and (2) complete documentation in a list of works cited at the end of your text. A DIRECTORY TO MLA STYLE In-Text Documentation 112. 1. Author named in a signal phrase 113 2. Author named in parentheses 113 3. Two or more works by the same author 113 4. Authors with the same last name 114 5. Two or more authors 114 6. Organization or government as author 114 7. Author unknown 115 8. Literary works 115 9. Work in an anthology 116 10. MLA Documentation Style. Introduction: When you use the words or original ideas of another person in your writing, you must cite the sources. If the exact words of the original source are used, quotation marks are necessary. There are several documentation formats. Be sure to use the one suggested by your instructor. This handout explains the MLA (Modern Language Association) format.