MLA 8ᵗʰ Edition Documentation

MLA now recommends that writers think of style principles as flexible guides, rather than rules. Therefore, compared to the seventh edition of the MLA Handbook, the eighth edition emphasizes the writer's freedom to provide reliable references that contain core elements common to most works, rather than adhering to rigid formatting styles. For example, certain types of sources, such as digital publications, are sometimes undefinable, or accessible in more than one way. Thus, there can be various models for presenting scholarly sources. It is important, however, to remember that the writer's goal and responsibility is to combine error-free writing with trustworthy documentation.

This handout focuses specifically on creating in-text citations and citing sources in MLA. For additional information on research documentation style, as well as related links, please visit the Writing Center's home page.

In-Text Citations

When paraphrasing an author's idea or quoting an author's exact words, cite the author's last name and the page number.

In-text citations are usually placed in parentheses and consist of the author's last name (or the first element in the works cited entry if no author is provided) followed by a space and a page number.

> Example: "It's tough being a stickler for punctuation these days. One almost dare not get up in the mornings" (Truss 3).

The author's name may also appear in the text itself when introducing the quoted or paraphrased material. In this case, only the page number would appear in parentheses.

> Example: In her book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*, Lynn Truss laments the plight of those who are orthodox punctuators: "It's tough being a stickler for punctuation these days. One almost dare not get up in the mornings" (3).

When the works cited entry begins with the title of the source, the title is included in the in-text citation. As with using the author, the title may appear in the text itself when introducing the source material or in abbreviated form with a page number in parentheses.

> Example: In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, King Arthur is described most humbly as "one who would not eat until all were served" (77).

> Example: King Arthur selflessly and humbly "would not eat until all were served" (*Sir Gawain* 77).

Electronic sources often do not include page numbers, so only the author's name would be included in the citation. Some sources provide explicit paragraph numbers. In such cases, give the relevant number or numbers, preceded by the label par. or pars. Other sources may provide labels instead of pages, such as sections (sec., secs.) or chapters (ch., chs.). If the author's name begins such a citation, place a comma after the name.

> Example: There is little evidence here for the claim that "Eagleton has belittled the gains of postmodernism" (Chan, par. 41).

Citing Sources on Works Cited Page: The Core Elements

Each citation on a works cited page is organized according to nine basic core elements written in a specific order. Note below, in parentheses, the specific punctuation marks, either a comma or a period, following the core elements' names. Some sources may not have all nine elements; if they do not, leave that element out and go on to the next element.

Author (.)

One author: Last name, First name. (Include middle names and initials after the author's first name.)

McCullough, David. *The Great Bridge: The Epic Story of the Building of the Brooklyn Bridge.* Simon and Schuster, 1983.

Two authors: Reverse the first listed author's name (same as for one author), follow it with a comma, the word *and*, then give the second name in conventional order.

Gaiman, Neil, and Terry Pratchett. *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch.* William Morrow, 2007.

Three or more authors: List the first author and then *et al.*

Burdick, Anne, et al. *Digital Humanities.* MIT P, 2012.

Note: The author can be an editor, translator, performer, creator, etc.

Holland, Merlin, and Rupert Hart-Davis, editors. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde.* Henry Holt, 2000.

Title of source (.)

Titles are placed in quotation marks or italicized depending on the source. When the source is contained in a larger work, place the title in quotation marks. If the source is not contained in a larger work, italicize the title.

Quotation marks: Titles of poems or short stories in a collection, articles or web pages, episodes of a television series, articles in a journal or magazine

Bailey, Michael D. "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstitions in Early European Witchcraft and Literature." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 111, no. 2, Jan 2006, ahr.oxfordjournals.org/content/111/2/383.full.

Italics: Titles of books, websites, television series, plays

Hamlet. Performance by Kenneth Branaugh, 21 Nov. 2012, the Booth Theatre, New York City.

Title of container (,)

When a source is part of a larger work, the larger work is considered a container that holds the source. Italicize the title of the container and follow it with a comma. Some possible containers include a book that is a collection of short stories, poems, or essays; a periodical; a television series; a website; or a database.

Dewar, James A., and Peng Hwa Ang. "The Cultural Consequences of Printing and the Internet." *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, edited by Sabrina Alcorn Baron et al., U of Massachusetts P/Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 2007, pp. 365-77.

When an electronic source is accessed from a database, for example JSTOR, that database is a second container and is written in italics.

Dewar, James A., and Peng Hwa Ang. "The Cultural Consequences of Printing and the Internet." *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, edited by Sabrina Alcorn Baron et al., U of Massachusetts P/Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 2007, pp. 365-77. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/79830288.

Other contributors (,)

In some sources, people other than the author may be credited in the source as contributors according to their role (for example: adapted by, directed by, edited by, illustrated by, introduction by, narrated by, performance by, translated by). It is the writer's prerogative to include these people as contributors or place them in the author position (see page 2, under "Three or more authors" Note). If the writer does not wish to focus on a person in a certain role, but does wish to include that person as a contributor, the name should be placed in the contributor position.

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, episode 10, Mutant Enemy, 1999.

Fagih, Ahmed Ibrahim al-. *The Singing of the Stars*. Translated by Leila El Khalidi and Christopher Tingley. *Short Arabic Plays: An Anthology*, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Interlink Books, 2003, pp.140-57.

Note the different uses of punctuation and capitalization in the above two examples of "other contributors." In determining which is appropriate, keep in mind the punctuation rules: Containers are followed by a comma and then a word beginning with a lower case letter; sources are followed by a period and then a word beginning with an upper case letter.

Version (,)

A source may indicate that it is a particular version of that source. Versions can be editions of books, unabridged or abridged editions, or an expanded or updated edition.

Hacker, Diane. *Rules for Writers*. 6th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

Number (,)

Some sources are part of numbered sequences such as volumes, issues, episodes or seasons.

Hilliard, Russell. "Music Therapy in Hospice and Palliative Care: A Review of the Empirical Data." *Evidence Based Complementary Alternative Medicine*, vol. 2, no. 2, April 2005. doi: 10.1093/ecam/neho76

Publisher (,)

The organization primarily responsible for producing the source is the publisher.

> Jacobs, Alan. *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. Oxford UP, 2011.

For the following kinds of sources, you do not need to include the publisher: a periodical, a work published by the author or editor, websites whose titles are the same as the publisher, websites not involved in producing the work (JSTOR, YouTube, ProQuest, etc.).

Publication Date (,)

Include as much information about the publication date as possible. Books, for example, list only the year on the copyright page. News articles, however, often list the day, month, and year. The general rule is to write the full date as listed in the source, in the order of day month year.

> "Mother's Eggs Could Mean Daughter Gives Birth to Sibling." *Herald Scotland,* Herald and Times Group, 3 July 2007, www.heraldscotland.com/news/12779522.Mother_apos_s_eggs _could_mean_daughter_gives_birth_to_sibling/.

Location (.)

The location of a source may be a series of page numbers, a URL, a DOI, a disc number, etc.

> Oates, Joyce Carol. "The Myth of the Isolated Artist." *Celestial Timepiece—The Joyce Carol Oates Home Page.* U of San Francisco, 26 Jan. 2015, celestialtimepiece.com/2015/01/26/the-myth-of-the-isolated-artist/.