TEMPLE UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER
GUIDE TO MLA DOCUMENTS

MLA Style is a method of formatting and documenting sources in academic writing. MLA is commonly used for papers in the Humanities (such as English and philosophy); at Temple, MLA style is also used in First Year Writing and Intellectual Heritage courses. **This guide is primarily concerned with the MLA style of documenting outside sources.** For more information on MLA formatting, see *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition* (available in the University Writing Center).

This guide covers the basic information needed for most student papers. It is intended as a convenience, not as a substitute for the complete *MLA Handbook*. If you are writing a paper with complex or unusual citations, please plan to consult the full *MLA Handbook*, which is available in the Writing Center.

Please note: the MLA periodically announce changes and additions to their citation guide, even between published editions of the *MLA Handbook*. This is especially true for emerging electronic texts. In general, these changes are minor, and they should not affect student work. However, if you are producing a high-stakes document and it is essential that every citation follow the very latest rules, you must check the MLA’s website at [www.mlahandbook.org](http://www.mlahandbook.org).

If you suspect that information in this guide is erroneous, please contact Lori Salem ([lori.salem@temple.edu](mailto:lori.salem@temple.edu))

The Seventh Edition of the *MLA Handbook* was released in 2009, and it includes many important changes regarding the preparation of the Works Cited page. The most significant change is the inclusion of a description of each source – print or web – to the end of each entry. Students should also note, however, that URLs are *no longer* required when citing internet sources *unless* your instructor specifically asks that you include them *or* if the source is hard to find. If you can enter the title and author into a search engine and quickly find your source, you do not need to include the URL in your citation.
Based on the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition, and MLA.org’s Style FAQ.
This Writing Center Guide was last revised on 08/05/2014.
Understanding the MLA Style of Documentation

MLA Documentation is composed of two equally important parts:

1) In-text citations – which are placed at the end of sentences that include material you are citing;
2) a “Works Cited” page at the end of your document

For example, imagine the following sentence in your paper:

In 1922, “the character of human communication changed irrevocably in Britain” (Avery 1).

The parenthetical reference “(Avery 1)” tells your reader that the quotation came from page 1 of a work by Avery. Please note that the punctuation – in this case a period – goes AFTER your citation. By looking up Avery in your Works Cited page, your reader can find complete publication information for the source. In your Works Cited, the Avery entry would look like this:


The in-text citation and the Works Cited page work together to provide your readers with the information they need to find and double-check your sources. What follows is a guide to preparing both in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

In-Text Citations

Whether you use quotations or paraphrases, MLA Style requires you to document exactly what works you referenced and where you found the information. Regardless of the medium – be it print, web, film, or otherwise, MLA style prefers that you think about two things:

1) whether you are referring to whole or part of a work -- and
2) whether you are directly or indirectly referencing the work.

All sources referenced in the text will have a corresponding works cited reference. There are a number of variations for in-text citations:

• Print Sources:

• Both author’s name and relevant page or section must be included when the writer has not been previously identified in the sentence. In commonly cited literature (e.g. religious texts, ancient literature, or Shakespeare), more detailed information can be used. See examples below:

Catherine’s pleasure at encountering sunshine after a period of rain is the “objective correlative of surprise” (Miller 250).

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Yet just as soon as Claudius declares his will to preserve the security of the body politic, he subsequently declares it to be a threat as well: “Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered? / It will be laid to us, whose providence/ Should have kept short, restrained, and out of haunt /This mad young man” (Ham. 4.1.16-20).

In one of the most famous passages of skepticism in western history, Thomas claims that he will not believe in the resurrection of Jesus “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger were the nails were” (New International Version John 20.24).

• **Indirect citations (a published account of another’s remarks) are indicated with the abbreviation qtd:**

  Shirley Jackson claimed that she has “always loved to use fear” to create energy in her writing (qtd. in Oppenheimer 233).

• **Paraphrases that cover multiple writers’ ideas can include all relevant authors and page numbers at the end of the sentence or paragraph. Note that the first author listed does not include a page number; this is because the entire work is being cited, not just a single page.**

  CASM researchers thus began by identifying the cognitive processes respondents must navigate in order to answer survey questions (and, in fact, any questions): comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response (Tourangeau et al.; McColl, Meadows, and Barofsky 217; Collins 232; Drennan 58).

• **Web Sources:**

  Web-based sources are identified starting with author and page number, or possibly paragraph number. If the web sources have none of these, provide the most relevant and easily identifiable source information, such as title. Do not number pages or paragraphs yourself that are not already numbered on the web.

  **Web sources with Author, no page/paragraph:**

  Noir has a long transatlantic history. As one astute cultural commentator in the online journal n+1 put it, “Before Noir was American, it was French” (Prickett).

  I agree that the *The Biggest Loser* is a show that is “about unruly bodies that must be disciplined by any means necessary, and through that discipline, the obese might become more acceptable members of society” (Gay).

  **Web sources with Title only, No Author:**

  When possible, differentiate between titles and headings.

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Using Wikipedia as a reliable source can be dubious. For instance, on the night of July 1, 2014, Wikipedia listed US soccer player Tim Howard was listed as the Secretary of Defense. (“United States Secretary of Defense”).

The Temple Undergraduate Bulletin defines plagiarism as the “unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, another person's assistance” (“Student Responsibilities,” Academic Honesty).

- **Film and Television Sources:**
  When citing whole works or episodes of films and television, it is normally preferred and acceptable to include the title in the sentence itself, rather than in a parenthetical. It is also acceptable to include the name of the director or performer in the sentence rather than the parenthetical.

  Gurinder Chada’s *Bend It Like Beckham* received wide critical acclaim for its girl-positive representation of a multi-racial Britain.

  Even children’s television wasn’t immune from Cold War anxieties during the Reagan years. In 1983, PBS aired “Conflict,” an episode of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* focused on the prospect of nuclear war (the episode has never aired since).

**Works Cited Page**

A Works Cited page is a list of all the sources you quoted or referred to in your paper. Generally speaking, you would not include sources that you read, but didn’t actually use in your writing. Works Cited pages are arranged in alphabetical order according to authors’ last names. Sources without an author are alphabetized by the first letter of the title (excluding A/An or The).

MLA Style puts a high premium on intelligibility for all readers, which is why Works Cited pages include full names and minimal abbreviation. There are different formats for citing different kinds of sources. For example, if you are citing a book, you’ll present the information one way, and if you are citing a journal article you’ll present the information another way. This guide includes sample citations for 40 of the most commonly used formats in academic writing. You’ll see that most of them require most of the following information: the author’s name, the title of the work, and the date and place of publication.

**What if my source doesn’t have an author (or page numbers, or a place of publication, or a date of publication, etc.)? What if my source doesn’t fit in any of these citation formats?**

Every source is unique, and some sources don’t provide all of the information called for in the samples. Luckily, the authors of the MLA Style guide anticipated this, and they created acceptable formats for citing most types of sources. If don’t find what you need in this brief guide, you can consult the *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition*: it offers guidelines for citing even the most unusual source.

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It’s sometimes difficult to follow the variations between citations. Is there any way to make this list easier to understand?

We know how difficult it is to learn a new citation style, so we’re trying a new approach that might make it easier to comprehend. Each entry in the online version of this Citation Guide is now color-coded to make it easier for you to isolate different parts of an entry. Authors will always be listed in red. Publication dates will always be listed in blue. Information specific to books (like the place of publication) will be assigned a color in the sample entry at the beginning of the Documenting Books section. Information specific to periodicals (like a journal title) will be assigned a color in the sample entry at the beginning of the Documenting Periodicals section. Information specific to web sources will be assigned a color in the sample entry at the beginning of the Documenting Web Sources section.

**DOCUMENTING PRINT SOURCES**

**(BOOKS, GOVERNMENT DOCS, AND ANTHOLOGIES)**

When you are citing a nonperiodical print source (such as **BOOKS**), always be sure to check the specific listing for your source to make sure that you use the correct punctuation and that you include any additional information required. **Note that book titles are always italicized, whereas chapter titles are enclosed in “quotation marks.”** The MEDIUM (in this case “print”) is always included in the citation, before supplementary information such as page numbers.

**Citations for books usually follow this general pattern:**

Author’s lastname, Author’s firstname (if any); *Title of book*; Place of publication (usually just the city, but include the state or country if the place of publication is not a major city); Publishing company; Date of publication. Inclusive page numbers. Medium of publication consulted. Supplementary Information.

Any additional information (edition number, editor, chapter title, page numbers, etc.) remain in black type.

**Book by One Author**


**Book by Two or More Authors**


**Edited Book**


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**Book by a Corporation, Organization, Association, or Foundation**  

**Book with an Author and an Editor**  

**Government Document**  

**One Volume of a Multivolume Book**  

**Work in an Anthology or Chapter in an Edited Collection**  

**Essay, Short Story, or Periodical Reprinted in an Edited Collection**  

**Article in a Reference Book**  
Reference books are not typically recommended as sources for college-level writing, because they provide only a general overview on a topic. If, however, you need to cite an encyclopedia or other reference book that does not provide an author for each entry, use the following format.


Based on the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition, and MLA.org’s Style FAQ.  
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DOCUMENTING PRINT PERIODICALS

The term “periodicals” refers to magazines, newspapers (in print form – MLA does not consider newspaper websites periodicals), and scholarly journals. The citations for these three types of sources are very different, so be sure to check the specific listing for your source to make sure that you have arranged the information in the correct order, that you have used the correct punctuation, and that you have included all relevant information. NOTE: IF you retrieved the source online, even if it was from an online database (like JSTOR or Google Scholar), and even if you printed it out, it is NOT A PRINT SOURCE. Please see DOCUMENTING WEB SOURCES sources to cite.

Usually periodical citations include the following information:
Author’s lastname, Author’s firstname (if any); Article title; Periodical title; Date of publication; Volume number (except for newspapers); Issue number (if any); Page number. Medium of publication.

Any additional information will remain in black type.

Article in a Scholarly Journal


Article, Story, or Poem in a Weekly Magazine

Article in a Daily Newspaper

Book Review

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DOCUMENTING WEB SOURCES
Citing electronic sources can be complicated. Sometimes you will not be able to find all the
information listed in an ideal works cited for electronic sources. In this situation, include as
much information as you are able to find; ALWAYS include the date on which you retrieved
the information. [NOTE: The MLA 7th edition no longer requires the URL address: “You
should only include a URL as supplementary information only when the reader probably
cannot locate the source without it or when your instructor requires it” (182).] If you are
having trouble figuring out a publication date, search the page for a copyright or a “last updated”
tag. If you can’t find any reference to a date, use n.d. (which stands for “no date”) in place of the
publication date.

For additional information on citing electronic sources, you can check out the MLA’s Frequently
Asked Questions page at http://www.mlahandbook.org/fragment/faq#Differences

NON PERIODICAL WEB SOURCES
(websites, electronic magazines, web newspapers, and other web sources)

Citations for nonperiodical web sources usually follow this general pattern:
Author’s name (if any); Article title (if any); Website name or publication name; version
or edition used, Publisher or sponsor of the website (if not listed, use N.P.); Date
of publication (if nothing available use n.d.); medium of publication (Web); date
of access.

Newspaper or Magazine Article Posted from Online Website (not retrieved
from database)

Downs, Jere. “SEPTA chiefs give support to rail plan.” Inquier.com. Philadelphia


Yandoli, Kayla. “What do You Miss Most About the ‘90s?” Buzzfeed.com. Buzzfeed,

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FAQ.
This Writing Center Guide was last revised on 08/05/2014.
PERIODICAL WEB SOURCES
(Scholarly articles and other online sources published on a regular basis, often accessed through online database)

Citations for periodical web sources generally follow the same pattern as print periodical sources, along with the title of the database, medium of publication consulted (web), and date of access (day, month, and year):

Author’s lastname, Author’s firstname (if any); Article title; Periodical title; (Date of publication): Volume number (except for newspapers); Issue number (if any); Page number. Title of Database. Medium of publication. Date Accessed.

Article Accessed from an Online Database:


Article in an Electronic Journal (accessed on website not through database)
An electronic journal is a peer-reviewed periodical published online with no print version available.


OTHER WEB SOURCES

Web Source with No Author

YouTube/Online Video Clip

eBook

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Online Dictionary


Online Map


Tweet


E-Mail


**MISCELLANEOUS SOURCES (AUDIO/VIDEO/LIVE SOURCES)**

Miscellaneous sources can take a number of forms. Generally, more information is better than less. Most audiovisual and performance-type sources include major people who contributed to the production, including directors, composers, writers, and/or performers. Use your judgment to determine who to include for a given citation. For instance, if you were focusing on the screenplay of a television program, you might include the writers (whose work you will be directly analyzing) and omit the performers (who don’t factor heavily into your particular argument).

There is no consistent pattern for miscellaneous sources, but the following color coding will be used in the citations:

- People involved in production; Title of production or series; Title of episode or excerpt;
- Distributor or place of performance; Date of production, composition, or release.

**Motion Picture, Videocassette, or DVD**


**Television or Radio Program**


**Sound Recording**


Based on the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition, and MLA.org’s Style FAQ.

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Arie, India. *Acoustic Soul*. Universal, 2001; CD.

**Performance**


**Work of Art**

Be sure to indicate the medium of composition, medium accessed, and whether it is a reproduction printed somewhere else.


**Interview**

Published interviews use citations that reflect the format of the publication. That is, interviews published in books will look similar to book citations, while interviews published in periodicals or online will use an adapted version of those citations.

