

MLA Style Guide: 8th Edition (rev. Mar. 2021)

In the past, citing sources in MLA was governed by rules and a more prescriptive approach: you decided what type of source you had and looked up the correct MLA format in which to cite it. But because information now exists in so many different forms, an “information overload,” so to speak, (e.g. online journals, websites, blogs, Netflix, YouTube, etc.), MLA has created a more universal set of guidelines or principles based on core elements—information common to most sources, which you then cite in the order recommended by MLA. You may already be familiar with some of the following:

- Author
- Title of source
- Title of container
- Other contributors
- Version
- Number
- Publisher
- Publication date
- Location

Containers: If you’ve used MLA in the past, you already know what a container is: it’s the book, periodical, TV series, web site, etc. that “contains” the information you want to use. Moreover, a container may be located within another container, such as an article that appears in a scholarly journal (container 1) which you found in Academic Search Complete (container 2). Containers is a term you will find in the 8th edition, so it’s important to be familiar with it.

Each element will be discussed below so that you can identify the information you’ll need to cite your sources correctly. However, not all of these elements may appear in the source. Use only the information the source provides.

For material not covered here, please consult your instructor, the *MLA Handbook* (8th edition), the Writing Center staff, or the Writing Center web page.

WORKS CITED

If you’re not familiar with MLA citing, the easiest way to approach it is to start with the Works Cited page(s). Once your sources are properly set up on these pages, it’s much easier to identify and use correct in-text citations.

Works Cited Page layout: An example Works Cited page is at the end of this document. Note that:

- A. The Works Cited page(s) are located at the end of your paper and are paginated as part of the paper; in other words, if your text is five pages, the Works Cited page is page six. Center the title “Works Cited” (without the quotation marks) at the top of the page.

- B. If you are submitting your paper electronically, *do not* send your Works Cited as a separate document. Your professor is going to open only one document—your paper, which must include the Works Cited page(s).
- C. *All lines* in a Works Cited are double-spaced. Often, your computer will default to triple-spacing in between citations, so you will need to make adjustments in your computer settings to insure that the entire text is double-spaced.
- D. “Hanging indentation” is used. This means that the first line of all citations is flush left; subsequent lines of the citation are indented ½ inch/5 spaces.
- E. Alphabetically arrange sources in your Works Cited list according to author’s last name. If no author is listed, alphabetize by the first major word in the title (not “A,” “An,” or “The”).

CITING SOURCES

AUTHORS:

Citations begin with the name of the author or authors, if they appear.

1. For a **single author** in a Works Cited citation, the name is inverted. Titles (Dr., Prof. etc.) are not used. A period is used at the end of the name:

Turtle, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press, 2015.

2. For **two to three authors**, list them in the order in which they are presented. The first name is inverted, but the second names remain in normal order:

Hart, Moss, and George S Kaufman. *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1998.

3. When a source has **more than three authors**, use the first name, inverted, followed by et al. (Latin for “and others”)(*MLA 22*):

Levi, Joe, et al. “Prince.” *Rolling Stone*, 19 Mar. 2016, pp. 40-50,
 mulinutil1.millikin.edu:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mah&AN=115094552&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

4. **Editors/translators**: Sometimes a work will have an editor/editors rather than an author. If you’re citing the source as a whole, the editors are cited the same as authors and must be listed as follows:

Nunberg, Geoffrey, editor. *The Future of the Book*. U of California P, 1996.

(Note that “editor” is spelled out rather than abbreviated).

If there is more than one editor, use “editors.”

Holland Merlin, and Rupert Hart-Davis, editors.

5. If you're focusing on a **film or television series** as a whole, begin with the title, in italics.

Example:

Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl. Directed by Gore Verbinski, performance by Johnny Depp, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2003.

If you're watching a film, television program, etc. via Netflix, Hulu, or other similar venues, you'll need to add on that information (see "Title of Containers").

When using an **episode of a larger series**, start with the episode.

Example:

"The Lion and the Rose." *Game of Thrones*, directed by Alex Graves, performances by Jack Gleeson, Emily Dormer, season 4, episode 2, HBO Studios, 2015.

6. When citing a **live performance**, start with the event title.

Example:

Holiday Jazz. Performed by Millikin University Faculty Jazz Sextet. Kirkland Fine Arts Center, 13 Dec. 2014, Millikin University, Decatur, IL.

7. When citing a **lecture or presentation**, start with the name of the presenter. At the end of the citation, you may add a description to clarify the type of source (MLA 52).

Example:

O'Conner, Michael. "Twain in the 21st Century." Millikin University, Decatur, IL, 19 Sept. 2016. Lecture.

Frech, Stephen. "The Dark Villages of Childhood." Millikin University, Decatur, IL, 21. Oct. 2011. Reading.

8. **Pseudonyms or online user names:** These are presented just like author names.

Example:

@persiankiwi. "We have report of large street battles in east & west of Tehran now - #iranelection." Twitter, 23 June 2009, 11:15 a.m., twitter.com/persiankiwi/status/2298106072.

9. **Corporate author:** Some articles will be authors by an organization, association, government agency, etc.

Example:

National Research Council. *Beyond Six Billion: Forecasting the World's Population*, National Academy, 2000.

10. **No author:** If no author can be found, *do not* use “Anonymous” or, in the case of newspaper articles, *do not* use UPI or other news agencies that might appear. Rather, start with the title of the work, in quotation marks.

Example:

"Sharing Reference Information." *Northwest Missourian*, 1 Mar. 2012, C1, 3 Mar. 2012.

TITLE OF SOURCE

Italicize titles of books, periodicals, films, plays, television series, etc. Capitalize the first word and all major words in titles as well as the first word after a colon in a title (See *MLA* 25-29).

Examples: *The Girl on the Train* (book)

Beautiful: The Carol King Musical (musical/play)

Game of Thrones (television series)

Use quotation marks for chapters of books, journal articles, essays, television episodes, posting or article on a website, song or other piece of music, , poem, etc. (See *MLA* 25-29).

Example: "Will *Hamilton* Save the Musical? Don't Wait for It" (journal article)

"The Lion and the Rose" (television episode title)

"Sorry" (song)

TITLE OF CONTAINER(S)

Documenting all containers is very important. It is essential that your readers know how and where you found your sources because copies can differ depending on the container in which they were found.

Italicize and place a comma after the title of the container because the information following the title describes the container. The container may be a book, anthology, journal/periodical, web site, television series, etc.

Often there are two containers. For example, you may have found an article in a journal, but you found that journal in Academic Search Complete. Secondary containers may be library subscription services (Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, ERIC, etc.) Google Books, Netflix, etc. Both containers must be included in the citation.

Permalinks: Stable or permanent links for sources are often called “permalinks.” They are not usually the URL at the top of the page. You will need to locate and include these links in your citation. If you are using an EBSCOhost database (Academic Search Complete, PsychINFO, SocINDEX etc.), you will see a permalink link on the right side of the source page. Other databases may have a Persistent Link, Record URL, etc. link. Clicking on these will give you the permalink. If you can't find such a link, email the article to yourself; the URL in your email is the

permalink. When citing, delete <http://> or <https://> and copy and paste the permalink at the end of your citation. All MLA citations end with a period.

Examples:

McWhorter, John. "Will *Hamilton* Save the Musical? Don't Wait for It." *American Theatre*, vol. 33, no. 3, Mar. 2016, pp. 48-52. *Academic Search Complete*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=113878618&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Mohler, Courtney Elkin. "The Native Plays of Lynn Riggs (Cherokee) and the Question of 'Race'-specific Casting." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 26, no. 1, Mar. 2016, pp. 63-75. *Academic Search Complete*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=114510006&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

In addition to the author(s), these are people whose input may be important to include in your citation. In front of each name or group of names, provide a description of their input. These are some of the most common:

Translated by

Edited by

Directed by

Performance by

Introduction by

Example:

Chekhov, Anton. *The Plays of Anton Chekhov*. Translated by Paul Schmidt. Harper Perennial, 1998.

VERSION/EDITION

Most commonly known as "editions," you will need to cite which version or edition of a source you are using. Your textbooks, for example, may have an edition (4th edition, etc.). Most commonly seen terms are:

Numbered editions (2nd, 3rd, etc.)

Updated edition

Unabridged version

Example:

LaMott, Anne. "Shitty First Drafts." *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, edited by Alfred Rosa, Paul Eschholz, and Rosa Clark, 11th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013, pp. 189-191.

NUMBER

Books: The information you're using may be in one of a number of multiple volumes. You will need to cite which volume you are using.

Example:

Smith, Jessie Carney. *Encyclopedia of African American Pop Culture*. Vol. 3, Greenwood, 2010.

Journal articles: Journal articles normally have numbers, and you may find both a volume and issue number. You will need to cite both if they appear. Some journals use a number only.

Again, cite only the information that appears.

Example:

Evans, Richard T. "'Faggots, Fame and Firepower': Teenage Masculinity, School Shootings, and the Pursuit of Fame." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, Spring 2016, pp. 1-21. *Project Muse*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:3733/article/614915.

Television series: Most series are listed by season and episode. Both of these should appear in your citation:

"The Luminous Fish Effect." *The Big Bang Theory*, season 1, episode 4, TBS, 2015, www.tbs.com/shows/the-big-bang-theory/season-1/episode-4/the-luminous-fish-effect.html.

PUBLISHER

Publishers are those who make sources available to the public. You may see more than one publisher listed in a work; if they both seem responsible for producing the work, cite them both with a forward slash in between.

Books: The publisher is usually found either on the title page or the copyright page (the page on the reverse of the title page).

Examples:

Turkle, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press, 2015.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. HarperCollins, 2014. *Kindle Cloud Reader*, read.amazon.com.

Film and television series: These may be distributed in a number of ways by various companies, but cite the company or organization that has primary responsibility for it.

Example:

Call Me by Your Name. Directed by Luca Guadagnino, performances by Timothee

Chalamet and Armie Hammer, Freseny Film Company, 2017.

Websites: You've probably seen websites that are published by museums, various organizations, and universities. The publisher's name is usually located at the bottom of the home page near the copyright date or on an information page about that site.

Example:

"Teacher Postsecondary." *O*Net Online*. United States Department of Labor, 2017, www.onetonline.org/link/summary/25-1081.00.

PUBLICATION DATE

It is essential that dates of sources are cited. Online sources may have more than one publication date, depending on when and where it appeared; for example, an article that appeared in a print copy may also appear online. Thus, cite the full online publication date when given.

Example:

Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google making Us Stupid?" *The Atlantic*, July-Aug. 2008, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/.

LOCATION

- A. Page numbers:** In a book, anthology, or periodical citation, the location of the text is designated by page numbers, using pp. before the page number(s). *Do not* number pages yourself or use the 1 of 4 etc. numbers found on printouts. These numbers are not accurate and will mislead readers.

Examples:

Turkle, Sherry. "The Case for Conversation." *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press, 2015, pp. 3-56.

- B. URLs:** The URL, or web address, identifies the location of a source. URLs, however, can take up a lot of space in a citation and/or become obsolete rather quickly. Nevertheless, they can provide useful location information. For many reasons, **MLA recommends including URLs in your Works Cited list but also states that "if your instructor prefers that you not include them, follow his or her instructions"** (48) (also see Permalinks discussion above).

Example:

Evans, Richard T. "'Faggots, Fame and Firepower': Teenage Masculinity, School Shootings, and the Pursuit of Fame." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, Spring 2016, pp. 1-21. *Project Muse*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:3733/article/614915.

- C. DOIs:** Publishers may assign a DOI, or digital object identifier, to online publications. DOIs do not change even if the URL does, so always use them when available; no other

location information is needed. If there is a DOI, it can be found in the Item Record. Cite your source as follows:

Singh, Kuldeep. "Cosmetic Surgery in Teenagers: To Do or Not To Do." *Journal of Cutaneous and Aesthetic Surgery*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan-Mar 2015, pp. 57-59, *Academic Search Complete*, doi: 10.4103/0974-2077.155091.

- D. **Real time locations:** Some sources, such as works of art or museum pieces, are located in an actual place. Cite the place and its city, unless the city is a part of the place's name.

Example:

Renoir, Auguste. *Two Sisters on the Terrace*. 1881. The Art Institute, Chicago.

- E. **Live presentations:** Cite the venue and its city (unless the city is part of the venue's name).

Example:

Obama, Michelle. "You Might Have to Ruffle a Few Feathers." Topeka School District Senior Recognition Day, 17 May 2014, Expo Center, Topeka, KS.

O'Conner, Michael. "Twain in the 21st Century." 19 Sept. 2017, Millikin University, Decatur, IL. Lecture.

OPTIONAL PIECES OF INFORMATION

The 8th edition discusses optional pieces of information, such as date of original publication, city of publication, and access dates, that may be necessary to include. See the *MLA Handbook* 8th ed. for details on these elements.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

MLA In-Text Citations

An in-text citation should clearly refer the reader to the full citation information in the Works Cited page(s). The in-text citation, or parenthetical, is composed of the first piece of information listed in Works Cited page, usually the author's/s' last name or the title of the source if no author is given, plus a page number. This information is placed in parentheses and located as close to the information as possible, most often at the end of a sentence. If the source has no page numbers, none are used. If your Works Cited is set up correctly, in-text citations are easier, as the information is already listed for you to use.

As a general rule, only about 10% of your sources should be directly quoted. You should paraphrase as much as possible to create a smooth flow of text for your readers. *Even though you paraphrase the information, it still needs to be cited.*

1. The first time you use a source in your text, it's beneficial to the reader to introduce it, identifying author and credentials in order to establish his/her/their credibility as well as your own as writer:

Sherry Turkle, author of the book, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, points out that "We are being silenced by our technologies" (9).

After you have introduced the source, subsequent parenthetical citations in the text will include only the author's/s' last name (if not already mentioned in the sentence) and page number (if available). Note the lack of a comma between the author's last name and the page number; the period is placed outside parentheses.

Leaving our technology behind and embracing our solitude allows us to increase our capacity for self-reflection, allowing us to better understand ourselves (Turkle 80).

Turkle notes that students who take notes in class using their laptops suffer not only from inattention but "lose their ability to take notes at all" (225).

If you are using more than one work by the same author, you must include a shortened form of the title along with the author's/s' last name and page number if available. Note the use of the comma here.

(Turkle, *Reclaiming*, 62) (Turkle, *Alone Together*, 187)

If you are citing a source written or edited by three or more people, use only the name of the first person listed, followed by et al. (Latin for "and others") with no additional punctuation, for example, (Blair et al. 21) if Blair isn't mentioned in your text. Or,

Blair et al. observed that the fine arts were almost ignored by colonial writers (21).

If there is no author, introduce the article by its title or source:

In "Death of a Writer," Ralph Ellison is described as "a writer of universal reach" (A18).

Subsequent parenthetical citations used later in your paper will include the article title (or a shortened form of it if it's long) in quotes:

A *New York Times* editorial describes Ralph Ellison as "a writer of universal reach" ("Death" A18).

1. **Source within a Source:** If you are quoting a source within a source, that is, the source that you're using is citing information that you want to use as well, indicate this by using **qtd. in** (for "quoted in") in your parenthetical citation:

William H. Sun, in his article about problems with nontraditional casting, points out that “most companies maintain the rule that actors cast in works that directly reflect racial or ethnic experience should identify racially with their characters and ideally look the part” (qtd. in Mohler 63).

You thus refer your readers to the source in your Works Cited in which the quote can be found.

2. **Blocked Quote:** If you are quoting more than *four* fully typed lines, first ask yourself whether you really need the entire quote; only quote what is absolutely necessary. A **blocked quote** means that:
 - the entire quote is *indented one inch or ten spaces from the left margin only and double spaced*
 - quotation marks are omitted
 - author and/or page number are parenthetically cited *one space after the period* (see *MLA 55*)

M. Scott Peck states in *The Road Less Traveled* that
 [T]he myth of romantic love is a dreadful lie. Perhaps it is a necessary lie in that it ensures the survival of the species by its encouragement and seeming validation of the falling-in-love experience that traps us into marriage. But as a psychiatrist I weep in my heart almost daily for the ghastly confusion and suffering that this myth fosters. (91-92)

3. **Ellipses:** If you need to leave out words in an exact quote, use **ellipses**—a series of three periods with a space between each. Do not use ellipses if you are paraphrasing or summarizing. For example:
 Margaret Fuller, in *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, assures her readers that “All men are privately influenced by women; each . . . is too much biased by these relations to fail of representing their interests” (97).

Citing page numbers within the text

Whenever possible, give the correct page number, e.g. (A13) or inclusive page numbers, e.g. (34-41), or paragraph number (par. 3), *but only if the numbering already exists in the text*. If no page numbers are given, as can happen with online sources and information from library subscription services (Academic Search Complete, etc.), page numbers are not used; *do not* number pages yourself. A printout may list pages “1 of 4,” “2 of 4,” etc. These only reflect the number of pages printed out which may be inconsistent from printer to printer. If no page numbers are used in the document, cite the author’s/s’ last name(s) or the title of the article if no author is given:

(Hemingway)
 (“Afghanistan Retaliates”)

If the document has numbered paragraphs (again, do not number them yourself), you may cite by the paragraph number:

(Smith and Ames, par. 4)

Page numbers in e-books

According to the 7th edition of MLA, “Most electronic readers provide a numbering system that tells users their location in the work. Do not cite this numbering, because it may not appear consistently to other users. If the work is divided into stable numbered sections like chapters, the numbers of those sections may be cited.” This is still true for 8th ed. Thus, location numbers as well as page numbers cannot be used. A chapter is cited as follows:

(Carr, ch. 3)

Note that a comma appears in the parenthetical citation after the author’s name if the subsequent reference begins with a word.

So how does all of this come together? Again, instead of a prescriptive approach, MLA is recommending that as a writer, you look for and record the core elements found in a source and cite them in the recommended order. This allows room to correctly cite the variety of sources now available to you. Based on the explanations given in these guidelines, the following rubric may help you find and record the information you need to cite your sources until you become more familiar with the 8th edition of MLA.

Author	
Title of source	
Container 1	
Title of container	
Other contributors	
Version	
Number	
Publisher	
Publication date	
Location	
Container 2	
Title of container	
Other contributors	
Version	
Number	
Publisher	
Publication date	
Location	

The following is a sample Works Cited page. Again, note the line spacing, hanging indentation, and alphabetization of sources.

Works Cited

Ant Man and the Wasp. Directed by Peyton Reed, performances by Paul Rudd

and Evangeline Lilly, Marvel Studios, 2018.

Evans, Richard T. "'Faggots, Fame and Firepower': Teenage Masculinity, School Shootings, and the Pursuit of Fame." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, Spring 2016, pp. 1-21. *Project Muse*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:3733/article/614915.

LaMott, Anne. "Shitty First Drafts." *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, edited by Alfred Rosa, Paul Eschholz, and Rosa Clark, 11th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013, pp. 189-191.

"Eastwatch." *Game of Thrones*, season 7, episode 5, HBO, 2017, <https://www.hbo.com/game-of-thrones/season-07/5-eastwatch>.

McWhorter, John. "Will *Hamilton* Save the Musical? Don't Wait for It." *American Theatre*, vol. 33, no. 3, Mar. 2016, pp. 48-52. *Academic Search Complete*, mulinutil1.millikin.edu:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=113878618&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Robson, Tom. "Acting Interview." 3 Mar. 2020, Millikin University, Decatur, IL.

Turkle, Sherry. "The Case for Conversation." *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin Press, 2015, pp. 3-56.

MLA 8th ed. CITING AT A GLANCE

Book:

Twenge, Jean M. *iGen*. Simon, & Schuster, 2017.

-Chapter in a book:

Twenge, Jean M. "Insecure: The New Mental Health Crisis." *iGen*, Simon & Schuster, 2017, pp. 93-118.

Article/essay from an anthology:

LaMott, Anne. "Shitty First Drafts." *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*, edited by Alfred Rosa, Paul Eschholz, and Rosa Clark, 11th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013, pp. 189-191.

One author, more than one work:

King, Stephen. *The Institute*. Scribner, 2019.

---. *The Shining*. Doubleday, 1977.

Journal articles:

-From a library subscription service (Academic Search Complete, Credo, Project Muse, etc.):

McWhorter, John. "Will *Hamilton* Save the Musical? Don't Wait for It." *American Theatre*, vol. 33, no. 3, Mar. 2016, pp. 48-52. *Academic Search Complete*,
mulinutil1.millikin.edu:2443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.
aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=113878618&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Barstow, Donald G., Rosalyn Carson-DeWitt, and James E. Waun. "Electroconvulsive Therapy." *The Gale Encyclopedia of Senior Health*, 2nd ed., 2015. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/galegsh/electroconvulsive_therapy/0

Bigman, Yochanan E., et al. "Holding Robots Responsible: The Elements of Machine Morality." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp. 365-376. *Google Scholar*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/>

pii/S1364661319300634

-Not from a library subscription service:

Social Media and Mobile Internet Use Among Teens and Young Adults." *Pew Research Center*, 3 Feb. 2010, pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx.

-Journal article with doi:

Singh, Kuldeep. "Cosmetic Surgery in Teenagers: To Do or Not To Do." *Journal of Cutaneous and Aesthetic Surgery*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan-Mar. 2015, pp. 57-59, *Academic Search Complete*, doi: 10.4103/0974-2077.155091.

Online periodical article (not a journal):

Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" *The Atlantic*, July-Aug. 2008, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/.

Periodical

Reynolds, Daniel. "How Friends Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth Became Lovers in *Supernova*." *The Advocate*, 2 Feb. 2021, www.advocate.com/exclusives/2021/2/02/how-friends-stanley-tucci-and-colin-firth-became-lovers-supernova

Film

IT Chapter Two. Directed by Andy Muschietti, performances by Jessica Chastain, James McEvoy, and Bill Skarsgard, New Line Cinema, 2019.

YouTube

"Hidden America: Chicago Gang Members on Tough Street Life." *ABC News Nightline*, 19 Oct. 2012, *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4w9N8OyLQE.

Interview:

Munoz, Mark. "Entrepreneurship Interview." 3 Mar. 2019, Millikin University, Decatur, IL.

Blogs:

Clancy, Kate. "Defensive Scholarly Writing and Science Communication." *Context and Variation*, Scientific American Blogs, 24 Apr. 2013, blogs.scientificamerican.com/context-and-variation/2013/04/24/defensive-scholarly-writing-and-science-communication/.