

# MLA, 8TH EDITION: AN INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

DSC-UCF WRITING CENTER  
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# A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Launched in April of 2016, the 8th Edition of MLA carries with it a significant shift in how we should *think* about formatting and citation. MLA is now more focused on methodology and process than adherence to strict formulaic rules and equations. MLA is, *now more than ever*, a rational process, not merely a product. Further, the writer's approach to documentation and citation should be tethered to a thoughtful understanding of audience and context.

The purpose of this document is to provide keystone fundamentals of MLA 8th Edition. This document is not intended to serve or function as an end-all/be-all MLA resource or a fully instructive guide. It seeks to describe and exemplify the process of MLA 8th Edition. The DSC-UCF Writing Center aims to make the transition to MLA 8 as easy as possible for both students and faculty. In addition to this packet to use as a resource, please visit the Writing Center for any MLA 8 concerns. For more information about MLA 8th Edition, please visit <https://style.mla.org>. This *MLA Style Center* provides a number of useful resources ranging from sample papers to interactive Q&A boards.

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- 1 Author.
- 2 Title of source.
- 3 Title of container,
- 4 Other contributors,
- 5 Version,
- 6 Number,
- 7 Publisher,
- 8 Publication date,

- 1 Author.
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- 3 Title of container,
- 4 Other contributors,
- 5 Version,
- 6 Number,
- 7 Publisher,
- 8 Publication date,
- 9 Location.



# THE LOGIC OF MLA, 8TH EDITION

Let's begin with MLA's official introduction to the *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition*:

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, forms of communication proliferate, and publications migrate readily from one medium to another. An article published in a print journal may be discovered and read online, through one of many databases; an episode of a television series may be watched through a service like Hulu; A blog post may be republished as a book chapter. Even as we developed this edition of the *MLA Handbook*, new publication formats and platforms emerged.

As a result, now more than ever we need a system for documenting sources that begins with a few principles rather than a long list of rules. Rules remain important, and we will get to them in due course, but in this section we emphasize commonsense guidelines aimed at helping writers at various levels conduct research and provide their audiences with useful information about their sources.

Your use of MLA style should be guided by these principles:

### Cite simple traits shared by most works

In previous editions of the *MLA Handbook*, an entry in the works-cited list was based on the source's publication format (e.g., book, film, magazine article, Web publication). The writer first determined the format of the source and then collected the publication facts associated with the format. A consequence of that approach was that works in a new medium could not be documented until the MLA created instructions for it. This edition, by contrast, is not centered on publication formats. It deals instead with facts common to most works — author, title, and so on. The writer examines the source and records its visible features, attending to the work itself and a set of universal guidelines. A work in a new medium thus can be documented without new instructions.

1	Author. Copeland, Edward.
2	Title of source. "Money."
<b>CONTAINER 1</b>	
3	Title of container, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen</i> ,
4	Other contributors, edited by Copeland and Juliet McMaster,
5	Version,
6	Number,
7	Publisher, Cambridge UP,
8	Publication date, 1997,
9	Location. pp. 131-48.

### FINAL WORKS-CITED-LIST ENTRY

Copeland, Edward. "Money." *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, edited by Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge UP, 1997, pp. 131-48.



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## Remember that there is often more than one correct way to document a source

Different situations call for different solutions. A writer whose primary purpose is to give credit for borrowed material may need to provide less information than a writer who is examine the distinguishing features of particular editions (or even specific copies) of source texts. Similarly, scholars working in specialized fields may need to cite details about their sources that other scholars making more general use of the same resources do not.

## Make your documentation useful to readers

Good writers understand why they create citations. The reasons include demonstrating thoroughness of the writer's research, giving credit to original sources, and ensuring that readers can find the sources consulted in order to draw their own conclusions about the writer's argument. Writers achieve the goals of documentation by providing sufficient information in a comprehensible, consistent structure.

This edition of the *MLA Handbook* is designed to help writers think about the sources they are documenting, select the information about the sources that is appropriate to the project they are creating, and organize it logically and without complication. Armed with a few rules and an understanding of the basic principles, a writer can generate useful documentation of any work, in any publication format.

## WHY DOCUMENT SOURCES?

Documenting sources is an important aspect of writing common to all academic fields. Across the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, authors use standard techniques to refer to the works that influenced or otherwise contributed to their research. Why?

Academic writing is at its root a conversation among scholars about a topic or question. Scholars write for their peers, communicating the results of their research through books, journal articles, and other forms of published work. In the course of a project, they seek out relevant publications, to learn from and build on earlier research. Through their own published work, they incorporate, modify, respond to, and refute previous publications.

Given the importance of this conversation to research, authors must have comprehensible, verifiable means of referring to one another's work. Such references enable them to give credit to the precursors whose ideas they borrow, build on, or contradict and allow future researchers interested in the history of the conversation to track it back to its beginning. The references are formatted in a standard way so that they can be quickly understood and used by all, like a common language.



Students are called on to learn documentation styles in a range of courses throughout their education, but not because it is expected that all students will take up such research practices in their professional lives. Rather, learning the conventions of a form of writing —those of the research essay, for instance— prepares the student to write not just in that form but in others as well.

Learning a documentation style, in other words, prepares a writer to be on the lookout for the conventions to which every professional field expects its members to adhere in their writing. Legal documents must refer to prior legal documents in a standard way to be acceptable in the legal profession. Reports on scientific research must refer to earlier research in the fashion expected in a particular scientific field. Business documents point to published information and use a language and format that are accepted in business. Journalists similarly obey conventions for identifying their sources, structuring their stories, and so on. The conventions differ from one profession to another, but their purpose is the same.

Learning good documentation practices is also a key component of academic integrity. However, avoiding charges of plagiarism is not the only reason that a student should learn to document sources. The proper use of a field's preferred documentation style is a sign of competence in a writer. Among other benefits, it shows that the writer knows the importance of giving credit where credit is due. It therefore helps the writer become part of a community of scholars and assures readers that the writer's work can be trusted.

## PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

You may have heard or read about cases in which a politician, a journalist, or another public figure was accused of plagiarism. No doubt you have also had classroom conversations about plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Your school may have an honor code that addresses academic dishonesty; it almost certainly had disciplinary procedures meant to address cases of plagiarism. But you may nonetheless find yourself with questions: What is plagiarism? What makes it a serious offense? What does it look like? And how can scrupulous research and documentation practices help you avoid it?

### What is plagiarism?

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines plagiarizing as committing “literary theft.” Plagiarism is presenting another's ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one's own. It is thus a kind of fraud: deceiving others to gain something of value. While plagiarism only sometimes has legal repercussions (e.g., when it involves copyright infringement — violating an author's legal right to publication), it is always as serious moral and ethical offense.



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## What makes plagiarism a serious offense?

Plagiarists are seen not only as dishonest but also as incompetent, incapable of doing research and expressing original thoughts. When professional writers are exposed as plagiarists, they are likely to lose their jobs and are certain to suffer public embarrassment, diminished prestige, and loss of future credibility. The same is true of other professionals who write in connection with their jobs, even when they are not writing for publication. The charge of plagiarism is serious because it calls into question everything about the writer's work: if *this* piece of writing is misrepresented as being original, how can a reader trust any work by the writer? Once instance of plagiarism can cast a shadow across an entire career.

Schools consider plagiarism a grave matter for the same reason. If a student fails to give credit for the work of others in one project, how can a teacher trust any of the student's work? Plagiarism undermines the relationship between teachers and students, turning teachers into detectives instead of mentors, fostering suspicion instead of trust, and making it difficult for learning to take place. Students who plagiarize deprive themselves of the knowledge they would have gained if they had done their own writing. Plagiarism also can undermine public trust in educational institutions, if students are routinely allowed to pass courses and receive diplomas without doing the required work.

## What does plagiarism look like?

Plagiarism can take a number of forms, including buying papers from a service on the Internet, reusing work done by another student, and copying text from published sources without giving credit to those who produce the sources. All forms of plagiarism have in common the misrepresentation of work not done by the writer as the writer's own. (And, yes, that includes work you pay for: while celebrities may put their names on work by ghostwriters, students may not.)

Even borrowing just a few words from an author without clearly indicating that you did so constitutes plagiarism. Moreover, you can plagiarize unintentionally; in hastily taken notes, it is easy to mistake a phrase copied from a source as your original thought and then to use it without crediting the sources.

Imagine, for example, that you read the following passage in the course of your research (from Michael Agar's book *Language Shock*):

Everyone uses the word *language* and everybody these days talks about *culture* . . . . "Languaculture is a reminder, I hope, of the necessary connection between its two parts . . . .

If you wrote the following sentence, it would constitute plagiarism:

At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that we



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might call “languaculture.”

This sentence borrows a word from Agar’s work without giving credit for it. Placing the term in quotation marks is insufficient. If you use the term, you must give credit to its source:

At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that Michael Agar has called “languaculture” (60).

In this version, a reference to the original author and a parenthetical citation indicate the source of the term; a corresponding entry in your list of works cited will give you reader full information about the source.

It’s important to note that you need not copy an author’s words to be guilty of plagiarism; if you paraphrases someone’s ideas or arguments without giving credit for their origin, you have committed plagiarism. Imagine that you read the following passage (from Walter A. McDougall’s *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776*):

American Exceptionalism as our founders conceived it was defined by what America was, at home. Foreign policy existed to defend, not define, what America was.

If you write the following sentence, you have plagiarized, even though you changed some of the wording:

For the founding fathers America’s exceptionalism was based on the country’s domestic identity, which foreign policy did not shape but merely guided.

In this sentence, you have borrowed an author’s ideas without acknowledgment. You may use the ideas, however, if you properly give credit to your source:

As Walter A. McDougall argues, for the founding fathers America’s exceptionalism was based on the country’s domestic identity, which foreign policy did not shape but merely guarded (37).

In this revised sentence, which includes an in-text citation and clearly gives credit to McDougall as the source of the idea, there is no plagiarism.

### How Can You Avoid Plagiarism?

Avoiding plagiarism begins with being scrupulous in your research and note-taking. Keep a complete and thorough list of all the sources that you discover during your research and wish to use, linking each source to the information you glean from it, so that you can double-check that your work acknowledges it. Take care in your notes to distinguish between what is not yours and what is yours, identifying ideas and phrases copied from sources you consult, summaries of your sources, and your own original ideas. As you write, carefully identify all borrowed material, including quoted words and phrases,



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paraphrased ideas, summarized arguments, and facts and other information.

Most important is that you check with your instructor if you are unsure about the way the you are using a particular sources.

### Does Absence of Documentation Indicate Plagiarism?

Documentation is not required for every type of borrowed material. Information and ideas that are common knowledge among your readers need not be documented. Common knowledge includes information widely available in reference words, such as basic biographical facts about prominent persons and the dates and circumstances of major historical events. When the facts are in dispute, however, or who your readers may want more information about your topic, it is good practice to document the material you borrow.

*The OWL at Purdue* summarized a few key changes as follows:

#### Takeaways

If you are already familiar with traditional MLA citation methods, continue to use them in a more simplified form. Since the eighth edition emphasizes the writer's freedom to create references based on the expectations of the audience, consider what your readers need to know if they want to find your source.

- Think of MLA style principles as flexible guides, rather than rules. Part of your responsibility as a writer is to evaluate your readers and decide what your particular audience needs to know about your sources.
- Your goal is to inform, persuade, and otherwise connect with your audience; error-free writing, along with trustworthy documentation, allows readers to focus on your ideas.
- In-text citations should look consistent throughout your paper. The principles behind in-text citations have changed very little from the seventh to the eighth editions.
- List of works cited/works consulted needs to include basic core information, such as author's name, title of source, publication date, and other information, depending on the type of source. Each entry should be uniform and simple, but should give enough information so that your readers can locate your sources.
- These updated MLA guidelines are based on a simple theory: once you know the basic principles of style and citation, you can apply that knowledge widely, and generate useful documentation for any type of publication, in any field.



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# MLA MANUSCRIPT FORMATTING

In today's world, the "printed page" isn't quite what it used to be. With the rise of fluid, digital text, *of web pages, social media feeds, and other websites that bend and pour into the contours of the digital screen as set by both the reader/user and the device itself*, the idea of the "printed page" is becoming more and more antiquated in our society. However, the printed page is still quite important in the academic, business, governmental worlds – even when that printed page is not, in fact, actually *printed* on paper. In many cases, documents are distributed in a fixed format such as PDF. An electronic PDF file can, in some ways, be considered a print document. It is, after all, a manuscript formatted to the specific dimensions of what *could* be a printed page (*if the user chooses to print that document*), and unlike other types of electronic sources, in theory these prints could come out the same. From font to pagination, a PDF document is simply a digital representation of a print manuscript.

For ease of reference, here are the quick notes provided by [mla.org](https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/) as of July 2016 :

Source: <https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/>

## FORMATTING A RESEARCH PAPER

If your instructor has specific requirements for the format of your research paper, check them before preparing your final draft. The most common formatting is presented here. When you submit your paper, be sure to keep a secure copy.

## MARGINS

Except for the running head (see below), leave margins of one inch at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. If you plan to submit a printout on paper larger than 8½ by 11 inches, do not print the text in an area greater than 6½ by 9 inches.

## TEXT FORMATTING

Always choose an easily readable typeface (e.g., Times New Roman) in which the regular type style contrasts clearly with the italic, and set it to a standard size (e.g., 12 points). Do not justify the lines of text at the right margin; turn off any automatic hyphenation feature in your writing program. Double-space the entire research paper, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited. Indent the first line of a paragraph half an inch from the left margin. Indent set-off quotations half an inch as well (for examples, see 76–80 in the *MLA Handbook*). Leave one space after a period or other concluding punctuation mark, unless your instructor prefers two spaces.



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## HEADING AND TITLE

A research paper does not need a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date on separate lines, double-spacing the lines. On a new, double-spaced line, center the title (fig. 1). Do not italicize or underline your title, put it in quotation marks or boldface, or type it in all capital letters. Follow the rules for capitalization in the *MLA Handbook* (67–68), and italicize only the words that you would italicize in the text.

- Local Television Coverage of International News Events
- The Attitude toward Violence in *A Clockwork Orange*
- The Use of the Words *Fair* and *Foul* in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
- Romanticism in England and the *Scapigliatura* in Italy

Do not use a period after your title or after any heading in the paper (e.g., *Works Cited*). Begin your text on a new, double-spaced line after the title, indenting the first line of the paragraph half an inch from the left margin. If your teacher requires a title page, format it according to the instructions you are given.

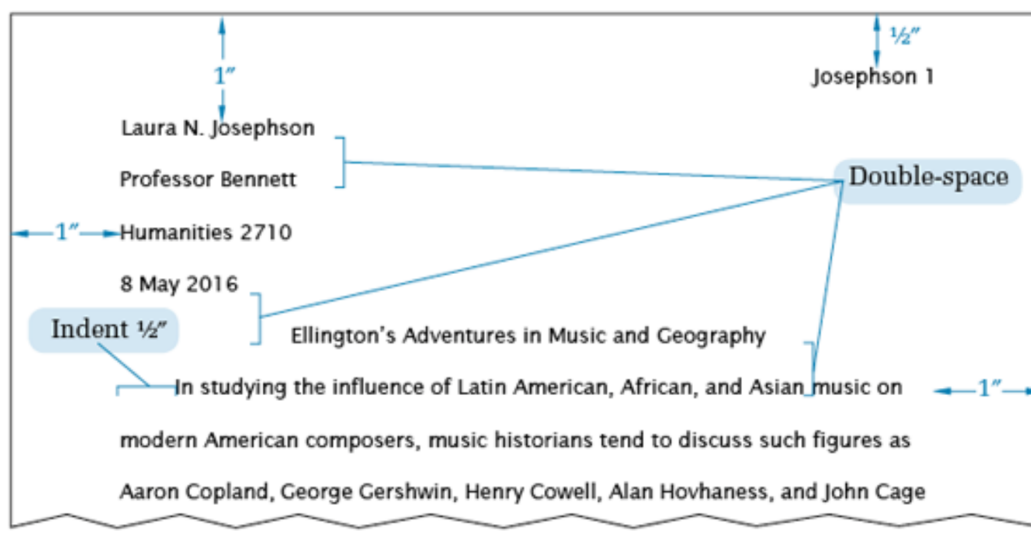


Fig. 1. The top of the first page of a research paper.



## RUNNING HEAD AND PAGE NUMBERS

Number all pages consecutively throughout the research paper in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Type your last name, followed by a space, before the page number (fig. 2). Do not use the abbreviation p. before the page number or add a period, a hyphen, or any other mark or symbol. Your writing program will probably allow you to create a running head of this kind that appears automatically on every page. Some teachers prefer that no running head appear on the first page. Follow your teacher's preference.

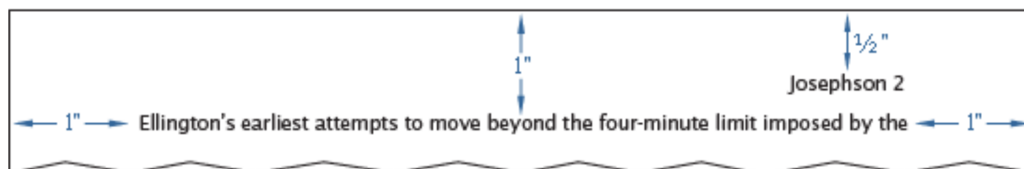


Fig. 2. The running head of a research paper.

## PLACEMENT OF THE LIST OF WORKS CITED

The list of works cited appears at the end of the paper, after any endnotes. Begin the list on a new page. The list contains the same running head as the main text. The page numbering in the running head continues uninterrupted throughout. For example, if the text of your research paper (including any endnotes) ends on page 10, the works-cited list begins on page 11. Center the title, Works Cited, an inch from the top of the page (fig. 3). (If the list contains only one entry, make the heading Work Cited.) Double-space between the title and the first entry. Begin each entry flush with the left margin; if an entry runs more than one line, indent the subsequent line or lines half an inch from the left margin. This format is sometimes called *hanging indention*, and you can set your writing program to create it automatically for a group of paragraphs. Hanging indention makes alphabetical lists easier to use. Double-space the entire list. Continue it on as many pages as necessary.

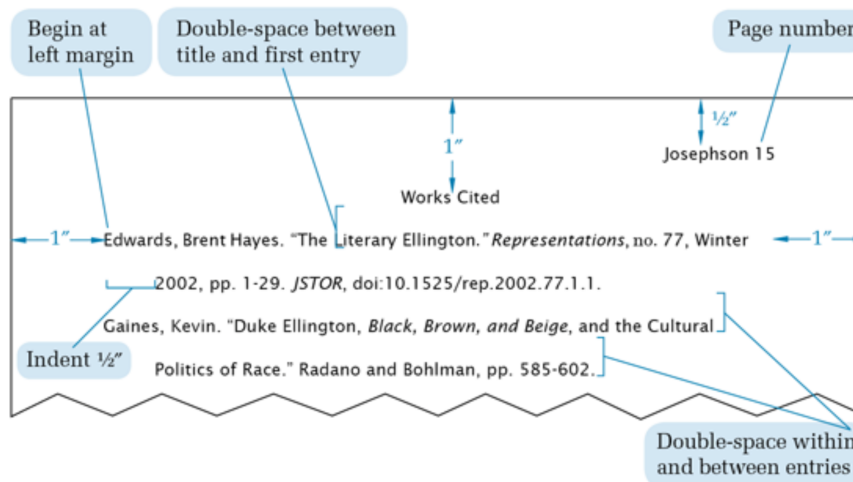


Fig. 3. The top of the first page of a works-cited list.

## TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the parts of the text to which they relate. A table is usually labeled *Table*, given an arabic numeral, and titled. Type both label and title flush left on separate lines above the table, and capitalize them as titles (do not use all capital letters). Give the source of the table and any notes immediately below the table in a caption. To avoid confusion between notes to the text and notes to the table, designate notes to the table with lowercase letters rather than with numerals. Double-space throughout; use dividing lines as needed (fig. 4).

Any other type of illustrative visual material—for example, a photograph, map, line drawing, graph, or chart—should be labeled Figure (usually abbreviated Fig.), assigned an arabic numeral, and given a caption: Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, *Mother and Child*, Wichita Museum. A label and caption ordinarily appear directly below the illustration and have the same one-inch margins as the text of the paper (fig. 5). If the caption of a table or illustration provides complete information about the source and the source is not cited in the text, no entry for the source in the works-cited list is necessary.

Table 1  
Degrees in Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures Conferred by  
Degree-Granting Institutions of Higher Education in the United States<sup>a</sup>

Year	Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctor's Degrees
1996-97	13,053	2,470	793
1997-98	13,618	2,367	819
1998-99	14,163	2,267	757
1999-2000	14,186	2,228	804
2000-01	14,292	2,244	818
2001-02	14,236	2,284	780
2002-03	14,854	2,256	749
2003-04	15,408	2,307	743
2004-05	16,008	2,517	762
2005-06	16,762	2,637	777

Source: table 297 in *Digest of Education Statistics*; 2007 ed., United States Dept. of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, June 2007, [nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07\\_297.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_297.asp).

a. These figures include degrees conferred in a single language or a combination of modern foreign languages and exclude degrees in linguistics, Latin, classics, ancient and Middle and Near Eastern biblical and Semitic languages, ancient and classical Greek, Sanskrit and classical Indian languages, and sign language and sign language interpretation.

Fig. 4. A table in a research paper.

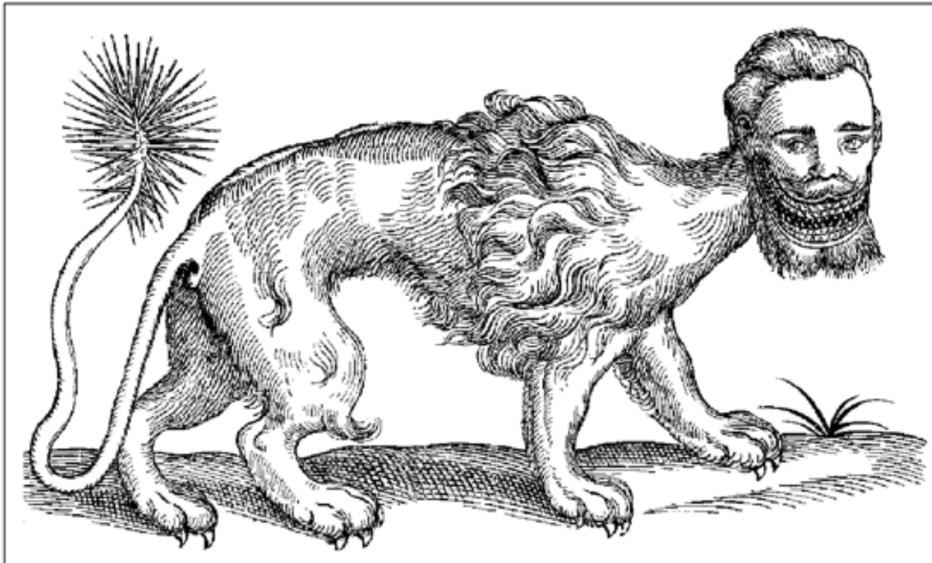


Fig. 1. Manticore, woodcut from Edward Topsell; *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents* . . . ; London, 1658, p. 344; *Curious Woodcuts of Fanciful and Real Beasts*, by Konrad Gesner, Dover, 1971, p. 8.

Fig. 5. A figure in a research paper.



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Musical illustrations are labeled Example (usually abbreviated Ex.), assigned an arabic numeral, and given a caption: Ex. 1. Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky, Symphony no. 6 in B, opus 74 (*Pathétique*), finale. A label and caption ordinarily appear directly below the example and have the same one-inch margins as the text of the paper (fig. 6).



Ex. 1. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony no. 3 in E flat, opus 55 (*Eroica*), first movement, opening.

Fig. 6. A musical example in a research paper.

## PAPER AND PRINTING

If you print your paper, use only white, 8½-by-11-inch paper of good quality. If you lack 8½-by-11-inch paper, choose the closest size available. Use a high-quality printer. Some instructors prefer papers printed on a single side because they're easier to read, but others allow printing on both sides as a means of conserving paper; follow your instructor's preference.

## CORRECTIONS AND INSERTIONS ON PRINTOUTS

Proofread and correct your research paper carefully before submitting it. If you are checking a printout and find a mistake, reopen the document, make the appropriate revisions, and reprint the corrected page or pages. Be sure to save the changed file. Spelling checkers and usage checkers are helpful when used with caution. They do not find all errors and sometimes label correct material as erroneous. If your instructor permits corrections on the printout, write them neatly and legibly in ink directly above the lines involved, using carets (^) to indicate where they go. Do not use the margins or write a change below the line it affects. If corrections on any page are numerous or substantial, revise your document and reprint the page.



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## **BINDING A PRINTED PAPER**

Pages of a printed research paper may get misplaced or lost if they are left unattached or merely folded down at a corner. Although a plastic folder or some other kind of binder may seem an attractive finishing touch, most instructors find such devices a nuisance in reading and commenting on students' work. Many prefer that a paper be secured with a simple paper or binder clip, which can be easily removed and restored. Others prefer the use of staples.

## **ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**

There are at present no commonly accepted standards for the electronic submission of research papers. If you are asked to submit your paper electronically, obtain from your teacher guidelines for formatting, mode of submission (e.g., by e-mail, on a Web site), and so forth and follow them closely.



# THE WORKS CITED LIST

The basic logic and function of MLA 8th Edition's Works Cited list is essentially the same as it was before; it is an alphabetically-arranged list of all works *actually cited* in the text of the paper itself. There *are* some exceptions when it comes to illustrations (see previous section). Beyond these graphical exceptions, however, the Works Cited list appears to mostly be the same.

If we look closer, however, we see that the actual "equational" content of Works Cited entries have changed quite a bit. In previous versions of MLA, the writer would essentially look up the "equation" for whatever kind of source needed to be cited. Need to cite a printed book? Look up "Printed book" and follow the recipe. Need to cite an article from a journal? No worries. Just look up "Article in a Journal" and fill in the blanks. For a good stretch of time, this worked fine in most cases. With the emergence of digital communication and social media, however, MLA had to reassess how it would deal with these emergent contexts. How do we cite a Tweet? Or a comment on a blog? Or an authoress "Yik-Yak" post? Alas, social media and digital communication continues to grow and outpace updated editions of MLA citation standards.

In response to this, MLA moved away from equational formulas for citations. The process of citing a source is now – more than ever – actually a true process of consistent logic.

In the illustration to the right, you can see the methodology of pulling information for any given MLA citation. First comes the lead information (the author and the title of the source, when present). Then comes the "Container 1" (marked in red). This is the textual thing that "contains" the immediate source. In some cases, we may even have *another* level of container – such as an article published in a journal hosted on a database. In such a case, the article title and author is the lead information. The journal issue information is Container 1, and the database information is Container 2. Think of smaller buckets fitting into larger buckets. If you follow the punctuation guides as you fill in the relevant blanks, all you need to do is clip the recorded data together in the same order to have a viable and functional Worked Cited entry. Remember, MLA specifically states that citations should be audience-focused. Writers should provide an appropriate level of information that best serves the audience's needs.

Sample MLA citation for a  
**WORK IN AN ANTHOLOGY**

LEAD INFORMATION	
Author.	Copeland, Edward.
Title of Source.	"Money."
CONTAINER 1	
Title of container,	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austin,</i>
Other contributors,	edited by Copeland and Juliet McMaster,
Version,	
Number,	
Publisher,	Cambridge UP,
Publication date,	1997,
Location.	pp. 131-48.
CONTAINER 2	
Title of container,	
Other contributors,	
Version,	
Number,	
Publisher,	
Publication date,	
Location.	
THE WORKS CITED CITATION	
Copeland, Edward. "Money." <i>The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austin</i> , edited by Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge UP, 1997, pp. 131-48.	



Sample MLA Citation for a  
**PRINTED BOOK, EXAMPLE 1**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author.

Title of Source. *MLA Handbook.*

**CITATION NOTES:**

MLA 8th edition requires less information than previous versions when it comes to printed books. You no longer need to state "Print" at the end of the citation, and the city of publication is no longer considered useful or relevant information. However, in this example we *do* point out that this is the *8th edition* because the 8th edition is substantively different than previous editions of the *MLA Handbook*. Include version information if you believe that information is important or useful to your audience. As for "Group or Corporate Authors," this is still used by MLA 8th Edition except in cases where the publisher is the same as the group or corporate author. Thus, in this example, we do not need to state that MLA is the group author.

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container,

Other contributors,

Version, 8th ed.,

Number,

Publisher, MLA,

Publication date, 2016

Location.

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container,

Other contributors,

Version,

Number,

Publisher,

Publication date,

Location.

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

*MLA Handbook.* 8th ed., MLA, 2016.

Sample MLA Citation for a  
**PRINTED BOOK, EXAMPLE 2**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author. Hutchins, Ross E.  
Title of Source. *Insects.*

**CITATION NOTES:**

This example gives us a more-typical citation example: A printed book with a clearly stated author. Again, you need not include the word "Print" at the end of the citation, and the city of publication is no longer needed. Further, there is no need to include version information because this is simply the original print source. The goal of MLA 8th Edition is to be as direct and streamlined as possible. There is no need for extra information that doesn't better serve the audience. If you have two authors, follow the standard MLA mode from before: Last name, First name, and First and Last name (Example: Hutchins, Ross E., and Phillip Seymour Hoffman). If you have three or more authors, you can list the first name followed by et al.

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher, Prentice-Hall,  
Publication date, 1966  
Location.

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher,  
Publication date,  
Location.

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

Hutchins, Ross E. *Insects*. Prentice-Hall, 1966.



Sample MLA Citation for an  
**WORK COLLECTED IN AN ANTHOLOGY**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author. Ehrenreich, Barbara.  
Title of Source. "Serving in Florida." 2009.

**CITATION NOTES:**

When a source has been republished or collected in an anthology, you can add the original date at the end of the lead information field; this can be rather important when working with a work collected in an anthology because the year listed under the Container 1 section can be quite misleading in relation to the original text being cited. Further, note how *editors* has been truncated. Instead of typing "edited by Andrea Lunsford, Michael Brody, Lisa Ede, Beverly J. Moss, Carole Clark Papper, and Keith Walters," we can simplify by typing "edited by Andrea Lunsford et al.). As it is with authors, if you have three or more names, just list the first followed by et al. Also note how the punctuation carries from the chart to the left to the final citation at the bottom.

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container, *Everybody's an Author,*  
Other contributors, edited by Andrea Lunsford et al.,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher, W. W. Norton and Company,  
Publication date, 2013,  
Location. pp. 761-774

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher,  
Publication date,  
Location.

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

Ehrenreich, Barbara. "Serving in Florida." 2009. *Everybody's an Author*, edited by Andrea Lunsford et al., W.W. Norton and Company, 2013, pp. 761-774.

Sample MLA Citation for a  
**ARTICLE OR PAGE ON A WEBSITE**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author. Harrison, Casmira.  
Title of Source. "Deputies: Woman Arrested After Setting Boyfriend on Fire."

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container, *The Daytona Beach News Journal*,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher, GateHouse Media, Inc.,  
Publication date, 24 July 2016,  
Location. [www.news-journalonline.com/news/20160724/deputies-woman-arrested-after-setting-boyfriend-on-fire/1](http://www.news-journalonline.com/news/20160724/deputies-woman-arrested-after-setting-boyfriend-on-fire/1)

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Location.

**CITATION NOTES:**

As for periodicals, blogs, and other types of websites, MLA 8th Edition does not require the writer to state the publisher's name when it is, in fact, essentially the same as the website name. For example, *Time Magazine* is published by Time, Inc.. You don't need to restate this information if it's basically the same. In *this* case, however, GateHouse Media, Inc., is the publisher of the online *Daytona Beach News Journal* website, so we will include it for added clarity. Also note how the location field in this example is a web address. Do not include "http://" code in this field. At long last, we are no longer required to include the date the writer last consulted or accessed the online resource.

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

Harrison, Casmira. "Deputies: Woman Arrested After Setting Boyfriend on Fire." *The Daytona Beach News Journal*, GateHouse Media, Inc., 24 July 2016, [www.news-journalonline.com/news/20160724/deputies-woman-arrested-after-setting-boyfriend-on-fire/1](http://www.news-journalonline.com/news/20160724/deputies-woman-arrested-after-setting-boyfriend-on-fire/1).

Sample MLA Citation for a  
**TWEET FROM TWITTER**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author. @persiankiwi.  
Title of Source. "We have report of large street battles in east & west of Tehran now - #Iranslection."

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container, *Twitter*,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher,  
Publication date, 23 June 2009, 11:15 a.m.,  
Location. [twitter.com/persiankiwi/status/2298106072](https://twitter.com/persiankiwi/status/2298106072).

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number,  
Publisher,  
Publication date,  
Location.

**CITATION NOTES:**

When it comes to social media, posts don't always have actual titles. Tweets, for example, aren't titled. When you want to cite a short text that has no title (such as a social media post like a Tweet), you simply use the source text *as* the title of the source. A tweet, for example, is its own text; it is both the body of the text and the title. Further, you can use the "handle" of the writer (@persiankiwi) as the author's name. Next, Container 1 is essentially the social media system that text is pulled from, and the publication date is expanded to include time (since multiple tweets are often published by a single writer on any given day). As with more traditional media, there's a logical breadcrumb trail in how you cite social media. The goal isn't to meet the formula; the goal is to let the reader find the original source!

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

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



Sample MLA Citation for a  
**JOURNAL ARTICLE FROM A DATABASE**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

Author. Shanley, Mary Lyndon.  
Title of Source. "Collaboration and  
Commodification in Assisted  
Procreation: Reflections on  
an Open Market and  
Anonymous Donation."

**CITATION NOTES:**

Journal articles pulled from databases are where you can see the value in "Container 2." If the article itself is the lead text and the journal serves as Container 1, it then makes sense that the *database* containing that specific journal serves as a second Container. This is the fundamental logic of MLA 8th Edition. Truly, it's not really about "looking up the equation" for the type of source you're trying to cite. It's about pulling and recording relevant information for each *container* level of each source. If there's only one container, that's all you need to worry about. If there's two, then you deal with both. If (somehow) there are three, then you repeat the cycle a third time.

**CONTAINER 1:**

Title of container, *Law and Society Review*,  
Other contributors,  
Version,  
Number, vol. 36, no. 2,  
Publisher,  
Publication date, 2002,  
Location. pp. 257-84.

**CONTAINER 2:**

Title of container, *JSTOR*,  
Location. [www.jstor.org/stable/1512177/](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1512177/)

**THE FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**

Shanley, Mary Lyndon. "Collaboration and Commodification in Assisted Procreation: Reflections on an Open Market and Anonymous Donation." *Law and Society Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2002, pp. 257-84. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/1512177/](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1512177/).

# IN-TEXT CITATIONS

In-text citations in MLA 8th Edition haven't really changed very much because they still serve the same functional purpose: to point the reader from the citation to the source as its listed on the (alphabetized) Works Cited list. Because sources still usually begin with an author's last name, that's still important data for any given in-text citation (be it a signal phrase or a parenthetical citation). Similarly, if the source doesn't have a stated author, then it is listed by its title; thus, the title would then serve as a key component of the in-text citation. If there are page numbers, they're still in play. Paraphrasing, summarizing sources, parenthetical and signal phrasing rules generally stay the same, as long as it identifies the source of the borrowed idea. There are, however, a few small changes. MLA qualifies a handful of additions and clarifications as follows (<https://www.mla.org/MLA-Style/What-s-New-in-the-Eighth-Edition>):

## For time-based media like video, times are now cited in the text.

**Example:** Buffy's promise that "there's not going to be any incidents like at my old school" is obviously not one on which she can follow through ("Hush" 00:03:15-17).

**Works Cited entry:** "Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Geller, season 4, episode 10, Mutant Enemy, 1999.

## Shorten long titles (longer than a noun phrase) when they have to be included in a parenthetical citation.

**Example:** A book entitled *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning and Religion* can be shorted to simply *The Double Vision* in an in-text citation.

## When documenting text from Greek, Roman, and medieval works, use part numbers, not page numbers alone.

**Example:** In one of the most vivid prophetic visions in the Bible, Ezekiel saw "what seemed to be four living creatures," each with the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (New Jerusalem bible, Ezek. 1.5-10). John of Patmos echoes this passage when describing his vision (Rev. 4.6-8).

**Works Cited entry:** *The New Jerusalem Bible*. General editor, Henry Wansbrough, Doubleday, 1985.



WRITING CENTER

### The punctuation used when various items are combined in one parenthetical citation is clarified a bit.

When you simply have an author and a page number, there's no punctuation in a parenthetical citation. Sometimes, however, you may have more information that needs to be represented (such as separate page references or multiple sources).

When you have multiple sources cited at once, use a semicolon to separate the elements:

**Example:** (Baron 194; Jacobs 55).

When once citation references separate page elements, use commas to separate those elements from the single source:

**Example:** (Baron 194, 200, 197-98).

When a citation points not to a page number, but instead to a paragraph or chapter range, use commas and periods:

**Example:** (Rowley, ch. 2).

### Refined ways of formatting citations in research projects other than traditional papers have been suggested.

MLA 8th Edition notes that contemporary academic writing does not always take the form of the traditional essay. From PowerPoint presentations to multi-modal video presentations, the academic text can now take many medium and technological forms. Generally speaking, MLA recommends treating citations in a common sense manner. Some kind of Works Cited list is always desirable and often useful to an audience, but there is no single "correct" way to do a Works Cited list for a video, a slideshow, or an audio recording. Thus, MLA stresses a common-sense pragmatism for these kinds of projects. The writer should simply provide references and citations in a manner that is logical and useful to the audience. Short citations in a PowerPoint presentation are useful on slides, as is a single list provided at the end of the slideshow. Hyperlinked citations are useful on web-based text pages. Supplementary citations are useful as appendix-based documents to audio texts. And so on.

Again, MLA does not mandate one specific MUST DO THIS approach. Instead, the writer should simply think rhetorically about the audience. What does the audience need to know? And how can the writer deploy MLA to best serve the audience's needs?



WRITING CENTER



# A SAMPLE MLA 8TH EDITION PAPER

Freeman 1

Brandon Freeman

Professor Lee

English 101

25 February 2017

## Problems with Assisted Reproductive Technology and the Definition of the Family

It is not unusual for people to think of a family in its basic form as a mother and a father and the child or children they conceive together. But a genetic connection between parents and children is not necessary for a family to exist. New families are often created by remarriage after a divorce or the death of a spouse, so that only one parent is genetically related to the child or children. Also, the practice of adoption is long-standing and creates families where neither parent is genetically related to the child or children. There are many single-parent families in the United States, and some of these may be families where the parents live together but are not married (Coontz 147). Couples that consist of two men or two women are also increasingly common, and more of these couples now also have or want children (Buchanan). Although there is no universal definition of the family, in recent years scholars have established that the “normative” definition in most societies is “at least one parent and one child.” This definition goes on to say that a child does not have to be genetically related to the parent, and “children conceived through artificial insemination or a surrogate mother” count (Munro and Munro 553). Though we may accept the idea that the definition of the “normative” family is a broad one and that no biological relationship is needed for a parent and child to form a family, for many people genetic heritage remains an

SAMPLE MLA PAPER



Freeman 2

important factor in describing who they are and how they relate to other members of their family. This thinking, which persists despite the broad variety of families that now exist, provokes particular conflicts for members of families that are created with the new methods of assisted reproductive technology, methods that are new in human history, having developed only over the past few decades.

Assisted reproductive technology (including artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization) is often used when one member of a male-female couple is infertile; the resulting child is usually related to at least one member of the couple.<sup>1</sup> This technology is also used to allow male-male and female-female couples to have children. In 2005, 52,041 children were born in the United States through assisted reproductive

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<sup>1</sup> This paper uses the term *assisted reproductive technology* for both artificial insemination, where eggs are fertilized in a woman's body, and technologies like in vitro fertilization, in which an egg is fertilized outside the body. In artificial insemination, a woman can be impregnated with her husband's or another man's sperm by having a doctor collect semen and place it into the vagina (Shanley 261). A woman can become a surrogate for a couple by being artificially inseminated with the husband's sperm. In in vitro fertilization, eggs are taken from a donor and fertilized by sperm outside the woman's body; the fertilized egg is then placed in a woman's uterus. In gamete interfallopian transfer, unfertilized eggs and sperm are put into a woman's fallopian tubes. In zygote intrafallopian transfer, eggs are fertilized outside the body and then placed into a woman's fallopian tubes (*2005 Assisted Reproductive Technology Success Rates* 3).

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technology, an increase of more than a hundred percent from 1996 (*2005 Assisted Reproductive Technology Success Rates* 61). It can be argued that the new families formed through artificial reproductive technology “tend to be stronger and more highly functioning than naturally conceived ones, because the parents are so motivated to have children, and so gratified once they arrive” (Mundy 99). If the parents involved tell their children how they were conceived and if the sperm donors, egg donors, or surrogate mothers are not kept anonymous, then the children resulting from artificial reproductive technology can have more than two “parents” or parental figures in their lives, possibly enriching their emotional environment. Artificial reproductive technology can give infertile women the chance to have a biological mother’s relationship with a child, since the technology allows them to bear a child, give birth, and bond with the child through breastfeeding. The possibilities given by artificial reproductive technology thus seem to support the idea that love and care from parents (“nurture”) outweigh the importance of genetics (“nature”) in forming strong families. But though this may be the case, the fact that many couples decide on artificial reproductive technology rather than on adoption means that the origin of these new families lies in the enduring importance of genetics in people’s ideas of what a family should be.

As Mary Lyndon Shanley points out, genetic relationship in families creates a sense of “genetic continuity through the generations” and is vitally important to many people’s identity, which is why people want to know who their biological parents are: “The right to learn the identity of one’s genetic forebear stems from some people’s desire to be able to connect themselves to human history concretely as embodied beings, not

Freeman 4

only abstractly as rational beings or as members of large social (national, ethnic, religious) groups” (268). We seem almost unable to see a child with his or her parents without looking for a resemblance between them; a lack of resemblance between parents and children can be a source of stigma (Mundy 194-95). Like adopted children, the children who result from the new reproductive technologies can be left with “genetic bewilderment” as they wonder who their biological father or mother is (and why they are genetically related to only one of their parents) and how many siblings they might have (103). Lobbying by the children of sperm donors has resulted in changes in the law in New Zealand and the United Kingdom: sperm donors can no longer be anonymous and can be contacted by their biological children when they reach the age of eighteen (Wente). A Web site, *The Donor Sibling Registry*, has been established “to assist individuals conceived as a result of sperm, egg or embryo donation that are seeking to make mutually desired contact with others with whom they share genetic ties” (“Our History”). The existence of this Web site, along with the common emotional need for children to know who their biological parents are, suggests that genetic heritage is important to many individuals conceived through assisted reproductive technology.

Assisted reproductive technology has also led to unexpected and disturbing events that show how the technology, which was meant to bring a genetically connected family into being, ends up creating something quite different. In one case, a British woman who became sterile as a result of cancer treatment but who had already had some of her eggs fertilized with her partner’s sperm through in vitro fertilization was denied the right (by the European Human Rights Court) to use those embryos, because



her partner did not want them brought to term. Unable to bear a child without these embryos, the woman was forced by a court to allow the embryos to be destroyed and give up all chance of ever having a child that was genetically related to her (Rozenberg). In another case, the parents of a man who was about to die but was being kept alive artificially asked a doctor to obtain sperm from him so that they could use it in in vitro fertilization and thus gain a grandchild (Marcotty and Yee). It is possible that the child born from this process will feel sadness or confusion if he or she finds out that his or her father did not even intend to have a child and was near death in a hospital when his sperm was taken from him without his permission.

Assisted reproductive technology can also mix up the usual progress of the generations, thereby taking apart the family structure that it was meant to promote. Through assisted reproductive technology, women have given birth to their own grandchildren by being implanted with their own daughters' eggs ("Woman"). In Canada a mother has frozen some of her own eggs so that her daughter, who will become sterile at the onset of puberty because of a rare disease, will be able to have genetically related children through in vitro fertilization. This means that the daughter will be able to give birth to a child that is her sibling; that child will be the birth child of his or her "mother" and the biological child of his or her "grandmother" ("Mother's Eggs"). The urge to create genetic offspring in these cases has led to confusing and disturbing relations that distort the family structures we are most familiar with.

The common use of assisted reproductive technology today means that many future families will have children whose relationship to their parents will be clouded by

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the technology used to bring them into the world. Kay S. Hymowitz, a commentator who calls for an end to anonymous sperm donation, writes that there is a great deal of irony in the way these technologies are used to produce children without “fathers” at a time when society bewails the increase in fatherless families—a problem she sees in terms of desertion by fathers. Artificial reproductive technology is thus used to produce families, but it can also turn the biological father into a genetic instrument who is not required or expected to help raise the child. Hymowitz writes:

More ordinary “choice mothers,” as many single women using AI [artificial insemination] now call themselves, are usually not openly hostile to fathers, but they boast a language of female empowerment that implicitly trivializes men’s roles in children’s lives. The term “choice mothers” frames AI as a matter of women’s reproductive rights. Only the woman’s decision making—or intention—carries moral weight.

This reduction of a biological parent into a mere instrument occurs with surrogate mothers as well. A series of dramatic lawsuits starting in the 1980s demonstrated the dangers of treating a woman as primarily a womb. In the case of “Baby M” in 1988, Mary Beth Whitehead was artificially inseminated with the sperm of William Stern. A contract between Whitehead and Stern said that the child must be given up to Stern and his wife at birth. Though the court involved ended up giving Stern parental rights, it found that the contract was against “public policy” (“Developments” 2069–71). Beyond the legal complexities, however, what the case dramatizes is that a surrogate mother can bond with the child in her womb to such a degree that she may not

want to give him or her up. This bonding may occur even when the baby is the result of assisted reproductive technology where the surrogate mother's egg is not the one used. A judge may have to decide whether the birth mother (the surrogate) or the genetic mother whose egg was fertilized in vitro and implanted in the surrogate mother is the legal mother of a child produced by assisted reproductive technology (2071-72).

Assisted reproductive technology has many unintended consequences. Despite the fact that the ability to produce children that are genetically related to at least one parent might seem to make the technology a source of family stability, it sometimes can create dissension, emotional pain, and legal quandaries. Liza Mundy points out that the technology has produced family arrangements where genetic connection is "often both affirmed and denied, . . . simultaneously embraced and rejected" (99). Indeed, the great lengths people will go to in order to establish a genetic connection between themselves and their children—bypassing the possibilities provided by adoption—show that genetic connection between parents and children remains an ideal for many people, even if it is not necessary for a family to be "normative." If a genetic connection between parent and child, then, remains the ideal that drives the use of assisted reproductive technology, it is proving to be a questionable ideal. When pursued at all costs by means of this technology, the biological bond between parents and children can become a negative force, producing detrimental results that actually work against the very values of love, trust, and stability that the family is supposed to cultivate.

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For Practice  
**MLA WORKSHEET**

**LEAD INFORMATION:**

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 FINAL WORKS CITED ENTRY:**