

# Modern Language Association (MLA) 8th Ed. Style Guidelines Overview

## Introduction

This poster overviews *basic* guidelines for using MLA style. To supplement this poster, consult the *MLA Handbook* (8th edition). The MLA handbooks are available in most writing centers, libraries, and bookstores. The MLA also maintains a website with style information at [style.mla.org](http://style.mla.org). You may also reference the Purdue University OWL for information on using MLA style: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

Poster by Kate Bouwens and Allen Brizee. Updated for MLA 8 by Rachel Atherton and Elizabeth Geib. © 2017 The Writing Lab & OWL at Purdue University.



## Formatting

Type MLA essays on white 8.5 x 11" paper. Margins should be 1" on all sides. All text should be double spaced. Use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman) in 10 to 12 pt. size. In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date.

Headers should contain your last name and page numbers (1, 2, 3...) in the upper right-hand corner, 1/2" from the top and right-aligned. Double space between the essay's title (not bolded, underlined, etc.) and the first line of the text. Indent the first line of each paragraph 1/2" (five spaces or press tab once) from the left margin.



## Works Cited Page Format

Begin the Works Cited list on a separate page at the end of your essay. Maintain MLA formatting standards. Title the page 'Works Cited' and center the title. Alphabetize the citations by the last name of the first author. Use a hanging indent (every line after the first line of a citation is indented 1/2", using tab or a word processor's settings) on each citation. The Works Cited page should be double spaced throughout; do not add extra space between citations.



## In-Text Citations

### One Author

Use parenthetical citation to cite outside sources in your text. The page number(s) of your outside source should always appear in the parenthetical citation. The author's name of the outside source may appear in the sentence itself.

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Or the author's name can go in the parentheses following the quote.

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

### Multiple Authors

For a source with two authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation.

Best and Marcus argue that one should read a text for what it says on its surface, rather than looking for some hidden meaning (9).

The authors claim that surface reading looks at what is "evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts" (Best and Marcus 9).

For a source with three or more authors, list the first author's last name, and replace the additional names with et al.

According to Franck et al., "Current agricultural policies in the U.S. are contributing to the poor health of Americans" (327).

The authors claim that one cause of obesity in the United States is government-funded farm subsidies (Franck et al. 327).

### No Known Author

For a source with no known author, use a shortened title of the resource in the parenthetical citation.

Many global warming hotspots exist in North America because this region has "comprehensive programs to monitor the environment" ("Impact of Global Warming" 6).

### Citing Indirect Sources

While it is always best to find the original source, sometimes you may have to use an indirect source (a source cited in another source). For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source you actually consulted. For example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd. in Weisman 259).

### Internet Sources

For Internet sources, include enough information to lead the reader to the appropriate entry on the Works Cited page, usually the author's name. You do not need a page or paragraph number in the parenthetical citation.

According to a 2014 Wall Street Journal article, women made up "about 48% of the game playing public in the US" in 2014, largely due to the explosion of casual gaming on mobile devices (Grundberg and Hansegard).

## Works Cited

### Basics

MLA style's 8th edition focuses on the principles of source documentation instead of on particular formats for different types of sources. This approach to citation emphasizes the many ways in which writers access information and the many kinds of sources writers use.

MLA now bases Works Cited entries on 'containers,' a concept that allows writers to use a standard form for any kind of source. For example, if you cite an episode in a TV series, the series would be the container for the episode. Similarly, a book is a container for a chapter, a blog is a container for a blog post, and a journal is a container for a scholarly article. Since it is possible to find a copy of a given source in many different places (for instance, you might find an article published in a book, and in a scholarly journal, and on an online database, and each copy might be slightly different), it is important to account for all the containers of the original source you use.

The basic format for an MLA Works Cited entry contains core elements first and additional elements second; the template is as follows:

Author. Title. Title of container (self contained if book), Other contributors (translators or editors), Version (edition), Number (vol. and/or no.), Publisher, Publication Date, Location (pages, paragraphs URL or DOI)2nd container's title, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location, Date of Access (if applicable).

### Book

The author's name or a book with a single author's name appears in 'last name, first name' format. For books with multiple authors, editions, or other circumstances, consult the *MLA Handbook* or the Purdue OWL.

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Penguin, 1987.

### Article in a Scholarly Journal

Cite the author and title of article as you normally would. Then, put the title of the journal in italics. Include the volume number ("vol.") and issue number ("no.") when possible, separated by commas. Finally, add the year and page numbers.

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *Bashai Tudu*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.

### Internet Sources

MLA encourages the use of date of access and the inclusion of containers such as Netflix or YouTube, as URLs change over time. If you can provide a URL or a permanent link, do so.

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). Name of Site. Version number, Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available), URL, DOI or permalink. Date of access (if applicable).

*The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl. Accessed 23 Apr. 2008.*