Citation Basics: MLA Style (8th Edition)

The Modern Language Association (MLA) style of documentation is widely used in the United States. MLA has one set of guidelines for creating citations for all types of sources. To document the facts and ideas that you find and use in your research, you need to create a list of sources of information (works) cited and a series of citations that indicate which facts and ideas came from which source (in-text/parenthetical citations). Create a citation for each source using the nine pieces of information (core elements) described below in the order listed. When you cannot find one of the core elements, skip it, and move to the next one. Use the punctuation shown in each box. Many examples are provided following the explanations. For more detailed explanations and additional types of citations, please see the MLA Handbook (8th ed.) or ask a librarian for assistance.

**MLA Core Elements**

1. **Author.**
   The person who or organization that created the source.

2. **Title of source.**
   The specific name of the source. Book titles are in *italics* but article titles, chapter titles, episode titles, etc. are in “quotation marks.” A colon marks the beginning of a subtitle.

3. **Title of container,**
   When the source forms a part of a larger whole, the larger whole can be thought of as a container that holds the source. Sometimes a source has more than one container (e.g. a journal article contained in a journal that is contained in a database). Complete all of the core elements for the first container then repeat for each additional container. All titles of containers are in *italics.*

4. **Other contributors,**
   List people who helped create the source but did not actually write it. Include the role of the person with their name (e.g. edited by, illustrated by, narrated by, performance by, directed by, etc.).

5. **Version,**
   If there is more than one edition of the source (e.g. 2nd edition or Director’s Cut), specify which one you used.

6. **Number,**
   If your source is part of a numbered set (e.g. volume, issue, episode, etc.), specify the numbers here with appropriate abbreviations or designations (e.g. vol., no., season, or episode).

7. **Publisher,**
   The organization responsible for producing the source and making it available for use. Do not include publishers of journals, magazines, newspapers or databases. Do not include publishers of websites that have the same website title as the name of the publisher.

8. **Publication date,**
   Use the date found on your source as Day Month Year (MLA specifies this date order to avoid extra commas). Include the time if provided.

9. **Location.**
   This includes page numbers for articles (where the article is located in a newspaper or journal), digital object identifiers (DOIs) for journal articles and universal resource locators (URLs) for websites (where the website is located on the world wide web).

**MLA Citation FAQ**

- **Caution:** Citations provided by citation generators are rarely 100% correct. Verify for accuracy.
- Indent one-half inch before the second and all subsequent lines in the citation (i.e. a hanging indent).
- Abbreviate the names of all months except May, June and July.
- Include all sources cited in your paper.
- The first letter of the first word in the title and the first letter of all major words are capitalized.
- All citations end with a period.
- Double space all lines within and between entries.

**Examples provided on this handout are single spaced to save space.**
Examples for Books

**Book: One Author**

1. Author.  
2. Title of source.  
3. Publisher,  
4. Publication date,


**Book: Multiple Authors**


Note: If there are one or two authors, use both names. List the second author in regular first name, last name order. If there are three or more authors, use only the first author and replace the remaining authors names with “et al.”

**Book: Work in an Anthology**


**Reference Book: Chapter or Article**


**eBook**


Note: MLA allows the option of adding a url location and an accessed date for database sources. These are not required but are often provided by citation generators.

**Reference eBook: Chapter or Article**


Note: If no author is listed, then begin the citation with the title of the article.

**eBook Chapter: Database**


Examples for Web Sites

**Web Site: No Author**

2. Title of source.  
3. Title of container,  
4. Publisher,  
5. Publication date,  
6. Location.


**Web Site: Author**


**Web Site: Organization Author**


**Web Site: Journal Article**


**Web Site: Newspaper Article**


**Web Site: No Date**


Note: The optional Accessed date is important to add when the website does not have a date of publication.
Examples for Databases

**Database: Journal Article**


**Database: Newspaper Article**


Note: MLA allows the option of adding a url location date for database sources. This is not required but is often provided by citation generators.

**Database: Gale Literary Sources: Journal Article: Reprint**


**Database: Business Source Premier: Company Profile**


**Database: Credo Reference**


**Database: Global Road Warrior**


**Database: Lexis Nexis Academic**


**Database: Opposing Viewpoints in Context: Essay**


**Database: Opposing Viewpoints in Context: Journal Article**


**Database: Science Direct**


**Database: VAST: Academic Video Online**


Examples for Other Sources

**Digital Image: Web Site**


**Digital Image: Database**


**Personal Interview**

Sargent, Margaret. Personal interview. 15 Feb. 2016.

Note: Margaret Sargent is the person who was interviewed.

**Email**

Woodward, Julie. “Newborn FAQs.” Received by Robert Small. 21 May 2015.

**Motion Picture/Video/DVD**


**YouTube Video**


**Sound Recording**


**TED Talk**


**Blog Post**


**Television Episode**

Documenting Sources in the Text of the Paper with In-Text Parenthetical Citations

When you quote from a source or use an idea taken from the work of someone else, note this in the text of your paper with a parenthetical reference. Place the author’s last name and the page number in parentheses after the material used as close as possible to the material being documented. When no author is available, use the shortest form of the title necessary to identify the work from your list of Works Cited and the page number. When no page number is available, cite the entire work. If the author’s name appears in the sentence, it may be omitted from the parenthetical reference. Include the complete citation in the list of works cited at the end of the paper.

Your text would state: One suggestion to uncover disorders is that “a structured interview could be employed by staff at juvenile justice facilities for routine identification of potential behavioral health conditions” (Drerup, et al. 126).

Or your text could state: According to Drerup, Croysdale, and Hoffmann, “a structured interview could be employed by staff at juvenile justice facilities for routine identification of potential behavioral health conditions” (126).

The List of Works Cited would state:


If there is no author: Begin the reference with the first word or two of the title. For example: (“Violence” 688).

If there is no page number: Cite the entire work (that is, do not include a page number). For example: (“Cyberbullying”)

If the source is audio or video: Cite the relevant time or time range as displayed in your media reader. For example: (Sapolsky 00:03:16-17)

Works Cited


