



THE DOCUMENTED ESSAY

MLA Documentation Style

MLA style is a system for documenting sources in scholarly writing, primarily in the liberal arts and humanities, recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA). In MLA documentation style, you acknowledge your sources by using parenthetical citations in your text that correspond to an alphabetical list of works that appears at the end of your research paper. The list titled “Works Cited” identifies the sources you used in your research. Each entry in the list of works cited is made up of core elements given in a specific order. Note that a citation in MLA style contains only enough information to enable readers to find the source in the list of works cited.

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- Unless your instructor has specific requirements for the format of your research paper, the most common formatting for 8½ x 11 inch paper is to leave one inch margins at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text.
- Always choose an easily readable typeface, such as Times New Roman, and set it to a standard size, usually 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 paper, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited.
- Indent the first line of a paragraph as well as set-off quotations half an inch from the left margin. Leave one space after a period or other concluding punctuation mark, unless your instructor prefers two spaces.
- 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. Do not italicize or underline your title; put it in quotation marks or boldface, or type it in all capital letters.
- Number all pages, including the title page, 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 each page number.

IN-TEXT CITATION

MLA style format follows the author-page method of in-text citation to identify quotations, ideas, or information derived from other sources. A basic in-text citation consists of the last name of the author and a page number. Note that abbreviations (p. or pp.) are not used in in-text citations.

For **direct quotation**, the parenthetical citation directly follows the closing quotation mark:

The author states that an inventory of the physical and material progress of printing until the year 1500 “**would reveal more than 1,100 shops in 200 cities, in which some 12,000,000 books, in 35,000 editions, had been produced**” (Chappell 84).

For a **paraphrase**, put the citation in a place where a natural pause would usually occur (preferably at the end of a sentence) or as near to the cited material as possible. Note that the period that would normally end the quoted or paraphrased material should be placed after the parenthetical citation:

Author Warren Chappell states that by the year 1500 at least 12 million books had been produced (84).

In-text citations should direct a reader to the corresponding entry in the list of works cited. The name or title that appears in the parenthetical citation should begin the entry in the works-cited list as follows:

Chappell, Warren. *A Short History of the Printed Word*. Nonpareil Books, 1980.

SAMPLE IN-TEXT CITATIONS

A Work by a Single Author: the standard parenthetical notation includes the last name of the author and page number(s) of the specific quoted or paraphrased material.

One modern researcher has found that dreams move backward in time as the night progresses, that they gradually turn from the contemporary world to childhood and “stored images” (Dement 71).

If the author’s name is mentioned in the sentence, then include only the page number in the parenthetical citation.

Sigmund Freud states that “a dream is the fulfillment of a wish” (154).

If the author is unknown, use the title or a shortened version of the title in place of a name.

In the poem, Grendel is defeated and Beowulf fulfils his boast: “The man who had lately landed among them, proud and sure, had purged the hall, kept it from harm” (*Beowulf* 55).

Work Cited

Beowulf. Translated by Seamus Heaney, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

A Work by Two Authors: include the last names of the authors in the order they are listed in the source.

For all their efforts to generalize about child behavior, psychologists recognize that “no two children are exactly alike” (**Gesell and Ilg 68**).

A Work by Three or More Authors: include the last name of the first author and replace the additional names with “et al.” (“and others”).

The relationships between words and their meanings are “much more complex than they seem” (**Plag et al. 140**).

Two or More Works by the Same Author: include the title of individual works in your citation. You may use a shortened version of titles for brevity’s sake. Be sure to use italics or quotation marks as appropriate for titles.

Modern dream researchers now accept the principle that dreams express “profound aspects of personality” (**Foulkes, *Sleep* 184**). Yet **Foulkes** himself has found that young children’s dreams are in general “rather simple and unemotional” (**“*Dreams*” 78**).

A Work by a Corporate or Government Author or Organization: use the name of the corporate or government author or organization (e.g., Public Agenda Foundation) or a commonly shortened version of the name (e.g., PAF) as the author in your citation.

By 1992 it was apparent that the American health care system, though impressive in many ways, needed “to be fixed and perhaps radically modified” (**Public Agenda Foundation 4**).

A Work from an Indirect Source: give the name of the author of the original work in your text and write “qtd. in” (quoted in) followed by the name of the author of the source you consulted.

In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, **Jakob Burchhardt** gives an interesting picture of the libraries and the copyists at the time of the *incunabula*, those first printed books: “At Urbino there were catalogues of the libraries of the Vatican, of St. Mark at Florence, of the Visconti at Pavia, and even the library at Oxford (**qtd. in Chappell 35**).

Note: The corresponding entry in the list of works cited will begin with the author or title of the source consulted (see above under Chappell).

A Quotation from a Work of Prose: if a quotation ending a sentence requires a parenthetical reference, place the sentence period after the reference.

For Charles Dickens the eighteenth century was both “**the best of times**” and “**the worst of times**” (35).

Note: If a quotation extends to more than four lines within your text, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. The quotation is generally introduced by a colon, and the parenthetical reference for a prose quotation is set off from the text following the last line of the quotation.

A Quotation from a Poem: cite by part (if applicable) and line(s), separated by a period. Include up to three lines of poetry within your text, separated by a slash with a space on each side (/).

In Robert Frost’s poem “The Death of the Hired Man,” one character describes home as the “**place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in**” (118-19).

Quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line. Unless the quotation involves unusual spacing, indent each line one inch from the left margin and double-space between lines, introduced by a colon and **not** with quotation marks.

Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room” is rich in evocative detail:

It was winter. It got dark
early. The waiting room
was full of grown-up people,
arctics and overcoats,
lamps and magazines. (6-10)

Note: For titles of poems, use quotation marks, except for book-length poems, which are italicized (e.g., *Beowulf*, Homer's *Iliad*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*).

Quotation from a Play with Act, Scene, and Line Numbers: cite by title (italicized and often abbreviated, e.g., *Mac.* for *Macbeth*, *Mis.* for Molière's *Le misanthrope*) followed by Arabic numerals separated by periods. Independent lines of quoted text are separated by a slash with a space on each side (/). Indent longer quotations one inch from the margin.

Claiming “**All the world’s a stage / And all the men and women merely players**” (2.7.146-47), the character of Jaques, in *As You Like It*, presents a gloomy view of the human condition. However, Macbeth’s perspective is even more pessimistic:

Out, out, brief candle!
 Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing. (*Mac.* 5.5.23-28)

Note: If you quote dialogue between two or more characters, set the quotation off from your text. Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character’s name indented one inch from the left margin and written in capital letters, followed by a period, and start the quotation. Indent all subsequent lines in the character’s speech an additional quarter inch. When the dialogue shifts to another character, start anew as above.

In Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*, we can see what an impact money—rather, the lack of it—has on the family dynamic.

WALTER (*looking at his sister intently*). You know the check is coming tomorrow.

BENEATHA (*turning on him with a sharpness all her own*). That money belongs to Mama, Walter, and it’s for her to decide how she wants to use it. I don’t care if she wants to buy a house or a rocket ship or just nail it up somewhere and look at it. It’s hers. Not ours—*hers*.

WALTER (*bitterly*). Now ain’t that fine! You just got your mother’s interest at heart, ain’t you, girl? You such a nice girl—but if Mama got that money she can always take a few thousand and help you through school too, can’t she?
(1.1)

In general, stage directions are treated like other quoted text: they should be reproduced exactly as they appear in the original source. If line numbers are not provided (see above), use only act and scene.

A Passage from a Work of Scripture (e.g., the Bible, the Talmud, or the Koran): cite by title of the text (italicized), book (not italicized and often abbreviated, e.g., Ezek. for Ezekiel, Ps. for Psalms), chapter, and verse numbers (or their equivalent).

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**).

E-Book: begin with the name of the author. Use page numbers only for a PDF with fixed pages; do not use page numbers for other formats, such as a Kindle edition. Although many e-readers have a numbering system, do not use those as page numbers, since they may not appear consistently to other readers. Instead, cite the book in its entirety. Usually, this means citing the author’s name. If the e-book has stable chapter divisions, add a comma after the author’s name and cite the chapter number preceded by the abbreviation **ch**.

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt began their honeymoon with a week’s stay at Hyde Park (Rowley, **ch. 2**).

LIST OF WORKS CITED

- The list of works cited appears at the end of your research paper. Begin the list on a new page. The list contains the same running head as the main text, and the page numbering continues uninterrupted.
- Center the title “Works Cited” an inch from the top of the page. 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. Double-space the entire list.
- Entries are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the author or by title when no author’s name is available (remember to ignore articles like *A*, *An*, and *The*), and in rare cases, by the name of a Web site for Web publications with no author or title.
- The specific information required depends upon the type of source (e.g., book, journal or newspaper article, online version of a print source, electronic article). Each entry in the list of works cited is composed of facts common to most sources, which are referred to as core elements. If an element is not relevant to the work being documented, it should be omitted from the entry.

Note: The author and title of source elements are followed by a period; all elements within a container are separated by a comma. The final element of a container is followed by a period.

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

1. Author

The author element represents the person or persons with primary responsibility for a source. Begin the entry with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name, as presented in the source.

A Work by a Single Author

Hardison, Ayesha K. "Crossing the Threshold: Zora Neale Hurston, Racial Performance, and 'Seraph on the Suwanee.'" *African American Review*, vol. 46, no. 2/3, 2013, pp. 217–35. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23784055.

MacKendrick, Paul. *The Greek Stones Speak: The Story of Archaeology in Greek Lands*. St. Martin's, 1962.

Mehlman, Jeffrey. Letter. *Partisan Review*, vol. 69, 2002, p. 320.

Schweitzer, Vivien. "Mozart, Joined by His Friends and Heirs." Review of Mostly Mozart Festival. Avery Fisher Hall. *New York Times*, 10 Aug. 2009, p. C2.

Twain, Mark. "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences." *Project Gutenberg*, Produced by David Widger, 20 August 2006, www.gutenberg.org/files/3172/3172-h/3172-h.htm.

Note: In some cases, the primary responsibility for producing a work or the aspect of the work you focused on, the name of the person or group creating the work's main content is treated as the author, followed by label that describes the role (e.g., an editor or translator).

Heaney, Seamus, translator. *Beowulf*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000.

Holland, Merlin, and Rupert Hart-Davis, editors. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*. Henry Holt, 2000.

A Work by Two Authors

Gesell, Arnold, and Francis L. Ilg. *Child Development: An Introduction to the Study of Human Growth*. Harper, 1949.

Shah, Parilah Mohd, and Fauziah Ahmad. “A Comparative Account of the Bilingual Education Programs in Malaysia and the United States.” *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2007, pp. 63-77.

A Work by Three or More Authors: list only the first author and replaces the other names with “et al.” (“and others”).

Francisco, Virginia, et al. “EmoTales: Creating a Corpus of Folk Tales with Emotional Annotations.” *Language Resources and Evaluation*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2012, pp. 341–381. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23325362.

Plag, Ingo, et al. *Introduction to English Linguistics*. Mouton, 2007.

A Work by a Corporate or Government Author or Organization: use the name of corporate or government author or organization as the author.

United States. Department of Labor. *Child Care: A Workforce Issue*. Government Printing Office, 1970.

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic,” www.cdc.gov/phpr/documents/zombie_gn_final.pdf.

Note: For multiple works by the same author, include the full name in the first entry. Thereafter, in place of the name, type three hyphens (---) followed by a period.

Amado, Jorge. *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*. Translated by James L. Taylor and William L. Grossman, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

---. *Showdown*. Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

---. *The Violent Land*. Translated by Samuel Putnam, Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.

2. Title of source

The title of source element uses quotation marks if the source is part of a larger work (e.g., article, essay, poem, short story, television episode) and italics if the source is a self-contained work, such as a book or film.

Galeano, Eduardo. “**Salgado, 17 Times.**” *An Uncertain Grace*. Translated by Asa Zatz, Aperture, 1990, pp. 7-15.

“**Health Risk on Tap.**” Editorial. *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Feb. 1998, p. B6.

Lewis, David Levering. “**Harlem Renaissance.**” *Africana*, edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Basic Civitas Books, 1999, pp. 926-36.

Maddow, Ben. **Edward Weston: His Life.** Aperture, 1989.

Scotland, PA., directed by Billy Morrisette, performances by James Le Gros, Maura Tierney, and Christopher Walken, Sundance Channel Home Entertainment, 2002.

3. Title of container

The title of container element refers to the larger work in which the source appears, such as books containing collections of essays, poems, or short stories; journals, magazines, and newspapers; and television shows (e.g., a short story contained in an anthology; the short story is the source and the anthology is the container).

Horton, Nancy. “Multicultural Literature.” *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, edited by Bernice E. Cullinan and Diane G. Person, Continuum, 2003, pp. 565-66.

Krugman, Paul. “Confronting Inequality.” *“They Say/I Say”: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, edited by Gerald Graff et al., W. W. Norton, 2009, pp. 322-41.

Weintraub, Arlene, and Laura Cohen. “A Thousand-Year Plan for Nuclear Waste.” *Business Week*, 6 May 2002, pp. 94-96.

Wright, Richard. “The Man Who Was Almost a Man.” *African American Literature*, edited by Demetrice A. Worley and Jesse Perry, Jr., National Textbook Company, 1994, pp. 81-91.

In some cases, a container might be included in a larger container; complete information for container 1 is followed by information for container 2 (e.g., a journal article stored on a digital platform such as *JSTOR* or a television series watched on a network like *Netflix*).

Goldman, Anne. “Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante.” *The Georgia Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2010, pp. 69-88. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41403188.

4. Other contributors

The other contributors element refers to additional people credited for the source, such as editors, translators, performers, or illustrators. This element also applies to the author of a foreword, preface, or introduction. Note: Depending on the focus of the entry, there is some flexibility regarding format (see below).

Drabble, Margaret, editor. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. 5th ed., Oxford UP, 1985.

Goldblatt, Howard, translator. *A Taste of Apples*. By Chunming Huang, Columbia UP, 2001.

Huang, Chunming. *A Taste of Apples*. **Translated by Howard Goldblatt**, Columbia UP, 2001.

Huddleston, Rodney D., and Geoffrey K. Pullum, editors. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge UP, 2002.

Puccini, Giacomo. *La Boheme*. **Conducted by** Nicola Luisotti, **performances by** Angela Gheorghiu, Ainhoa Arteta, and Ramón Vargas, Metropolitan Opera House, New York. 5 April 2008.

Thorpe, Marjorie. Introduction. *The Wine of Astonishment*, by Earl Lovelace, Heinemann, 1985, ix-xii.

5. Version

The version element refers to numbered, abridged, or updated editions of sources or sources with more than one form (e.g., 1st, 2nd).

Faust, Langdon Lynne, editor. *American Women Writers*. **Abridged ed.**, Ungar, 1988.

Howatson, M. C., editor. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. **2nd ed.**, Oxford UP, 1989.

6. Number

The number element refers to works appearing in a numbered sequence, such as multi-volume books, journal volumes and issues, television series and episodes.

Albada, Kelly F. "The Public and Private Dialogue about the American Family on Television." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2000, pp. 79-110.

Francisco, Virginia, et al. "EmoTales: Creating a Corpus of Folk Tales with Emotional Annotations." *Language Resources and Evaluation*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2012, pp. 341–381. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23325362.

7. Publisher

The publisher element identifies the organization responsible for making the source available to the public. Note: In the list of works cited, shortened forms of academic presses are accepted (e.g., Yale University Press is cited as Yale UP).

Gillies, John, et al. "Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, edited by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton, **Cambridge UP**, 2002.
 "Hybridity." *A Dictionary of Sociology*, edited by John Scott and Gordon Marshall, **Oxford UP**, 2009. *Oxford Reference Online*.

Shah, Parilah Mohd, and Fauziah Ahmad. "A Comparative Account of the Bilingual Education Programs in Malaysia and the United States." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2007, 63-77.

8. Publication date

The publication date element refers to the year of publication for a self-contained work; for journals, magazines, and newspapers, use either month and year or day, month and year.

Gillies, John, et al. "Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, edited by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton, Cambridge UP, **2002**.
 "Hybridity." *A Dictionary of Sociology*, edited by John Scott and Gordon Marshall, Oxford UP, **2009**. *Oxford Reference Online*.

Shah, Parilah Mohd, and Fauziah Ahmad. "A Comparative Account of the Bilingual Education Programs in Malaysia and the United States." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, **2007**, 63-77.

Wolfe, Tom. Interview. *The Wrong Stuff: American Architecture*. Directed by Tom Bettag, Carousel, **1983**.

9. Location

The location element specifies where you found the item within a larger container. For print works, indicate the page number or range of pages. For online sources, provide the URL or Web address to help readers locate your sources. If a DOI (digital object identifier) is available, cite the DOI rather than the URL. Unless required by your instructor, citing the date when an online work is accessed is optional. For a physical object, provide the place name that holds the object.

Record the location of a performance, a lecture, or other form of live presentation by naming the venue and its city (but omit the city if it is part of the venue's name). The location of a television episode in a DVD set is indicated by the disc number.

Andrews, Walter G. "Orhan Pamuk: Memories Personal and Professional." *World Literature Today*, vol. 80, no. 6, Nov.-Dec. 2006, pp. 27-29. *JSTOR*, doi: **10.2307/40159240**.

Atwood, Margaret. "Silencing the Scream." Boundaries of the Imagination Forum. MLA Annual Convention, 29 Dec. 1993, **Royal York Hotel, Toronto**.

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3, May 2000. *Project Muse*, doi:**10.1353/pmc.2000.0021**.

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist—and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The Atlantic*, 28 Dec. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-death-of-the-artist-and-the-birth-of-the-creative-entrepreneur/383497/.

"Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Complete Fourth Season*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, episode 10, WB Television Network, 2003, **disc 3**.

Updike, John. "No Brakes." Review of *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street*, by Richard Lingeman. *The New Yorker*, 4 Feb. 2002, pp. **77-80**.

Vermeer, Johannes. *Officer and Laughing Girl*. 1657, **Frick Collection, New York**. *Visualizing Emancipation*. Directed by Scott Nesbit and Edward L. Ayers, dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/.

Further information is available from the Modern Language Association of America:

***MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 8th ed. New York: MLA, 2016.**