

MLA STYLE

The Modern Language Association (MLA) style guidelines presented here have been adapted from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed., 2009. This introductory handout focuses on documentation, but the manual addresses a wide variety of issues from abbreviations to layout and should be consulted for additional examples and further information. (A copy is available in the Writing Center, but is not to be taken from the center).

MLA style is often used in the humanities. In an MLA-style paper, the writer identifies the author and page of each source in parentheses after every reference. That information then directs the reader to more detailed entries on a Works Cited list at the end of the paper.

Citing Sources in your Paper

1. Show the source of every thought or word you borrow. In general, introduce any direct quotation or paraphrase with the name of the author. Then identify the page number by putting it inside parentheses directly before the first punctuation after the quotation. Don't use commas or the abbreviation "p." *Handbook* 217.

Lawrence Stone describes "the new companionate marriage among the upper classes of the eighteenth century" (372).

Claudia Johnson argues that the novel takes an ironic stance which destabilizes any such reading (96-97).

2. If you don't use the author's name to introduce the quoted or paraphrased material, put the author's last name along with the specific page number in parentheses at the end of it. *Handbook* 217.

Gambling was another vice targeted by the reformers (Shoemaker 135-36).

3. When you don't know the name of your source's author, use the first keyword from its title instead. *Handbook* 223.

The pamphlet's attack on the proposed tax hike was vicious ("Murderous" 24).

4. If two authors listed on your works cited page have the same last name, put their initials, or (only if absolutely necessary) their first names, in the parentheses to distinguish between them. *Handbook* 215.

Austen's novels have been described both as politically radical (P. Johnson 217) and as socially conservative (M. Johnson 59).

5. If your source has two or three authors, put each author's last name in parentheses. *Handbook* 215.

The novel attacked the nation's monetary policy (Diaz, Polanski, and Baum 134).

6. If your source has four or more authors, put either the first author's name with "et al." or each author's last name in the parenthesis. *Handbook* 215.

A recent study found a strong correlation between positive parenting behaviors and reduced school violence (Larsen et al. 39).

A recent study found a strong correlation between positive parenting behaviors and reduced school violence (Larsen, Barry, Smith, and Frank 39)

7. If your source has a corporate author, you can put the organization's full name inside citation parentheses using common abbreviations--but it's better to work a long name into a signal phrase instead. *Handbook* 224.

One study argues that an increased minimum wage would have significant effects (Natl. Labor Relations Board 124).

A study sponsored by the National Labor Relations Board argues that an increased minimum wage would have significant effects (124).

8. If you have two works by the same author, identify each by its author, abbreviated title, and page number. If you mention the author's name in the text, give only a title and page reference in your parenthesis. *Handbook* 225.

Just as Tilney follows the "dictate of conscience" (Austen, *Northanger* 243), Ferrars places his fate in the hands of the abominable Lucy Steele as a matter of "duty," as he later explains, "independent of my feelings" (Austen, *Sense* 356).

Austen's character, Lucy Steele, adheres to her sense of "duty," despite her own feelings (*Sense* 356).

9. If the same point is made in two or more different sources, cite them both in the same parentheses and separate them with a semicolon. *Handbook* 229.

Others insist that the policy is misguided (Choi 134; Springwater 57).

10. You can show that you found the all information in a paragraph in a single part of one source by mentioning the author's name at the beginning of the paragraph and giving the parenthetical citation at the end. *Handbook* 218.

By watching the cottagers, Shelley's creature both learns about family and learns how isolated he is in not having one. His observations teach him the difference between children and parents, and they show him how parents interact with children at different ages. As he sees the warm relationships between Felix, Agatha, and the old man, he "groans" to realize that he has no siblings or parents of his own (130).

11. If you are discussing both your own ideas and your source's, you'll need to show where your ideas end and the author's ideas begin by repeating the author's name every time you come back to it. *Handbook* 219.

Kennedy sees Sister as the victim of her family's bad behavior (45). This portrayal is unconvincing, however, because Sister's own actions, like taking the radio that had been a joint gift to her mother, are so outrageous. While it may be true that she was driven out of the household (Kennedy 46), Sister's attitude towards Stella-Rondo was hostile from the beginning.

12. If an idea or quotation that you want to use is quoted in another source, use the original source if you can. If not, name the original source in a signal phrase and then use parentheses and the abbreviation "qtd. in" to identify the place where you found it. *Handbook* 226.

Both characters are judged by standards founded, according to Anthony Fletcher, "upon an inner self discipline" (qtd. in Shoemaker 35).

13. If you use a quotation longer than four typed lines, set it off from the rest of your paper by indenting it ten spaces (two tab spaces.) **As a general rule, not more than 10% of your paper should consist of direct quotations.** *Handbook* 92.

The Works Cited List

The Works Cited list at the end of your paper usually contains all the sources you actually cited in the paper. (Less often, it can list all the sources you consulted while writing your paper and be titled "Bibliography.") Its purpose is to help readers find the materials you used, so each entry must be complete, accurate, and easy to follow.

1. Every line should be double-spaced, without extra spaces between entries. The words "Works Cited" should be centered at the top without underlining, italics, or quotation marks. The pages should continue to be numbered as if they were part of your paper. *Handbook* 131.
2. Use the "hanging indent" format: start the first line of each entry at the left margin, but indent all subsequent lines one tab space (five spaces). *Handbook* 131.
3. Each source should be listed alphabetically by the last name of its first author. List all names as they appear in your source, whether they're C.J. Kent or Jean-Marie Formentin de la Maisoneuve Jr. (Don't include academic degrees). *Handbook* 131.
4. In all entries, reverse the first and last names of the author by whose name you're alphabetizing the entry. Do **not** reverse the order of any other names in the entry, even co-authors'. *Handbook* 132.
5. If you don't know the author, alphabetize your source by the first word of its title (excluding **a, an, the**). *Handbook* 132.
6. In a book, the date of publication is usually on the copyright page behind the title page. *Handbook* 151.

7. The place of publication is usually found at the bottom of the title page. If several cities are listed, use only the first. If the city isn't well-known or if there is more than one city with that name, add a state or national abbreviation for clarity. *Handbook* 151.
8. The words "University" and "Press" can be abbreviated as "U" and "P." *Handbook* 247.
9. Book titles, periodicals, Web sites, online databases, albums, television shows and film titles (longer works that can be bought individually) should be italicized. The titles of short stories, essays, poems, pages in Web sites, songs, and individual television episodes (shorter works that are usually collected with others in a book, on a Website, or on a CD) are placed in quotation marks. Do not italicize a title within a title that's already italicized, even if the results look strange. (See model reference 3, below.) *Handbook* 88-90.
10. All references should include the medium of publication, i.e. Print, Web. *Handbook* 148.
11. When you have more than one work by the same author, list the author's name for the first entry only. For other works by the same author, substitute three hyphens and a period for the author's name and arrange the titles alphabetically. *Handbook* 134-135.

Hou, Haixia. *A Dream Deferred*. New York: Random House, 2001. Print.

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12. In general, when you cite an online source on your "Works Cited" page you include the name of the author and the title of the article, the title of the overall Web site, the version or edition used, the publisher or sponsor of the site (if not available use N.p.), the date of publication (if nothing is available use n.d.), the medium of publication, and the date of access. If part or all of any of these elements is unavailable, omit it and move on to the next. *Handbook* 184.
13. In general, when you cite a work on the Web that includes its original print publication data, begin by listing the print publication information in the works cited format of the original medium (see model references 1-16, below). When you finish the entry, instead of concluding with the original medium of publication (i.e. "Print."), record the title of the database or Web site, the medium of publication consulted (Web), and the date of access. *Handbook* 187.
14. **You no longer need to cite the URL for your online reference.** *Handbook* 182.

Model References

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