

Citation Basics / MLA 8th ed.



MLA recently issued the 8th edition of its *Handbook* with a substantial revision to its citation system in an effort to simplify citation for 21st century sources. Instead of providing rules for each type of source, MLA now provides guidelines for constructing a *reasonable citation* for any kind of source.

Going forward, MLA asks writers of Works Cited pages to provide certain information about a source, regardless of type, in a particular sequence. Writers omit any element that isn't relevant to their source. Here is the list of information and the punctuation used to separate the elements from one another:

Author. Title of source. *Title of Container*, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location (in the Container).

To learn how to examine a variety of sources for these elements, visit <https://style.mla.org/works-cited-a-quick-guide/> **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/jexy4bz>

Formatting Works Cited Entries – English, other humanities, communications

Formatting the *Author* element: The Author element is followed by a period.

The author is the person responsible for producing the work or the aspect of the work being used as a source. A work might have multiple authors. The person(s) named as author may depend on the writer's use of the source. For example, an actor and a director may be an author of a film. The actor is the author of a role played in a film; the director the author of the film. When writing about a role, use the actor as author, and name the director as an Other Contributor. When writing about the film, use the director as the author, and name cast members as Other Contributors, if relevant.

One author: Last name, First name, Initial.

Two authors: Last name, First name, Initial and First Name Initial Last Name.

Three or more authors: Last name, First name Initial., et al.

Example: West, Kanye.

Example: Adler-Kassner, Linda and Elizabeth A. Wardle.

Example: Johnson, Ella B., et al.

Formatting the *Title of Source* element: The Title of Source element is followed by a period.

If the title can stand alone as a complete work, use *italics*.

If the title is part of a larger work, enclose it in quotation marks.

Examples: *To Kill a Mockingbird*. *Purple Rain*. *The Force Rises*. *Meet the Beatles*

Examples: "Black Box." "Darling Nikki." "Help!" "To His Coy Mistress."

Formatting the *Title of Container* element: The Title of Container element is followed by a comma.

When a work is part of a larger whole, it can be said to "live" in a "container." A story lives in a book, magazine, or newspaper. A post lives on a website. A journal can live in a database. An episode of a television show lives within the television show. A video can live in on a DVD or a streaming service, such as Netflix, or on YouTube.

Containers can be embedded in other containers: for example, a journal article lives in a journal, which lives in a database: *Example:* Bromley, Pam, et al. "Transfer and Dispositions in Writing Centers: A Cross-Institutional, Mixed-Methods Study." *Across the Disciplines*, vol. 13, no. 1, Jan.-Dec. 2016, *The WAC Clearinghouse*, <http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/bromleyetal2016.cfm>.

Generally, container titles are formatted in *italics*.

Examples: *Journal of American Folklore*, *Netflix*, *JSTOR*, *Norton Anthology of Literature*,

Formatting the *Other Contributors* element: The Other Contributors element is followed by a comma.

Just as with the author, the person(s) named as Other Contributors is determined by the writer's use of the source.

Other contributors include any other people who have a role creating a work: editors, translators, reviewers.

Examples: edited by John Bean, translated by Chloe Drown,
Other contributor phrases: adapted by, directed by, illustrated by
introduction by, narrated by, performance by,

Generally, spell out the words defining the contribution of other contributors.

Formatting the *Version* element: The Version element is followed by a comma.

Many sources are offered in multiple versions.
Use Arabic numerals, and use ed. for edition
and rev. for revised.

Examples: 2nd ed., Radio edit, Director's cut, Rev. ed., King James Version,

Formatting the *Number* element: The Number element is followed by a comma.

Large work and periodicals are often numbered.
Abbreviate vol. and no.

Examples: vol. 1, no. 2, vols. 1-4,

Formatting the *Publisher* element: The Publisher element is followed by a comma.

The publisher is the person, organization, or company responsible for making a work available.

Omit Publishers for periodicals, and websites
when the name of the website is the same as the
Publisher.
Omit "business words," such as Company, LLC.
Abbreviate University Press as UP.

Examples: New York UP, Random House, Warner Home Entertainment,
U.S. Department of Education,

Formatting the *Publication Date* element: The Publication Date element is followed by a comma. Use the most relevant date when there is more than one.

For articles read online, use the date published online,
even if the original publication date is different.
Format the date as in the original.
Include Month or Season if available.

Examples: 22 May 2014, Spring 2001, 18 Aug. 1867, Dec. 2008,

Formatting the *Location* element: The Location element is followed by a period. Use p. and pp. to designate page numbers in Works Cited.

Location can include page numbers, Digital Object Identifiers, URL, Database numbers. *Examples:* p. 27. pp. 245-76. DOI: 10.1016/j.endeavour.2006.08.004.
ERIC, EJ10784684. <http://nymag.com/news/features/56793/>.

In-Text Citations (in the body of the paper)

A typical in-text citation is comprised of two elements, the element that comes first in the Works Cited entry (typically the author or title) and a page number or time stamp. See below for a range of in-text citation examples. Be sure to cite both directly quoted and paraphrased ideas.

Single author

According to Naomi Baron, reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (194).

Reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (Baron 194).

Two authors

Adler-Kassner and Wardle explain that “threshold concepts are concepts critical for continued learning and participation...within a community of practice” (2).

The importance of threshold concepts, “concepts critical for continued learning and participation...within a community of practice,” cannot be overstated (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2).

Three or more authors

Public debates about multiculturalism have practical implications for educational institutions, because, as Cushman et al. explain, “many of the debates about multiculturalism are also debates about literacy” (1).

Public debates about multiculturalism have practical implications for educational institutions, because “many of the debates about multiculturalism are also debates about literacy” (Cushman et al. 1).

Two or more authors with the same last name: Add an initial.

According to Naomi Baron, reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (194).

Reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (N. Baron 194).

More than one work by an author: Add a short form of the source’s title.

As Naomi Baron explains in “Redefining Reading,” reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (194).

Reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (Baron, “Redefining” 194).

Formatting direct quotes of more than 4 lines – Block quote.

Nancy K. Baym argues that contemporary social media users perform important social and psychological work via social media:

As people appropriate the possibilities of textual media to convey social cues, create immediacy, entertain, and show off for one another, they build identities for themselves, build interpersonal relationships, and create social contexts.... Performing well can bring a person recognition, or at least lead to a sense that there is a real person behind otherwise anonymous text. Our expressions of emotions and immediacy show others that we are real, available, and that we like them as does our willingness to entertain them. Our playful conventions and in-jokes may create insider symbols to help groups to cohere. This phenomena are only enhanced by the additional cues found in shared video, photography, sound, and other multimedia means of online interaction that has developed over time.(62)

Citing indirect sources

Samuel Johnson admitted that Edmund Burke was an “extraordinary man” (qtd. in Boswell 450).

When the Works Cited entry begins with the Title (either because its author is anonymous or the author is the organization that published it)

In 1988 a federal report observed that the “current high level of attention to child care is directly attributable to the new workforce trends” (United States, Dept. of Labor 147).

No page numbers

Nicholas Carr argues that Taylorism is the “intellectual ethic” of the internet.

Taylorism is the “intellectual ethic” of the internet (Carr).

Time-based media, such as audio or video recordings

In “Shake it Off,” Taylor Swift dismisses media gossip about her personal life as hearsay, singing “At least, that’s what people say” (00:00:23-25).

Attributing an idea to more than one source

While reading may be the core of literacy, literacy can be complete only when reading is accompanied by writing (Baron 194; Jacobs 55).