

## MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition Citation Style Quick Guide

### What is MLA?

The Modern Language Association (MLA) is an international organization that determines formatting standards for work in the humanities. If you are a student, this means that MLA will supply the required format for information like in-text citations and the works cited page for many essays you will write in your humanities courses, including English. You may find more detailed instructions about MLA style in the MTSU *Writing in Action* handbook.

### Why does citation matter?

Whenever you refer to someone's words or ideas, whether you are paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting, you have a responsibility to your readers to cite your source. If you do not cite your source's words or information, you are committing plagiarism (academic theft). Whether intentional or accidental, it has consequences (see MTSU's definition of plagiarism). See our resources on Writing Responsibly and Citation for more information. Understanding your citation style can go a long way toward helping you write responsibly.

### What's an in-text citation?

Writers use in-text citations when they make reference to someone else's ideas through paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting. This allows your readers to refer to your Works Cited page to see where the selected information came from.

In-text citations typically include:

1. the author's name
2. the page number(s) referenced

The name may appear either in the sentence itself or in the parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase/summary, but the page numbers always appear in parentheses. For example:

Although Watson's theories have been "long-lived," new ideas are born each day (Jones 29).

Jones asks, "Are these rules necessary?" (29)

### What if the source has no author?

If the source has no author and still is reliable, use an abbreviated version of the work's title or whatever information is at the beginning of the corresponding Works Cited entry. For example:

An anonymous critic once argued that Zinsser's own writing was full of clutter ("Get to the Point" 89).

### What if the source has no page numbers?

If the source is web/electronic, it may not have page numbers. If paragraphs/sections are numbered, refer to the paragraph or section. Abbreviate *par(s)* for paragraphs and *sec(s)* for sections:

Alston describes three types of rubrics for evaluating customer service (pars. 2-15).

Hilton and Merrill provide examples of effective hyperlinks (sec. 1).

## What is a “Works Cited” page, and how do I make one?

The works cited section lists every source referenced in text. If you didn’t cite it in your paper, don’t add the source to your works cited page. The purpose of the works cited page is to provide a roadmap to your sources so that other scholars or researchers can find them. This means that, as a writer, you need to provide as much information as you can about where and how to find a source.

Scholarly sources include a variety of media, but they all should have similar basic information, such as an author, a title, a date of publication, or a publisher, and which may be found in either one or two “containers”. The first container is where the information can be found *originally*: whether in a book, a journal, or on a website. These are all primary containers. Secondary containers are places where the original information may have been re-published, such as in an online database. MLA provides a template to help you construct works cited entries. Visit [MLA’s quick guide](#) for more information.

Type of Information	(Insert your info here!)	Punctuation
Author		.
Title of source		.
Title of container 1		,
Other contributors		,
Version		,
Number		,
Publisher		,
Publication date		,
Location within container		.

Title of container 2		,
Other contributors		,
Version		,
Number		,
Publisher		,
Publication date		,
Location		.

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