THE MLA DOCUMENTATION STYLE

This handout provides an overview of MLA style. For material not covered in this handout, please consult your instructor, the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (8th ed., 2016 – available at the SCC Library), the SCC Library’s [online MLA citation guide](http://library.sc.columbia.edu/research/), or the Academic Support Center. To view a full MLA paper, visit [https://style.mla.org/sample-papers](https://style.mla.org/sample-papers)

MLA IN-TEXT CITATIONS

The 8th ed. of MLA style suggests that titles of books, periodicals, newspapers, films, home pages, etc. be italicized, both within your text and Works Cited.

The first time you use a source in your text, consider introducing it, identifying author and credentials in order to establish his/her/their credibility.

Nancy F. Cott, author of *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, points out that “the suitability of the marital metaphor for political union drew tremendous attention to marriage itself in the Revolutionary era” (16).

After you have introduced the source, subsequent parenthetical citations in the text will include only the author’s/s’ last name (if not already mentioned in the text) and page number (if available). Note the lack of a comma between the author’s last name and the page number; the period is placed outside parentheses.

While men and women consented to marry, “public authorities set the terms of marriage” such that they were indeed common law and could not be broken without offending not only the partner, but “the larger community, the law, and the state” (Cott 11).

*Cott* observes that living together, having children outside of marriage, and even divorce elicited social ostracism, yet today these formerly condemned behaviors raise little negative comment, if any at all (202-203).

If you are using more than one work by the same author, you must include a shortened form of the title along with the author’s/s’ last name and page number if available. Note the use of the comma here.

(Cott, *Public Vows* 16)
(Cott, *No Small Courage* 43)

If you are citing a source written or edited by four or more people, use only the name of the first person listed, followed by *et al.* (Latin for “and others”) with no additional punctuation, for example, (Blair *et al.* 21) if Blair isn’t mentioned in your text. Or,
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Blair et al. observed that the fine arts were almost ignored by colonial writers (21).

If there is no author, introduce the article by its title or source:

In “Death of a Writer,” Ralph Ellison is described as “a writer of universal reach” (A18).

Subsequent parenthetical citations used later in your paper will include the article title (or a shortened form of it if it’s long) in quotes:


1. If you are quoting a source within a source, that is, the source that you’re using is citing information that you want to use as well, indicate this by using qtd. in (for “quoted in”) in your parenthetical citation.

George Cukor once told F. Scott Fitzgerald, “I’ve only known two people who eat faster than you and I, and they are both dead now” (qtd. in Latham 39).

You thus refer your readers to the source in your Works Cited in which the quote can be found.

2. If you are quoting more than four fully typed lines, ask yourself whether you really need the entire quote (as a general rule, your paper should contain about 10% direct quotes; the rest of the sources used should be paraphrased). A blocked quote means that:

- the entire quote is indented one inch or ten spaces from the left margin only and double spaced
- omit quotation marks
- author and/or page number are parenthetically cited 1 space after the period

M. Scott Peck states in The Road Less Travelled that,

[T]he myth of romantic love is a dreadful lie. Perhaps it is a necessary lie in that it ensures the survival of the species by its encouragement and seeming validation of the falling-in-love experience that traps us into marriage. But as a psychiatrist I weep in my heart almost daily for the ghastly confusion and suffering that this myth fosters. (91-92)
3. If you need to leave out words in an exact quote, use **ellipses**—a series of three periods with a space between each. Do not use ellipses if you are paraphrasing or summarizing.

   Margaret Fuller, in *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, assures her readers that “All men are privately influenced by women; each . . . is too much biased by these relations to fail of representing their interests” (97).

**MLA WORKS CITED**

The Works Cited list is just what its name indicates: a list of the works you have actually cited in your paper. The following offer samples for entries in the Works Cited. Not all examples are included in this list.

The Works Cited page begins on the page following your last page of text. For example, if your paper ends in the middle of page 12, you would move to page 13 to begin typing your Works Cited. Number this page as you do your others and center the title “Works Cited” (without the quotation marks) at the top of the page. Keep your word processing program on double-space; do not add any extra spaces between entries.

**Appearance of citations:** Use hanging indentation when preparing each entry, which means that the first line of each entry should begin at the left margin. Indent second and subsequent lines of that entry five spaces or ½ inch.

**Titles:** *Italicize* titles of books, periodicals, films, etc. Capitalize the first word and all major words in titles as well as the first word after a colon in a title.

**Arrangement of citations:** Alphabetically arrange sources in your Works Cited list according to author’s last name. If no author is listed, alphabetize by the first important word in the title (not “A,” “An,” or “The”).

**Authors:** Always invert the name of the first author listed (even if there is only one). If there is more than one author, invert only the first name and separate subsequent names with a comma. For more than three authors, you may use the first author’s name followed by *et al*.

   Examples: Baker, Nancy L., and Nancy Huling.
   Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams.
   Carroll, Noel, et al.

**Page numbering:** When citing a book in your Works Cited, do not cite page numbers used. Simply cite as shown below. When citing journals, newspapers, periodicals, etc., cite complete page ranges; if ranges are not continuous. i.e. continue at the back of a magazine, for example, use the first page number with a plus sign (e.g. 43+).
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PRINT SOURCES

Sample Citations

A book citation includes the author’s name or names, the title of the book, the publisher, and the year of publication. If the place of publication, publisher, or pagination is missing, simply skip those elements. Do not use placeholders for unknown information like n.d. (“no date”) and n.p. (“no pagination”) unless your teacher asks you to do so.

The following are examples of correct MLA citations:

1. **Book with one author:**


2. **Book with two or three authors:**


3. **Book with more than three authors or editors:**


4. **Revised edition** (such as a textbook, etc.):


5. **Two or more works by the same author:**

   Alphabetize by the *title* of the work. Note that the author’s name is not repeated but is represented by three dashes (---) followed by a period.


6. **Multi-volume work (entry changes depending on number of volumes used):**

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7. **Specialized dictionary or encyclopedia:**


8. **Work in an anthology or collection of works by different authors:**


9. **Newspaper articles:**


10. **Magazine/Periodical articles**


11. **Journal articles**


12. **Interview**

   Myers, Denise. Personal interview. 29 Mar. 2009.

   King, Stephen. E-mail interview. 17 Jan. 2009.

13. **Television or radio broadcast**

   “Death and Society.” *Weekend Edition Sunday*, narrated by Joanne Silberner, PBS,
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"Chandler Can't Cry." Friends: The Complete Sixth Season, created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, performance by Matthew Perry, season 4, episode 10, NBC, 2000.

"Under the Gun." Pretty Little Liars, season 4, episode 6, ABC Family, 16 July 2013.


14. Film and Video


ONLINE SOURCES

Information you access on your computer -- whether it is through a library subscription service (such as ProQuest, JSTOR, LexisNexis, etc.) or through general Internet searches -- must be cited such that your readers know where you acquired it. An article from a periodical you held in your hand in the library is cited differently than that same article acquired online, and this must be made clear in your Works Cited. Dates listed in your Works Cited should be the publication dates of the online material. If no date is found, simply skip that element. Do not use placeholders for unknown information like n.d. ("no date") unless your teacher asks you to do so. Do not include http:// or https:// in the web site address.
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17. Articles from Library Databases


18. Electronic Books (eBooks)


HathiTrust Digital Library, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis;c=869533047.

19. Scholarly journal not accessed through a subscription service (exists only in electronic form on the Web)


20. Other works cited from the Web (magazines, newspapers, news sources, etc.)


21. **YouTube or video on a website**


22. **Tweet or other short message**

@nprinskeep. "There are reports of large street battles north & south of Tehran right now #Iranelection." *Twitter*, 23 June 2009, 11:15 a.m., twitter.com/nprinskeep/status/2298106072.

23. **Email**

Smith, Anthony J. "Re: Inquiry." Received by Jalen Thompson, 5 June 2015.