Documentation: MLA Style

Note: This tip sheet was based on the 8th edition of the MLA handbook.

All college-level students will need to use documentation when writing papers for university classes. There are several styles of documentation; the most common are APA and MLA.

This handout will briefly describe some basic MLA documentation procedures. It is not intended to be inclusive, nor is it intended to replace the handbook.

• MLA (Modern Language Association) style is most often used in humanities courses, such as literature, composition, cross-cultural studies, and sometimes history. It is always best to consult your professor for his or her preference before using any specific type of documentation.
• If you are required to use MLA style, you may want to purchase The MLA Handbook.
• The URL for the MLA website is http://www.mla.org.

How to create citations within the text:

If you’ve used the author’s name in your sentence, put only the page numbers in parentheses after the segment you are citing.

Example: Johnson argues for the continuation of . . . (189-94).

If you have not named the author in your sentence, put both the name and page numbers in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

Example: Tess’ character is often described as . . . (Johnson 189-94).

Quoted material in your text: Enclose quotations of less than four lines in double quotation marks.

Example: Johnson describes Tess as "a wonder of the real world" (294).

Guidelines for writing a Works Cited section:

• Place the words Works Cited in the center of the first page of this section, an inch from the top.
• Double-space all lines.
  • Note: To save space, the examples on the back of this tip sheet are not double-spaced.
• Begin the first line of all entries at the left margin and indent all subsequent lines ½ inch.
• Alphabetize the list by the last names of authors. If no author is given, alphabetize by title. Ignore articles (A, An, and The).
• Include the author’s name as it appears in the publication you are citing. For example, while you would probably list the author of The Waste Land as Eliot, T.S., you would list the author of Beloved as Morrison, Toni.
• Shorten publisher’s names. You can find a more detailed guide on how to do this in section 1.6.3 of the MLA Handbook.
Examples of how to list selected materials:

Books
Typically include the relevant information in this order: Author. “Article Title.” Book Title, Editor, Edition, Publisher, Year, Page numbers.

Book with one author:

Book with two or three authors:

Article in an encyclopedia:

Article or chapter in a book:

Periodicals
Typically include the relevant / available information in this order: Author. “Article Title.” Periodical Title, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publisher Date, Location (pp.). (For daily or weekly publications, use exact dates instead of volume/issue/year.)

Journal article, with continuous pagination:

Journal article, paginated by issue (i.e. includes both volume and issue numbers):

Magazine article:

Newspaper article:

Web sites:
Typically include as much of the following information as possible in this order: Author (may be an organization). “Article Title." Title of Website. Version number, Name of
Professional site:

Scholarly journal:

Article from an Online Database:

This information can be located in the following publication: