Citation Styles: Introduction to MLA and APA

UHCL Writing Center
Updated Spring 2015
Focus of MLA & APA Styles

Modern Language Association (MLA)
• Humanities and related areas (i.e. literature)
• Focuses on authorship: “…(Smith and Johnson)”
• Format is designed for ease of presentation
• Often viewed as “easier” to follow by students
• Commonly taught first to students

American Psychological Association (APA)
• Social sciences (i.e. psychology, sociology, and linguistics)
• Focuses on date of publication: “…(Smith & Johnson, 2009)”
• Format is designed for comparison of research and determining relevance
• Often thought of as more difficult by students
• Commonly taught as an alternative citation style
Basics of MLA & APA Citations (Book Example)

**MLA**
- Name(s) of author(s)
- Work title
- Publication city and year
- Publisher
- Publication medium (i.e. print, web)

In-text citations:
- **MLA**: “…no significant results” (Johnson 34).
- **APA**: “…no significant results” (Johnson, 2003, p. 34).

Reference citations:

**APA**
- Name(s) of author(s)
- Publication year
- Work title
- Publication city
- Publisher
Comparing In-Text Citations

• In-text citations are used when you need to give credit to an author for using a quote (exact wording), paraphrasing (rewording), or discussing his/her ideas. Example: (Mathis and Jones, 2009, pg. 74)

• All in-text citations for MLA and APA must reference the author’s name.

• Reference to the page number or publication year depends on the situation and citation style.
  • When using APA, always give the year of publication.
  • When quoting, always give the page number in MLA & APA.
  • When paraphrasing or simply referencing, no page number is needed for either style.
Comparing In-Text Citations (Cont.)


Paraphrase

**MLA:** As stated by Johnson and Maiden, the research showed that there was…

**APA:** As stated in Johnson & Maiden (2003), the research showed that…

**Quote (incorporation in text)**

**MLA:** As Johnson and Maiden explained, their “study…classes” (34).

**APA:** As Johnson & Maiden (2003) explained, their “study…classes” (p. 34).

**Quote (no incorporation in text)**

**MLA:** “…in language classes” (Johnson and Maiden 34)

**APA:** “…in language classes” (Johnson & Maiden, 2003, p. 34)
Comparing References

• At the end of each research paper, a section must be devoted to listing the information for each resource that you used in the paper. This includes all resources that you quoted, paraphrased, or mentioned.

• If you have done your citing correctly, you should have mentioned each reference work at least once in your paper and each cited resource should have a reference citation.

• Different citation styles use different terms for this section:
  • MLA: Bibliography (Works Cited title)
  • APA: Reference Page (Reference title)

• Both MLA and APA require that you organize your citations alphabetically by the first letter of an author’s last name.
Books

Template
MLA: Lastname, Firstname. Title of Work. City of Pub: Publisher, Year. Medium.
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). Title of work. City of Pub, State: Publisher.

Examples

Notice these primary differences...

• MLA uses the full first name; APA uses only the first initial.
• MLA capitalizes all major words (excluding articles (a/an/the) and prepositions (of, out, in)); APA only capitalizes first words in the titles and proper nouns (names).
• MLA states the medium of publication (print, web); APA does not.
Books (cont.)

Template
MLA: Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Work*. City of Pub: Publisher, Year. Medium.
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). *Title of work*. City of Pub, State: Publisher.

Examples

Try to cite the following book in both MLA and APA…

Author: Stephen Jones
Title: A Review of Industry Standards
Year of Pub: 2010
City of Pub: London
Publisher: Stanton Publishing Group
Books (cont. 2)

Template
MLA: Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Work*. City of Pub: Publisher, Year. Medium.
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). *Title of work*. City of Pub, State: Publisher.

Examples

Answers…


Articles in Journals

Template
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). Title of work. Journal Title, Volume(Issue), page numbers.

Examples

Notice these additional differences…
• MLA puts the article title in quotation marks; APA does not.
• MLA uses the V.I format for volume and issue numbers; APA uses V(I).
Articles in Journals (cont.)

Template
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). Title of work. Journal Title, Volume(Issue), page numbers.

Examples

Try to cite the following journal article in MLA and APA…
Author: Samuel Brown
Title: Working for the Union
Journal: Workplace Review
Volume: 4
Issue: 1
Pages: 164-184
Year: 1995
Articles in Journals (cont. 2)

Template
APA: Lastname, First Initial. (Year). Title of work. *Journal Title, Volume*(Issue), page numbers.

Examples

Answers...
Online Sources

Template
MLA: Author. *Title of Site*. Sponsor, Date created (use n.d. if not given). Medium. Date accessed. <URL (optional)/>.


Examples: We are citing the data found here.

Online Sources (cont.)

Template
MLA: Author. *Title of Site*. Sponsor, Date created (use n.d. if not given). Medium. Date accessed. <URL (optional)>.

Examples: Try to cite the following website in MLA and APA…

http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/aboutteenpreg.htm
**Online Sources (cont. 2)**

**Template**

MLA: Author. *Title of Site*. Sponsor, Date created (use n.d. if not given). Medium. Date accessed. <URL (optional)>.


**Examples:** We are citing the data found [here](http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/aboutteenpreg.htm).


Where to go for further help…

• The UHCL Writing Center—each student can have two 45-minute appointments per week to help with all aspects of the writing process, including citation styles.

• The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)—known for its simplified explanation of MLA and APA citation styles: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

• For further examples of citations and reference pages, you can review Cornell University’s informative website: https://www.library.cornell.edu/research/citation/apa

See the coordinating worksheet, available on the Writing Center website, to further test your APA citation skills.