

MLA Documentation Style: Works Cited

Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style is used for citing sources primarily in the humanities. Like similar documentation styles, MLA requires that you cite your sources in two ways:

-With an in-text citation (also known as a parenthetical citation) following any quoted or paraphrased material from your sources

-With a works cited page at the end of the paper that provides a full bibliographic entry for each of your sources

This resource focuses specifically on the second method of citation, the works cited page. However, we also have a resource on MLA in-text citation if you would like more guidance on that topic.

Formatting the Works Cited Page

General rules:

-Start the works cited page on a new page directly after the last page of your paper. Title it “Works Cited” and center-justify it on the page.

-Use the same spacing that you use in the rest of your paper (likely double-spacing) for the works cited page.

-List sources in ascending alphabetical order (A-Z).

-Indent all lines BESIDES the first line for each source. This makes it clear to your readers where the entry for one source ends and the next begins.

Note: Your instructor may have individual preferences for formatting the works cited page. Always follow your instructor’s guidelines, even if they contradict the MLA’s guidelines.

Formatting Bibliographic Entries

It would be overwhelming to include instructions for how to format the bibliographic entry for every potential type of source you might use. Instead, this section provides some guidelines to follow regardless of what sources you use. To find the MLA format for a specific type of source, consult the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*. The Cottey Library also has a tool for generating bibliographic entries; however, you should always cross-check its results with the *MLA Handbook*.

You can also access a sample works cited page by going to the Purdue OWL here:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_sample_works_cited_page.html

Generally, the goal of a bibliographic entry is to provide as much of the following information about your sources as possible, in this order:

-The author’s name (last name, first name)

-The title of the source (in quotation marks if a shorter text; in italics if a longer text)

-The “container” of the source, if applicable (see note below)

-The entity that published/sponsored/featured the source

-The date that the source was published

Note: The “container” of a source is the larger entity in which the source is included. For example, a book would be a container for an individual chapter; a TV show would be a container for an individual episode; a journal would be a container for an individual journal article. Put the names of containers in *italics*.

If you use an online source, you will also need to include the URL (web address) for the specific web page you used as well as the date on which you accessed the web page. Remove the hyperlink of a URL by right-clicking it and selecting “Remove hyperlink.”

Frequently Asked Questions about Works Cited

Q: What if I don’t know the author’s name?

A: Simply exclude it from your bibliographic entry and begin the entry with the source’s title instead.

Q: What if my source has more than one author?

A: Use (last name, first name) format for the first listed author, but use (first name last name) format for subsequent authors. **Example: Hernandez, Emilia, Dwight Williams, and Maribel Schultz.** If you have four or more authors, list only the first author and the abbreviation “et al.,” which means “among others.” **Example: Hernandez, Emilia, et al.**

Q: What if I don’t know the date of publication?

A: Use the abbreviation “n.d.” (“no date”) instead.

Q: What if my source is an anthology?

A: Anthologies are collections of texts written by various authors that have been compiled into one singular text. The people who do this compiling are called editors, and their names need to be included in your bibliographic entry. You will also need to include the page range within the anthology of the specific text you used. For example, if the anthology is 250 pages but the text you used spans pages 160-180, you need to include that page range in your entry.