MLA 8th edition: Citation Basics

In 2016, MLA updated their guidelines for citing sources. The new model is meant to be simpler and more flexible for writers using sources from a variety of platforms and publication types.

Works Cited entries are created by consulting the MLA’s list of Core Elements.

If your source doesn’t have one of these Core Elements, just omit that element and move on to the next one.

Note that each element should listed in the following order and followed by the punctuation shown in the left-hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR.</th>
<th>The author should always be listed last name first (e.g., Shakespeare, William).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE OF SOURCE.</td>
<td>The title should follow MLA guidelines for titles (e.g., book titles are italicized, while article titles are in quotation marks).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE OF CONTAINER,</td>
<td>The “container” is the larger work that the source is a part of, such as the scholarly journal or website where an article is located.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER CONTRIBUTORS,</td>
<td>Other contributors include people like translators, illustrators, editors, etc. This also includes the user who uploaded a video or post to a website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERSION,</td>
<td>The version of a source might be a 4th edition (abbreviated as “4th ed.” in the Works Cited entry) or a “Kindle ed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER,</td>
<td>The number refers to multi-volume works like television series or journals with volume and issue numbers (abbreviated as “vol. 61, no. 2” in the Works Cited entry).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLISHER,</td>
<td>The publisher is who produces or distributes the source to the public. For academic publishers, like Utah State University Press, MLA uses U and P as abbreviations (e.g., Utah State UP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION DATE,</td>
<td>Publication dates are listed in a day-month-year format (14 Dec. 2010). MLA no longer uses “n.d.” as a placeholder to indicate “no date.” If there is no date listed, skip this portion of the Work Cited entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION.</td>
<td>The location should help readers find the source being cited. For print sources, this includes page numbers (e.g., “pp. 247-261”), and for online sources, this includes either an URL or a DOI (digital object identifiers).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: When citing sources found online, including the date accessed is optional, but many instructors prefer including this information. Always confirm your instructor’s preferences regarding optional elements. If included, this information goes at the end of the citation as follows: “Accessed 26 Oct. 2016.”
Sample Works Cited Entries

Note: All sources on the Works Cited page should be alphabetized, double-spaced, and formatted using a hanging indent. See our MLA Style & Format Guide for more information.

Scholarly Article (online database):

Scholarly Article (print source):

Article on a Website (with no author):

Video:

Book (accessed online):

Book (print source):

In-Text Citations
The basic structure of in-text citations is to include the author’s last name and a page number in parenthesis (or just a page number if the author’s name is given in the sentence): (Shatz and Helitzer 143) or (Monshipouri 18).
For in-text citations with no page numbers, like an online article, omit the page number from the citation: (Bell).
If there is no author, use a shortened version of the title of the source: (“Asthma Overview”).
For videos and audio recordings, the in-text citation should include the range of hours, minutes, and seconds you are citing: (Brown 00:02:15-00:02:35).

Information compiled from Elizabeth Preston, Purdue OWL, and MLA Handbook, 8th Edition.