

THE BOISE STATE  
**WRITING CENTER**

Because Writers Need Readers

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## Basics of Formatting with MLA Style

The Modern Language Association style, commonly referred to as MLA style, is a system of documentation generally used in the humanities, such as language arts and history. MLA documentation requires in-text citations for brief references to sources used in the body of the text and a works cited page featuring full citation information for all of your sources. In this style, writers create citations by listing all the core elements of a source.

### **Margins:**

Margins are 1 inch on all sides of the page.

### **Font:**

Standard font is 12-point Times New Roman. For other fonts, MLA recommends a font that when the word is *italicized* the difference is clear. Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.

### **Paragraph and line spacing:**

Indent the first line of each paragraph 0.5 in. Text is double-spaced. No extra spaces before or after headings or between paragraphs.

### **First page:**

In the upper left hand corner of the first page, write your name, professor's title and last name, the course title and number, and then the date (Day Month Year) on separate lines. On a new line, create a title (in Title Case) centered on the page. List your last name and page number in the top right corner of every page.

### **Section headings:**

Section headings are used to divide major sections of a paper. MLA does not require specific formatting for section headings. The general rule is to maintain consistency in the use of bold, italics, and alignment when creating levels. Topics of equal importance share the same level heading throughout the document.

### **Citations:**

In-text citations are used to credit the work of others and refer readers to the source on your Works Cited page. Parenthetical citations include the author's last name and page numbers. Enclose citations in parentheses and follow by a period.

### **Works Cited:**

Begin a new page. "Works Cited" centered.. List all sources used alphabetically.

## Sample MLA First Page

MLA title page begins on the first page of the paper with the paper text beginning after the title. The following example depicts a common MLA title page and a description of the elements within.

### Elements Title Page Example

<b>Header</b>	Wise 1
<b>Author</b>	Nathan Wise
<b>Professor</b>	Professor Harmon
<b>Class</b>	English 101
<b>Date</b>	5 July 2022
<b>Title</b>	<i>Catcher In The Rye: Is Holden A Normal Teenager?</i>

- **Header:** The header lists your last name and the page number. Align to the right.
- **Author:** List your first and last name. If there are multiple contributors, provide each of the names a separate line then continue with the rest of the requirements discussed here.
- **Professor:** Include your instructor's name. It's most universally accepted to put professor before their last name, unless otherwise requested (for example, a professor may request to be called Dr. Harmon).
- **Class:** List the course and course number. It's most universally accepted to put the full subject name over the abbreviation (for example, English 101 instead of ENGL 101).
- **Date:** Format the date as Month Day Year. List the assignment due date, not when the document was originally created or last updated.
- **Title:** Hit enter and create a space between the header and the first line of the text. Make sure it's in the center of the page. Do not underline, italicize, or add quotations around the title except if referring to other works within the title.

## MLA In-Text Citations

In MLA, every time you use the work or thoughts of another, you need to cite the original author. The use of others' work or thoughts includes summary, paraphrase, and direct quotations. To cite the source, you will need an in-text citation, which typically consists of the author's last name and the page number where the material comes from. In-text citations are enclosed in parentheses and followed by a period.

### Single Author

If introducing the author in the text, use their first name and last name the first time it is used and then use only the surname thereafter. If introducing the author in the parenthetical citation, list only the author's last name followed by the page number.

The text portrays the mindset of millennials through lines like this: “[Alice thinks] of the twentieth century as one long question, and in the end we got the answer wrong” (Rooney 101).

### Two Authors

If a source has two authors, list the authors' names in the parenthetical citation or in the text and connect them with an 'and':

The first time the character Viktor is introduced, he's described as “[...]the lowliest of the lot” (Charaipotra and Clayton 18).

### Three or More Authors

List the first author's last name followed by the abbreviation "et al." (and others).

Heat is a significant symbol in the book *Blackout*. The very first page discussed how “[t]ensions matching the temperature make people do stupid things in a city full of millions” (Clayton et al. 1).

### Organization or Group Author

If no author is listed and/or the source is published by an organization or group, list the group's full name in the text or citation (with the page number), followed by the abbreviation if well known. Use the acronym for every subsequent citation. If no known acronym is given, shorten the organization name to the shortest noun phrase within the parenthetical citation.

According to The Modern Language Association (MLA), “whenever you use the title of a source in your writing, take the title from an authoritative location in the work” (53).

### Narrative Citation

If you introduce the author before quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing, then only the page number is included in the in-text citation:

According to music critic Mark Prindle, Minneapolis rock combo The Cows are an acquired taste (259).

## Unknown Author

If the author's name is unknown, include a shortened version of the publication title in quotations if it's a short work or italics if it's a longer work. Include a page number if it's available.

When thinking about what kind of photography to use, it's important to consider that, “[d]igital photography is more eco-friendly than traditional photography” (Eco-tography 119).

## Block Quotations

When using a direct quotation that runs four or more lines long, the quotation is introduced by a colon, set off from the main text, and indented an extra half inch from the left margin. Do not indent the first line, add quotation marks not present in the original, or adjust the line spacing. Include the parenthetical citation after the final period or punctuation mark of the block quote.

Fitzgerald movingly describes the personality traits of Gatsby:

Only in Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. (Fitzgerald 6)

## Omissions or Alterations to Quotations

Place an ellipsis (...) where parts of a quote were omitted in the middle of the sentence (e.g. "Grammar... is the study of writing techniques"). Ellipses are not necessary to indicate the first part of a phrase was omitted. Put brackets [text] around necessary alterations made to quotations for clarity, as in "[They] said..."

## Common Knowledge

Facts or information that you already know, is widely available, and undisputed is considered common knowledge, which does not require an in-text citation. Common knowledge includes biographical information, dates of historical events, and other information that reasonable readers would accept as fact.

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States.

## More Information

For more information on citing secondary sources, timed media, multiple sources in one citation, multiple works by one author, and personal communication, see page 7

## MLA Works Cited Entries

MLA style requires a works cited page that includes full citation information for each source. Begin by starting on another page titled “Works Cited” centered in the page. Alphabetize each entry by the last name of the first author listed. Hanging indents are an important characteristic of work cited pages. To make a hanging indent, The second and following lines are indented 1/2 inch after the first line. MLA style customizes entries for each type of source, meaning that each citation will be unique.

### Webpage from a Website

Website citations follow a basic format for all types of websites. For sources without authors, list the group or organization as the author. If no group or organization is given, move the website name to the author position.

Author Last Name, Author First Name. "Article Title." *Publisher*, Day Month Year, URL.

Boise State University Writing Center. "Welcome to the Writing Center." *Boise State University*.  
<https://www.boisestate.edu/writingcenter/>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.

### Book

List the author, the title, the publisher, and the year it was published. Include the editor/translator/any other type of contributor before the publisher if it can be found. The title can start the citation:

Author Last Name, Author First Name. *Book Title*. Publisher, Year Published.

Pratchett, Terry. *Guards! Guards!* Gollancz, 1989.

### Work from a Collection

The type of works in this category may include an essay in an edited collection/anthology or a chapter of a book. Here’s the basic form:

Last Name, First Name. “Chapter Title.” *Title of Book*, edited by Editor’s Name(s), Publisher, Year, Page Range.

Kinsella, Sophie. “Seven.” *The Party Crasher*, edited by Kara Cesare et. al., The Dial Press, 2021, pp. 95-119.

### Journal Article

Journal articles, or periodicals, are print and electronic sources issued within larger journals:

Author(s). “Article Title.” *Journal Title*, Volume (vol. #), Issue Number (no. #), Year, Page Range (pp.).  
 DOI if available

Hollingdale, Jack et. al. “Impact of COVID-19 for people living and working with ADHD: A brief review of the literature.” *AIMS Public Health*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2021, pp. 581–597. DOI: 10.3934/publichealth.2021047

## Newspaper Article

Newspaper and magazine articles are two other types of periodicals. Include volume, issue, and/or page number(s) if available:

Last name, First Name. "Article Title." *Newspaper Title*, Day Month Year, pages (if print). URL (if digital)

Mitchell, Jessi. "New public health laboratory breaks ground in Harlem." *CBS NEW YORK*, 06 July 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/harlem-public-health-laboratory/>

## YouTube Video

Including the author/creator/publisher is optional, you could just go into the title. If you bring up a name in your paper or want to emphasize a participant in the video, it would be a good idea to include it.

Last Name, First Name. "Video Title." *Streaming Service*, uploaded by Username, Day Month Year, URL

Smith, Clint. "Marsha P. Johnson and the Stonewall Rebellion." *YouTube*, uploaded by CrashCourse, 29 June 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftcvaJCKVjs>

## Podcast Episode

Citing a podcast differs from the typical way of citing in MLA in that the title of the episode is listed first, followed by the name of the series in italics. Make sure to include where it was published, who it's hosted by, and that it's the podcast edition of the recording.

"Episode Name" *Name of series* from Publisher, hosted by Host Name, Podcast Number, Day Month Year. URL.

"The Mysterious Disappearance of Brittaneé Drexel." *Morbid* from Amazon Music, hosted by Alaina Urquhart and Ashleigh Kelley, episode 203, 23 January 2021.  
music.amazon.com/podcasts/30381209-4d12-4c82-ba16-5bde361156c9/episodes/40756d04-f27a-4723-b036-8a3d3083f508/morbidepisode203themysteriousdisappearanceofbrittaneedrexel

## More Information for In-Text Citations

### Primary and secondary sources:

If you quote an author's quotation of another author's work, put the phrase "qtd. in" (short for "quoted in") in the parenthetical citation, followed by the secondary source (e.g. qtd. in Jacobson). The abbreviation isn't necessary if it's made clear in prose it's an indirect quote. Always try to find the direct source if you can!

### Timed media:

For timed media such as videos or songs, cite the time in parentheses (e.g. Eilish 2:57-3:15).

### Multiple sources:

In-text citations with multiple sources are separated by a semicolon. The order should correspond with the order of the research (e.g. Offerman, 52; Yong, 33). However, if delineating the specific attribution is needed, avoid combining the citations and instead separate each source into its own sentence.

### Multiple works by one author:

Include the title of the work within the in-text citation (with a comma before it) or in prose (e.g. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 237).

### Consecutive use of one or more sources:

When referencing one source multiple times consecutively, you can avoid multiple parenthetical citations by first introducing the source. Refer to the author in text using the known-new contract, adding page numbers for quotes where needed.

### Personal communication:

If citing a personal communication such as an email, interview, or telephone conversation, include the name of the person, the date, and the type of communication. If citing a lecture, include the subject of the lecture. Where possible, include the author's name in a narrative citation to avoid the long parenthetical entry.

## More Information for Works Cited Entries

### **Multiple authors:**

With sources that have three or more authors, follow the first author's name with a comma and the abbreviation 'et al.' ("and others").

### **Online handles:**

Supply the author's handle in square brackets with the name [[@handle](#)] if the handle differs from the author's account name.

### **Organization or group author:**

In instances where an organization or group authored the work, spell out the full name of the group but omit initial articles (e.g. a, an, the). If the author is the publisher, skip the author element and begin the entry with the title.

### **No author:**

In a reference entry for a work with no author, move the title of the work to the author position.

### **No date:**

If no publication date is available, include the date you accessed the source at the end, e.g. Boise State University. <https://www.boisestate.edu/writingcenter/>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.

### **Publisher:**

Publishers' names are given in full; however, do not give words indicating business structure, like Ltd. or LLC. Terms like Press and Books should be included.



## Sample MLA Works Cited Page

MLA works cited begin on a new page. "Works Cited" title is centered. On the left-hand margin are titles that explain the type of citation used in the corresponding reference entry. Each entry is formatted with a hanging indent and alphabetised.

Elements	Works Cited Page Example
<b>Webpage from a Website</b>	Boise State University Writing Center. "Welcome to the Writing Center." <i>Boise State University</i> . <a href="https://www.boisestate.edu/writingcenter/">https://www.boisestate.edu/writingcenter/</a> . Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.
<b>Journal Article</b>	Hollingdale, Jack et al. "Impact of COVID-19 for people living and working with ADHD: A brief review of the literature." <i>AIMS Public Health</i> , vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 581–597. DOI: 10.3934/publichealth.2021047
<b>Work from a Collection</b>	Kinsella, Sophie. "Seven." <i>The Party Crasher</i> , edited by Kara Cesare et. al., The Dial Press, 2021, pp. 95-119.
<b>Book</b>	Jimenez, Jesus. <i>Latin Culture in the United States</i> . Harper Collins, 2003.
<b>Newspaper Article</b>	Mitchell, Jessi. "New public health laboratory breaks ground in Harlem." <i>CBS NEWS YORK</i> , 06 July 2022, <a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/harlem-public-health-laboratory/">https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/harlem-public-health-laboratory/</a>
<b>YouTube Video</b>	Smith, Clint. "Marsha P. Johnson and the Stonewall Rebellion." <i>YouTube</i> , uploaded by CrashCourse, 29 June 2022, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftcvaJCKVjs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftcvaJCKVjs</a>
<b>Podcast</b>	"The Mysterious Disappearance of Brittane Drexel." <i>Morbid</i> from Amazon Music, hosted by Alaina Urquhart and Ashleigh Kelley, episode 203, 23 January 2021. <a href="https://music.amazon.com/podcasts/30381209-4d12-4c82-ba16-5bde361156c9/episodes/40756d04-f27a-4723-b036-8a3d3083f508/morbidepisode203themysteriousdisappearanceofbrittaneedrexel">music.amazon.com/podcasts/30381209-4d12-4c82-ba16-5bde361156c9/episodes/40756d04-f27a-4723-b036-8a3d3083f508/morbidepisode203themysteriousdisappearanceofbrittaneedrexel</a>

**Source Attribution**

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