Writing and Citing in MLA Style

> **MacEwan University students should always check with their instructors for any preferences or requirements that may vary from the guidelines in this handout.**

The documentation style of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) is used by many university students, primarily for literature and humanities classes. The following guidelines are based on the *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition, published in 2016. For other examples and guidelines, consult the MLA website at www.mla.org/MLA-Style.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is presenting others' words or thoughts without crediting the sources. Whether you are quoting directly or putting the ideas of an author into your own words (paraphrasing), **you must formally cite the source of your material**. Even though most plagiarism is unintentional, there are serious consequences for plagiarizing in writing assignments (see MacEwan University's Academic Integrity Policy C1000).

You must always **cite** quoted or paraphrased information with an **in-text citation.** Each source you use must be included on a **works cited page**.

I. General Formatting

- Double space all pages, including long quotations and the works cited page.
- Use one inch margins, a 12-point easy-to-read font (such as Times New Roman), and left-justified margins.
- Type your name, your instructor's name and title if appropriate, the course number, and the date on separate double-spaced lines, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin. An MLA style research paper does not need a title page.
- Center your essay title before your first paragraph, and capitalize all principal words in the title.
- Leave one space after all punctuation marks, including periods.
- Indent all paragraphs one tab (5-7 spaces).
- Consecutively number every page of the paper in the upper right-hand corner of the page. Type your last name before the page numbers.

Sample First Page

Student's Last Name 1

Student's Full Name

Instructor's Title and Last Name

Course and Section Number

Date (dd-mmm-yyyy format)

Title of Paper

Your first paragraph begins here, indented one tab from the left margin. Double space your entire paper, including long quotations and your works cited page. Use only one space after punctuation.

Indent all subsequent paragraphs one tab from the left margin.

II. In-Text Citations

A. General Rules

In-text citations generally include two elements: **the last name(s)** of the author(s) and the **locator** (page number, paragraph number, section number, etc.).

Crediting Sources with More than One Author

When a source has three or more authors, use the first-listed author plus "and others" in the text. When you use "et al." inside a parenthetical citation, state the name of the first-listed author, followed by "et al."

Number of authors	In-text citation
2 Authors	Smith and Jones explain . . . (62). **or** (Smith and Jones 62).
3 or More Authors	Roberts and others explain . . . (7). **or** (Roberts et al. 7).

B. Quotations

The following are the two ways in which the last name(s) of the author(s) and the locator can be placed into short and long quotations:

Short Quotations (Four Lines or Fewer)

Use double quotation marks around the quoted words and incorporate them into the text of your paper. Note the period is placed after the final parenthesis. For example,

> However, the attack on Vera Cruz may have been fueled by different motivations: "Perhaps the affair in Mexico was an instinctual response of the system for its own survival, to create a unity of fighting purpose among a people torn by internal conflict" (Zinn 357).
>
> **or**
>
> As Zinn suggests, "Perhaps the affair in Mexico was an instinctual response of the system for its own survival, to create a unity of fighting purpose among a people torn by internal conflict" (357).

Long Quotations (More Than Four Lines)

Indent a long quotation one tab from the left margin. Introduce the quotation first. Note the quotation is double spaced without quotation marks, and the period is placed before the page number(s):

Roberts offers this interesting comment about the origins of fiction:

> In primitive civilizations, stories were circulated by word of mouth, and often traveling storytellers would appear in a court or village to entertain eager listeners with tales based on the exploits of heroes and gods. Although many of these were heavily fictionalized accounts of events and people who may or may not ever have existed, they were largely accepted by the people as fact or history. (51)

Changes to Quotations

Use **square brackets** when you insert changes, additions, or explanations into a quotation. For example,

> Pinker explains, "Sometimes [common expressions] are called conceptual metaphors, because no one ever actually had to say 'Argument is war' or 'Love is a journey'; the underlying metaphor is implicit in the family of related tropes" (240).

Use **ellipsis points** (three periods with a space before and after each period) to show you have omitted material from a quotation. For example,

> "Like many contemporaries, the Paris masters believed that the extraordinary ecological upheavals of the 1330s and 1340s . . . played an important role in the plague" (Kelly 170).

Note: When you omit a sentence or more, use **four** ellipsis points (literally a period and three ellipsis points).

Short Quotations from Poetry (3 Lines or Fewer)
Cite the source using the author's last name and the line number(s). Use a forward slash with a space on either side (/) to indicate line breaks. Mark a stanza break with two forward slashes (//) if the break occurs in the quotation. For example,

> In her poem, "Unlinked," Meynell vows, "No, I shall live a poet waking, sleeping, / And I shall die a poet unaware" (7-8).

Long Quotations from Poetry (More than 3 Lines)
Indent one tab from the left margin for quotations that are more than three lines. For example,

> In "The Song of Wandering Aengus," Yeats' description of the metamorphosis from a fish to a beautiful girl is shown by the shift in pronouns from "it" to "one":
>> When I had laid it on the floor
>>
>> I went to blow the fire aflame,
>>
>> But something rustled on the floor,
>>
>> And some one called me by my name:
>>
>> It had become a glimmering girl. (9-13)

Quoting Plays
Give the act, scene, and line number(s) in parentheses, with periods separating the various numbers. For example,

> Shakespeare's Othello is confident, calm, and reasonable. As Roderigo and Iago prepare to fight, Othello commands them, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2.59).

Alternatively, you may cite the act and scene in your introductory remarks, and then add the line number(s) at the end of your quotation (or paraphrase) in parentheses. For example,

> In act 1, scene 2, Shakespeare's Othello is confident, calm, and reasonable. As Roderigo and Iago prepare to fight, Othello commands them, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (59).

For examples of how to quote dialogue between two or more characters in a play, see p. 80 of the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed.

C. Paraphrases
When you **summarize or rewrite an author's idea,** you **must** use your own words and indicate your source.

Avoid Patch Writing
Paraphrasing improperly is a common reason that students may be accused of plagiarism, so it is crucial to develop proper paraphrasing skills. Paraphrasing is more than simply replacing a few words or phrases with synonyms.

Original	**Patch Writing**
"For nearly as long as English has had a relatively stable or 'settled' spelling system, there have been people complaining about it and campaigning for change" (Wolman 3).	~~Since the time English has had a relatively uniform spelling system, there have been critics protesting it and arguing for change (Wolman 3).~~

Here are some tips on **how to paraphrase properly:**

1. Read the passage several times until you understand the meaning.
2. Cover the original and write the main ideas in point form.
3. Draft your paraphrase.
4. Check it against the original passage to see if you have captured the idea without using the phrasing or structure of the original. (Note: key/technical terms may remain.)
5. Rephrase wherever appropriate.
6. Cite each sentence if your paraphrase is more than one sentence.

Sample Paraphrases

Thornton shows that the energy of Lawrence's writing results from her techniques of identifying with her characters. Her perspective and empathy change from one character to the next (46).

or

The act of writing is an opportunity for learning more about a subject and for developing complex thinking (Stewart et al. 3).

Multi-Sentence Paraphrases and Quotations

If you borrow more than once from the same source within a single paragraph and no other source intervenes, you can create multi-sentence paraphrases and quotations. Remember, every paraphrased sentence needs to have an in-text citation; otherwise, the distinctions between the author's ideas and your analysis may be unclear. For example,

> To excel in persuasive writing, we must "consider how to appeal to [our] audience" (Stewart and Allen 4). Many writers dismiss the reader's perspective while planning to write their paper, which can weaken the paper's overall argument (4).
>
> **or**
>
> According to Stewart and Allen, to excel in persuasive writing, we must "consider how to appeal to [our] audience" (4). Many writers dismiss the reader's perspective while planning to write their paper, which can weaken the paper's overall argument (4).

Note: If you include material from a different source or your own analysis between two cited sentences, you must repeat the author's name and the locator in the subsequent citation. For example,

> According to Stewart and Allen, to excel in persuasive writing, we must "consider how to appeal to [our] audience" (4). In fact, "having a focused topic is important, but having a specific audience is equally important" ("Audience Matters," sec. 2). Many writers dismiss the reader's perspective while planning to write their paper, which can weaken the paper's overall argument (Stewart and Allen 4).

D. Special Cases of In-Text Citation

Sources without Page Numbers
If your source has no page number but numbers paragraphs, use the label par. or pars. followed by the paragraph number. If the source uses section numbers or chapters, use sec. or secs. or ch., chs. respectively. Place a comma between the author's last name and the label when it appears in a parenthetical citation:

> Although proofreading can be rather dull and tedious, it is a necessary step in the writing process because it allows you to think about the work from the reader's perspective (Hacker, par. 11).

Note: When a source has no page number nor any other kind of locator, cite only the author's(s') last name(s) in the in-text citation.
For **audio and visual recordings,** give the numbers of the hours, minutes, and seconds, as available, as displayed in your media player, separating the numbers with colons:

> Pollan asserts that "processing food is extremely profitable—much more so than selling it or growing it whole" (00:22:16-22).

Sources without an Author
When the author is the organization that published the work or the author is anonymous, the title of the work replaces the author in your in-text citation. The title may appear in the text itself or abbreviated before the page number in the parentheses:

> *Working for Health: An Introduction to the World Health Organization* notes that the world is in the middle of a health crisis: "as many as two billion people around the world face health threats every day" (10).
>
> **or**
>
> The world is in the middle of a health crisis: "as many as two billion people around the world face health threats every day" (*Working* 10).

Note: Abbreviate the title if it is longer than a noun phrase. Provide the first noun and any preceding adjectives, while excluding any initial articles: *a, an, the.*

Indirect or Secondary Sources
When the author of your source cites another author's work, name the author of the original work first (Hobbes in the examples below), then cite the author of your source (Adler and Van Doren in the examples below):

> Hobbes remarks, "If I read as many books as most men do, I would be as dull-witted as they are" (qtd. in Adler and Van Doren 166).

> "If I read as many books as most men do, I would be as dull-witted as they are" (Hobbes, qtd. in Adler and Van Doren 166).

Crediting More than One Source
If more than one source discusses the idea you are referencing, cite all the sources in the same parentheses, listing them in alphabetical order by the authors' surnames. Separate the sources with semicolons:

> Several scholars have noted that the strongest evidence that Virginia Woolf suffered from what we now call manic depression or bipolar disorder comes from her letters and journals (Caramagno 6; Dalsimer 809; Iszáj and Demetrovics 27-28).

III. Works Cited Page General Format

- Include only the sources from which you have quoted or paraphrased, and provide full publication/retrieval information.
- Center the title (Works Cited) in plain, easy-to-read font.
- Number the page(s) sequentially as part of the paper.
- Use a hanging indent (i.e., keep the first line of each entry at the left-hand margin and indent all following lines 1 tab. See sample works cited entries below.)
- Use one-inch margins.
- List sources alphabetically, according to the first distinct element in each works cited entry, which is typically the author(s) or the title.
- Double space all entries.

Sample Works Cited Page

Student's Last Name 6

Works Cited

Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Human Rights Law. United

Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2012. www.ohchr.org/Documents/

Publications/BornFreeAndEqualLowRes.pdf.

Jansen, Joyce C. and Holly Bustard. *Beginner English: What Every International Student Needs to Know About*

English. Gage, 2006.

Rodriquez, Michael, et al. "Social Media in Large Scale Forces: An Empirical Study of the Impact of Sales

Process Capability and Relationship Performance." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, vol. 24,

no. 3, Summer 2016, pp. 365-379. *Business Source Complete*, doi:10.1080/10696679.2016.1170538.

III. Works Cited Entries

The *MLA Handbook,* 8th edition, recommends a universal set of guidelines that writers can apply to any source they need to cite. Be aware that there may be more than one correct way to cite a source on your works cited page—it depends on what information you want to emphasize.

The Core Elements

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Note: Omit irrelevant elements. Use the punctuation shown above. End the works cited entry with a period.

The MLA website provides a practice template you can use to fill in all of the core elements: style.mla.org/files/2016/04/practice-template.pdf.

A. Using the Core Elements
Begin with the first core element and then move through the list until you reach the last element. Use the questions attached to each core element below to help you create works cited entries for your sources.

1. Author.
- Does the source have an author? If the answer is no, skip the author element and begin the entry with the work's title.
- How many authors are there? When a source has 2 authors, invert only the name of the first author. When a source has 3 or more authors, invert the first author's name and follow it with a comma and et al.
- Do the authors require a specific label (e.g., editor, translator, performer, creator)? Add a comma after the name, followed by the label.
- Has the work been published by an organization that is also its author? If so, skip the author element and list only the organization as publisher. Thus, the entry will begin with the work's title.

Examples

Book in print	Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Harvard UP, 2000.
Tweet	@SportsCentre. "UPDATE: Michael Jordan to donate of $1M apiece to organizations trying to improve police-community relations." *Twitter,* 25 July 2016, 9:14 a.m., twitter.com/SportsCentre/status/757610099489865728. Accessed 1 Aug. 2016.
Blog post published by an organization that is also the author	"Every Day Actions Transform Lives: Stop Torture and My Body My Rights Campaigns." *Amnesty International,* 13 July 2016, www.amnesty.ca/blog/every-day-actions-transform-lives-stop-torture-and-my-body-my-rights-campaigns.

Note: For information on how to cite multiple works by one author, see p. 113 of the *MLA Handbook,* 8th ed.

2. Title of source.
- Does the source have a title?
  - Capitalize first, last, and all principal words of titles **regardless** of how titles are printed on your sources. B
  - *Italicize* the titles of any independently published works: books, plays, journals, films, etc.
  - Use double quotation marks around titles of smaller works that are part of a larger whole: article, posts, etc.
- Is the source untitled? Describe the type of source but do not italicize or use quotation marks. Capitalize sentence style (i.e., the first word and any proper nouns).

Examples of How to Format Titles of Work

Type of Source	Original Title	Modified Title
Book	The pleasures of reading	*The Pleasures of Reading*
Journal article	Mindfulness: diverse perspectives on its meaning	"Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on Its Meaning"

Examples

e-Book	Kafka, Franz. *Metamorphosis.* Translated by Ian Johnston, Floating Press, 2008. *EBSCO Host E-book,* web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/.
Article on a website	Lahr, John. "The Lady and Tennessee." *The New Yorker,* 19 Dec. 1994, www.newyorker.com/magazine/1994/12/19/the-lady-and-tennessee.
Play in an anthology	Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet. Norton Introduction to Literature*,

	edited by Jerome Beatty et al., Norton, 2002, pp. 1670-1769.

Note: When an independent work (such as a novel or play) appears in a collection (*Hamlet,* above), the work's title remains in italics.

Note: When you discuss a source that was translated from another language and your focus is on the translation, treat the translator as the author. For example,

Bassett, Jennifer, translator. *Les Miserables.* By Victor Hugo, Simplified ed., Oxford UP, 2012.

3. Title of container,
Sources that are part of a larger work can be thought of as nesting in a container (e.g., an article in a journal, a poem in an anthology, etc.). Italicize the titles of containers.

- How many containers does the source have? Entries for sources with more than one container should include the names of all containers (e.g., an article is contained in a journal, which may be contained in a database).

Examples of Sources with Two Containers

Newspaper article	Harris, Kathleen. "Elections Commissioner Sanctions Green Party for Peddling 'Misleading' Polling Data." *CBC News,* 26 July 2016, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/elections-commissioner-green-party-polling-1.3695519.
Chapter in an edited book	Beechey, Veronica. "Women and Production: A Critical Analysis of Some Sociological Theories of Women's Work." *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production*, edited by Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe, Routledge, 1978, pp. 155-95.
Television episode on *Netflix*	"A Study in Pink." *Sherlock,* season 1, episode 1, BBC, 25 July 2010. *Netflix,* www.netflix.com/watch/70174779?trackId=13462986&tctx=5%2C5%2Cc0d8b6a8-23a7-4ddc-9cb1-0ae7f94b2874-1416475.

Note: If you discuss a television show, film, or other collaborative work in a general way, without focusing on an individual's contribution to it, then you typically cite no author ("A Study in Pink," above).

4. Other contributors,
- Are other people credited in the source as contributors (e.g., directors, editors, narrators), aside from the author(s)? Name important contributors that help your reader identify the work.

Example

Edited book	Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*, edited by Claudia Johnson, W. W. Norton, 2001.

5. Version,
- Does the source indicate a particular form or version of the text (e.g., edition)? List the edition or version number.

Examples

Edition of a book	Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students.* 3rd ed., Pearson / Longman, 2004.

Article in a reference book	Mohanty, Jitendra M. "Indian Philosophy." *The New Encyclopaedia Americana*, 5th ed., 2005, pp. 973-85.
Scripture	*The New Revised Standard Version Bible.* General editor, George Sinclair, Harper Collins, 1973.

For more information about how to cite scripture, see pp. 122-23 of the *MLA Handbook,* 8th ed.

6. Number,
- Is the source part of a numbered sequence (e.g., volume or issue number)? Include sequence number(s).

Example

Journal article	Cimarosti, Roberta. "Literacy Stories for Global Wits: Learning English through the Literature-Language Line." *A Review of International English Literature,* vol. 46, no. 1-2, 2015, pp. 13-44. *MLA International Bibliography*, doi: 10.1353/ari.2015.0010.

7. Publisher,
Omit unnecessary words from the publisher's name, such as *Company, Corporation,* and *Limited.*
If two or more publishers seem equally important, cite each of them separated with a forward slash.

- Who or what published the source? Look at the actual source—not where you found the source—to find the publisher.

Examples

Film	Capra, Frank, director. *It's a Wonderful Life*, performance by James Stewart, RKO, 1946.
Lecture	Roberts, Nancy. "MLA Documentation Style." ENGL 102, 12 Sept. 2015, MacEwan University, Edmonton.

Note: A publisher may be omitted for the following kinds of publications: a periodical, a work published by its author or editor, a Web site whose title is essentially the same as the name of its publisher, or a Web site not involved in producing the works it makes available (e.g., a service for users' content like *WordPress* or *YouTube,* or an archive like *JSTOR*).

8. Publication date,
- Does your source contain multiple dates? Cite the most recent date attached to the source.
- Does the source include a month and day? Include the day and month, if provided, along with the year.

Examples

Video on a Web site	"How to Find Your Most Productive Time of the Day." *YouTube*, uploaded by Thomas Frank, 19 June 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl1RApVpIpU.

9. Location.
- Does the source specify a page number (p.) or range of page numbers (pp.)?
- Does the source have a URL? Provide the URL if it's available, unless your instructor prefers that you do not.
- Is the source a journal article? Provide the DOI if available.

Examples

Poem in an anthology	Kipling, Rudyard. "Gentlemen-Rankers." *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, edited by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle, Broadview Press, 1999, pp. 1149-1150.

Song	Beyoncé. "Pray You Catch Me." *Lemonade,* Parkwood Entertainment, 2016, www.beyonce.com/album/lemonade/?media_songs.
Artwork	Rodin, Auguste. *The Kiss.* 1886, *ARTstor*, library.artstor.org/library/iv2.html?parent=true#.

How to Retrieve the DOI
If the journal article does not include a DOI, use www.crossref.org/guestquery to see if one has been assigned to the article. If so, copy and paste the DOI (dx.doi.org/xxxxx) into your works cited entry. If not, include the URL to the article in the location position of the works cited entry.

B. Optional Elements
The core elements of the entry may be accompanied by optional elements, at the writer's discretion. Include the optional elements only if they are important to your use of the source.

Date of Original Publication
You can provide the date of original publication of republished sources if it is relevant to your reader's understanding of the source. For example,

Adler, Mortimer J., and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book.* 1940. Rev. and Updated ed., Simon & Schuster,

1972.

City of Publication
Including the city of publication is usually not necessary, unless a book was published before 1900 or if a publisher has more than one publishing house and releases multiple versions of a novel. In these cases, place the name of the city before the publisher. For example,

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.* London, Bloomsbury, 1998.

Date of Access
The date of access is not required but should be included if the source has no publication date or the source is likely to change (e.g., a Wiki or Blog). For example,

BBC News. "The one-week-old boy was taken into care for more than two months." *Facebook,* 16 Feb. 2017,

www.facebook.com/bbcnews/?fref=ts. Accessed 23 Feb. 2017.

Note: This list of optional elements is not exhaustive. For more information on optional elements, see pp. 50-53 of the *MLA Handbook,* 8th ed.

For additional information on formatting a research paper, visit style.mla.org/formatting-papers/. To view sample research papers in MLA Style, see style.mla.org/sample-papers/.

IV. Verbs to Introduce Quotations in MLA Format

Each of the following verbs gives a quotation a slightly different meaning or emphasis; the words **cannot be used interchangeably**. Please note that the words listed are in simple present tense:

acknowledge(s)	contend(s)	inquire(s)	recount(s)
acquiesce(s)	contest(s)	insinuate(s)	refute(s)
add(s)	continue(s)	insist(s)	regret(s)
address(es)	contradict(s)	interject(s)	reiterate(s)
admit(s)	counsel(s)	interrogate(s)	rejoin(s)
advise(s)	counter(s)	intimate(s)	relate(s)
advocate(s)	debate(s)	lament(s)	remark(s)
affirm(s)	decide(s)	lecture(s)	remind(s)
agree(s)	declare(s)	maintain(s)	remonstrate(s)
allege(s)	decreed(s)	mandate(s)	repeat(s)
announce(s)	demand(s)	mention(s)	reply/replies
answer(s)	deny/denies	narrate(s)	reprimand(s)
argue(s)	denounce(s)	note(s)	request(s)
articulate(s)	describe(s)	object(s)	respond(s)
ask(s)	dictate(s)	observe(s)	reveal(s)
assent(s)	direct(s)	order(s)	rule(s)
assert(s)	disclose(s)	petition(s)	state(s)
assure(s)	divulge(s)	plead(s)	stipulate(s)
attest(s)	elaborate(s)	point(s) out	suggest(s)
avow(s)	enjoin(s)	preach(es)	supplicate(s)
beg(s)	entreat(s)	proclaim(s)	suppose(s)
boast(s)	enunciate(s)	pronounce(s)	swear(s)
brag(s)	equivocate(s)	propose(s)	talk(s)
call(s)	exclaim(s)	protest(s)	testify/testifies
charge(s)	exhort(s)	query/queries	think(s)
chide(s)	explain(s)	question(s)	tell(s)
claim(s)	grant(s)	quibble(s)	translate(s)
command(s)	hold(s)	quip(s)	urge(s)
comment(s)	hesitate(s)	quote(s)	utter(s)
complain(s)	hint(s)	rant(s)	vow(s)
concede(s)	impart(s)	read(s)	warn(s)
conclude(s)	implore(s)	reason(s)	
concur(s)	indicate(s)	rebut(s)	