

MLA Style

Referencing with Confidence

As used in:

English (as well as Chicago)

Philosophy (as well as Harvard)

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Using this Guide

This guide is intended to help you understand how to use source material effectively in this referencing style. It outlines the general features of the style, but **it is important that you follow your department's specific guidelines as there are some different interpretations and requirements that might be specifically required within your discipline.** The guide has been compiled using the official MLA Handbook, 8th Edition (2016). **You will find more extensive examples of this style on the University website at www.york.ac.uk/integrity.**

Why Reference?

Citing and referencing source material is a crucial aspect of academic writing. You will probably be aware that plagiarism (using someone else's work as though it were your own) is a serious form of academic misconduct and it must be avoided at all costs. Referencing accurately and consistently is an important part of ensuring the distinction is clear between your words and the words and ideas of others in your assignments. **In-text citation** is included in the body of your text and is there to directly show the reader where an idea, piece of information, and/ or a quotation are from. The reader will then be able to match the source cited in the text to the full reference given in your works cited/ bibliography where full details of the publication are presented.

Citing of source materials within your assignment is useful and beneficial to supporting your argument. However, be selective. Do not just use as many references as you can in a bid to impress the marker that you've read a massive amount. Your references should be relevant and integral to your argument, that is, you discuss or critique them in your writing.

For example, if you:

- Include data from your reading (eg tables, statistics, diagrams)
- Describe or discuss a theory, model or practice from a particular writer
- Want to add credibility to your argument by bringing in the ideas of another writer – for or against
- Provide quotations or definitions in your essay;
- Paraphrase or summarise information which is not common knowledge



cite the source

Frequently asked questions

➤ What is the MLA Style?

The Modern Languages Association of America (MLA) style is the MLA's standard for acknowledging source materials and it is used internationally in humanities subjects. It is a standard – a set format – for citing sources. Usually, the name of the author and the page(s) used in the text of a piece of writing are given within (), for example, (Smith 162). It is also acceptable to use the name of the author or title of a source within a sentence, as the citation. A list of works cited/ bibliography of full publication details is then given at the end, with sources listed in alphabetical order by author's last name.

➤ MLA Handbook, 8th Edition

The 8th Edition of the MLA Handbook was released in 2016 and has some slight changes from the 7th Edition. As the 8th is relatively new (at the time of writing), it may take a while before all staff and students are aware of the differences. As result departments will accept references in MLA 8th Edition and 7th Edition style. The MLA 8th Edition allows you to be flexible to a degree and to consider whether your reader can locate the sources you have referenced, so they recommend a basic format and you can add information if you wish to make it more clear.

Major Differences between 7th & 8th Edition

Book: A book no longer needs the location of publication or the medium of publication.

- **7th Edition:** Bartley, Christopher. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. London: Continuum, 2011. Print.
- **8th Edition:** Bartley, Christopher. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. Continuum, 2011.

Journal: The volume, number and page numbers have been more explicit. The date is no longer in brackets and there is no need for the medium of publication.

- **7th Edition:** Ritter, Joshua R. "Recovering Hyperbole: Rethinking the Limits of Rhetoric for an Age of Excess." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 45.4 (2012): 406-28. Print.
- **8th Edition:** Ritter, Joshua R. "Recovering Hyperbole: Rethinking the Limits of Rhetoric for an Age of Excess." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2012: pp. 406-28.

➤ What is the MLA convention for using capital letters in the titles of texts?

You should capitalise the first word, the last word and any major word of a book, journal article, etc. Also, capitalise the first word following a colon in the title. For example: *Pride and Prejudice* Troy and Homer: Towards a Solution of an Old Mystery.

➤ Are in-text citations included in my word count?

Usually in-text citations will be included in your word count as they are integral to your argument. This may vary depending on the assignment you are writing and you should confirm this with your module tutor. If in-text citations are included, this does not mean you should leave out citations where they are appropriate.

➤ How do I format in-text citations?

The MLA style requires you to either include the name of the author and the page(s) of the publication in () or the name within the sentence. There are different ways in which you can integrate an in-text citation depending on how you are using the source in your writing and where in the sentence the citation will be placed. It is also common to see the title of a work within the text, for example:

The awkwardness of conversations between a patient and doctor has been presented in Hall (7-10).

The conversation between a patient and their doctor can be an awkward interaction (Hall 7-10).

Hall's *The Coroner* (7-10) describes an awkward consultation between a patient and doctor.

Work cited: Hall, M. R. *The Coroner*. Basingstoke: Pan Books, 2009. Print.

In these examples, the numbers in the parentheses indicate that the conversation referred to takes place on pages seven to ten. Note also that the title of the work is given in italics.

➤ **How do I effectively cite quotations?**

Quotations are word-for-word text included in your work and must be clearly distinguished from your own words and ideas. For short quotations (for example of less than four lines of prose or two to three short lines of poetry), use a brief phrase within your paragraph or sentence to introduce the quotation, before including it inside double quotation marks “ ”. Give the page number for a discursive quotation, inside the end punctuation, for example:

As Neville states, “you should cite all sources and present full details of these in your list of references” (37).

Give the line number(s) for lines of poetry or a play script, for example:

Coward creates a delicate image of nature in “To a Maidenhair Fern”, which begins “You pretty thing/ each dainty frond unbending” (1-2).

In the Coward example, the name of the poem is given in quotation marks, as it is the title of a poem within a collected edition.

For longer quotations (of more than 4 lines of prose/ poetry) you use block quotation, without quotation marks, but clearly indented to indicate these words are not your own. Include the page/ line number outside of the end punctuation. For example:

Neville comments that:

It can sometimes be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid using some of the author's original words, particularly those that describe or label phenomena. However, you need to avoid copying out what the author said, word for word. Choose words that you feel give a true impression of the author's original ideas or action (38).

For poetry, either indent the full quotation and left align, or if appropriate, retain the unusual spacing. For example:

Coward creates an optimistic image of nature in “To a Maidenhair Fern”:

You pretty thing,
Each dainty frond unbending,
Supple unending,
Like pearls on a string –
Your message in sending
A promise of spring (1-6).

The poem's title will be included in the list of works cited/ bibliography:

Coward, Noel. "To a Maidenhair Fern." *The Complete Verse of Noël Coward*. Ed. Barry Day. London: Methuen Drama, 2011. 72. Print.

➤ **When must I use page/ line numbers in my in-text citations?**

It is important to give a page number in an in-text citation in the following circumstances:

- when quoting directly
- when referring to a specific detail in a text (for example, a specific theory or idea, an illustration, a table, a set of statistics).

This might mean giving an individual page number or a small range of pages from which you have taken the information. Giving page numbers enables the reader to locate the specific item to which you refer.

NB: Where no page or paragraph number can be given for a source, such as on the web, it is acceptable to just give the name of the author/ organisation in () or to name the author and the source title in the sentence. You can also use 'n.pag.' for 'no pagination' in your works cited/ bibliography to indicate a lack of page numbering.

➤ **How do I show what type of source I am citing?**

In the MLA 8th Edition Handbook it is no longer required to provide the type of source. It is recommended, however, that you consider whether you should provide further information to enable your reader to locate a source. In order to identify the type of source for your reader, you can follow the MLA 7th Edition guidelines when listing sources in your works cited/ bibliography. One of the elements of your reference should be the medium of publication, such as: 'print', 'web', 'performance' or 'DVD'. The location of this information will vary slightly depending on the medium. For example:

"Exhibitions." *Dickens 2012*, 2013. Web. 1 May 2013. <http://www.dickens2012.org/section/exhibitions>. Online.

Yes, Prime Minister. By Jonathan Lynn. Dir. Jonathan Lynn. Perf. Graham Seed and Michael Simkins. Theatre Royal, York. 16 Apr. 2012. Performance.

➤ **What if I want to reference a work in an in-text citation that has more than one author?**

If a book or journal has one, two or three authors you should give all three names within your in-text citation and name all the authors in your works cited/ bibliography. For example:

In-text:

(Swales and Feak 87)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Swales, John M., and Christine B. Feak. *Academic writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills*. 2nd. U of Michigan Press, 2011.

If a book or journal has four or more authors you should give the name of the first author in-text, followed by et al. For example, (Moore et al. 26) and either list all named authors in the works cited/ bibliography or give the first author only. For example:

Moore, Sarah, Colin Neville, Maura Murphy, and Cornelia Connolly. *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook*. OU Press, 2010.

OR

Referencing with confidence: The MLA Style 5

Moore, Sarah, et al. *The Ultimate Study Skills Handbook*. OU Press, 2010.

NB: The authors' names should appear as they do on the source, with the first listed author being presented last name first, then first name/ initial. The subsequent author(s) should be presented with their first name/ initial and then last name.

MLA also allows for the abbreviation of commonly known and frequently used words, such as 'University' and 'Press', as in the examples above.

➤ What if an author I am referencing has published two or more works?

In this case, you can add a short description from the title to distinguish the two sources when using them in-text. For example:

(Horowitz, *Necropolis* 89) and (Horowitz, *Oblivion* 4).

You will then be able to distinguish between the two sources in the works cited/ bibliography. In the works cited/ bibliography, repeated use of the same author's name can be presented using '--' in place of the name in the second and subsequent uses of that author where all authors of the sources listed are the same. Order the sources alphabetically by title when the name is the same. For example:

Horowitz, Anthony. *Necropolis*. Walker, 2009.

---. *Oblivion*. London: Walker, 2012. Print.

If you are citing the same person but individually and in co-authored works you should write their name in full in the works cited/ bibliography for each source cited with different authors, for example:

Smith, Emma. *A History of Surrealism*. National Gallery, 2005.

Smith, Emma, and Anne Jones. *Surrealist Artists*. Easel Books, 2007.

--. *Joan Miro*. Easel Books, 2009.

Smith, Emma, James Jackson, and Anne Jones. *A Young Person's Guide to Surrealism*. National Gallery, 2009. Print.

➤ What if I am citing different authors with the same name?

If you are citing works by different authors with the same name, include the initial as well as the last name, or the full first name if the initial is also shared. For example:

(J. Smith 33; P. Smith 49)

Or

(John Smith 33; Jenny Smith 49)

➤ **What if I want to use a number of sources in one in-text citation?**

If, for example, you are pulling together a number of sources to support your argument, you may want to use a number of sources in one in-text citation. For example:

As is widely discussed... (Carroll 15; Mallon 52; Neville 75).

Sources should appear alphabetically, matching the order in which they will appear in your works cited/ bibliography.

➤ **What if I cannot locate the name of an author of a source?**

It is important to use quality sources to support your arguments and so you should carefully consider the value of using any source when you cannot identify its author. For online sources, look carefully for named contributors, such as in the 'about us' sections. For printed material, look carefully at the publication/ copyright information, which is often on the inside cover of a book or back page of a report.

If you cannot locate the author information, **do not** use 'Anon.' or 'Anonymous', instead you could use:

- The name of the organisation in place of the author – (British Museum 23)
- The title of the work/ webpage in the text, in full or in short form, in such a way as to easily locate the source in the list of works cited/ bibliography, with a page number if possible – (The Georgian Assembly Hall 23) OR (Georgian Assembly 23).

In the list of works cited/ bibliography, the work would then be listed alphabetically by the first major word of its title, that is, the above would be listed under G.

The Georgian Assembly Hall, York: Wright's Books, 1885. Print.

➤ **What if I cannot locate the date of a source?**

Knowing when a source was created, published, or last updated is important as this helps you to determine its currency. How current a source is relates, for example, to being contemporary to an event or containing the latest research findings. Sacred and classical works where dates are not given (precisely) are, however, also commonly used.

For online sources, look carefully for created and/ or last updated dates on the page(s).

If the source does not give the date, but you have found reference to it elsewhere, put the date in [] to indicate this, adding a ? to emphasise any uncertainty, for example:

John, Jeremy. *My Poems from the Trenches*. Knight Books, [1919?].

If you know an approximate date use 'c.', for 'circa', for example:

Singh, Gita. *Monsoon Heat*. Jaipur: Tiger, [c.1935]. Print.

If you cannot locate or estimate a publication date, use 'n.d.' for no date in place of the year.

➤ Should I include web addresses in an in-text citation?

No. If the website has an author, cite the source as you would anything else, for example (Gillett). If there is no author, use the organisation name for the web page (Dickens 2012). Include page or paragraph numbers if they are given, or if using multiple pages from a site, include the specific page in the citation, for example:

(Dickens 2012, "Literature and Education")

Or

If including the website name in your text, give only the page as the citation:

Dickens 2012 details various anniversary events ("Exhibitions"; "Festival & Outdoors").

Full details of the website will be given in the works cited/ bibliography.

Note also, that in this example, the website title is given in italics and the individual pages in quotation marks.

➤ Should I use secondary references/ indirect citations?

A secondary reference/ indirect citation is given when you are referring to a source which you have not read yourself, but have read about in another source, for example referring to Jones' work that you have read about in Smith. Avoid using secondary references wherever possible and locate the original source and reference that. Only give a secondary reference where this is not possible and you deem it essential to use the material. It is important to think carefully about using secondary references as the explanation or interpretation of that source by the author you have read may not be accurate.

Further information

See more extensive examples for this style online: University of York referencing guides and A to Z of examples www.york.ac.uk/integrity

'Referencing the Discussion' tutorial available in the Academic Skills Tutorials module on Yorkshire <http://vle.york.ac.uk>

MLA. *MLA Handbook*. 8th ed. MLA, 2016.

MLA. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. MLA, 2009.

MLA. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 3rd ed. MLA, 2008.

Purdue Online Writing Lab. MLA Formatting and Style Guide, 2017, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Neville, Colin. *The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. 3rd ed. Maidenhead: OU Press, 2016. Print.

Examples of the MLA Style

➤ Book (one author):

In-text:

(Burns 10)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Burns, Edward. *William Shakespeare: Richard III*. Northcote House, 2006.

➤ Book (two or three authors):

In-text:

(Bate and Thornton 105)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Bate, Jonathan, and Dora Thornton. *Shakespeare: Staging the World*. The British Museum Press, 2012.

➤ Book (four or more authors):

In-text:

(Mills et al. 45)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Mills, Sara, et al. *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

Or

Mills, Sara, Lynne Pearce, Sue Spaul, and Elaine Millard. *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

➤ Chapter in an edited book:

In-text: (Marenbon 47)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Marenbon, John. "The Medievals." *The Oxford Handbook of Causation*. Eds. Helen Beebee, Christopher Hitchcock and Peter Menzies. Oxford UP, 2009. 40-54.

➤ **Journal article:**

in-text:

(Ormrod 321)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Ormrod, W. Mark. "John Mandeville, Edward III, and the King of Inde." *The Chaucer Review* vol 46, no. 3, 2012: pp. 314-39.

➤ **Journal article (electronic):**

In-text:

(Chung 1.3)

Works cited/ bibliography:

Chung, Soh-young. "The Modality of the Textual Institutionalisation of Literary Studies: Towards a Sociology of Literature." *Sociological Research Online*, vol 16, no. 3, 2011: 3.

<http://socresonline.org.uk/16/3/3.html%3E>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2017.

NB: This web only publication uses paragraph numbers to help pinpoint parts of the text and so the paragraph number cited is given as a substitute for a page number. The date in the reference is the date the source was accessed.

➤ **Newspaper article (with author):**

In-text:

(Swain) OR Swain explains...

Works cited/ bibliography:

Swain, Harriet. "The Art of Doing an Assessed Assignment." *The Guardian: Education Supplement* 23 Sept. 2008: 11.

NB: It is not necessary to include a page number in the in-text citation for a single page source, but the page should be included, depending on the type of source, in the works cited/ bibliography.

➤ **Newspaper article (with no author):**

In-text:

("Shush Money") OR
"Shush Money" discusses...

Works cited/ bibliography:

"Shush Money." Leading Article. *The Times* 12 Apr. 2013: p. 2.

➤ **Secondary referencing:**

Secondary referencing should be avoided as far as possible and the original source consulted and cited. If it is essential to refer to a source indirectly follow:

In-text:

Fiorenza argues that feminist theologians need to avoid “apologetics” (qtd. in Thickstun 33).

Works cited/ bibliography:

Thickstun, Margaret Olofson. *Fictions of the Feminine: Puritan Doctrine and the Representation of Women*. Cornell UP, 1988.

NB: Only the source you have actually read is referenced in the works cited/ bibliography, however, you may include a note to give the publication details of the original source (Fiorenza in the example).

➤ **Website with author:**

In-text:

(Gillett)

Or

...Gillett, on “Writing a List of References”, outlines...

Works cited/ bibliography:

Gillett, Andy. “Writing a List of References.” UEAfP, 2012.
<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm> . Accessed 8 Mar. 2017

➤ **Website with no author:**

In-text:

(BBC)

Or

The BBC “Bronte Sisters” gives a brief overview of the authors’ relatively short lives.

Works cited/ bibliography:

“The Bronte Sisters (1818-1855).” BBC, 2013.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bronte_sisters.shtml. Accessed 8 Mar. 2017