Introduction to Modern Language Association (MLA) Style, 8th edition

MLA Style: What is it?
“MLA Style” refers to the publication style of the Modern Language Association. This handout summarizes in-text citations (also known as parenthetical citations). In-text citations are applicable to direct quotes and ideas borrowed from a source such as a book, play, or movie. Information and examples from this handout can be located in the MLA 8th Edition handbooks found around the WMC.

In-text citations

One author

If the author is mentioned within a sentence, the in-text citation will only need a page number. If the author is not mentioned within the sentence, then use both the author and page number at the end of the sentence.

Examples:
Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Two authors

The authors can be either mentioned directly within the sentence, or parenthetically at the end of a sentence. Be sure to use “and” between each author’s surname if you are using a parenthetical citation.

Examples:
Best and Marcus argue that one should read a text for what it says on its surface, rather than looking for some hidden meaning (9).

The authors claim that surface reading looks at what is “evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts” (Best and Marcus 9).

Three or more authors

The phrase “et al.” means “and others;” this is used when you have three or more authors.

Examples: Taylor et al. agree that tuna is the only fish fit for astronaut consumption (150).
Tuna has been posited to be the best type of fish for hungry astronauts (Taylor et al. 150).

**Two or more authors with the same last name**
*Use the author’s first initial followed by their surname in your citation.*

Example: Author Jeff Baron believes that literacy is comprised of only reading and not writing (12). Another viewpoint is that reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (N. Baron 194).

**One author with multiple works in one piece of writing**
*If you are citing from multiple sources from the same author, then include which particular source you citing from.*

Example: Reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (Baron, “Redefining” 194). Baron also believes that ability to articulate what one has read in a conversation is an invaluable skill (Baron, “Art of Conversation” 10).

**Anonymously written or an organization**
*When citing a source without an author, use a shortened version of the title in place of the author’s name. Be sure to italicize the title if it is a longer work such as a book or a play. Place quotation marks around shorter pieces such as an online article.*

Examples: Reading At Risk notes that despite a decline in reading during the same period, “the number of people doing creative writing - of any genre, not exclusively literary works - increased between 1982 and 2002” (3).

According to the Modern Language Association of America, documentation should be useful to readers (*MLA Handbook* 4).

**Text with paragraph numbers instead of page numbers**
*Some texts explicitly use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. Rather than use a page number for an in-text citation, replace the page number with the appropriate label (paragraph becomes para., paragraphs become paras., and section becomes sect.). If the author’s name is available, begin the parenthetical citation with their last name, followed by a comma and the appropriate label.*

Example: There is little evidence here for the claim that “Eagleton has belittled the gains of postmodernism” (Chan, par. 41).

**Text without page numbers and unnumbered paragraphs, sections, etc.**
*When using a source without page numbers, do not use unnumbered paragraphs, sections, etc. Instead, use the title of the text that you are citing from. This is common when using internet sources.*
Example: As we read we...construct the terrain of a book” (Hollmichel), something that is more difficult when the text reflows on a screen.

**For an in-text citation of a literary work that has multiple editions**

In addition to the page number; use division numbers such as chapter (ch.), paragraph (para.), etc. to help readers find your references in any edition of the book. Use semicolons to separate page numbers from any other division numbers. It is imperative that the edition of the source is listed on the Works Cited page under “version.”

Example: Austen begins the final chapter of *Mansfield Park* with a dismissive “[l]et other pens dwell,” thereby announcing her decision to avoid dwelling on the professions of love made by Fanny and Edmund (533; vol. 3, ch. 17).

**Audio and video recordings**

Use the title of the source followed by a timestamp when citing information from movies, television series, or YouTube videos. Italicize and wrap the source in quotation marks. Use a dash to indicate how long the quote is on-screen for.

Example: In a half-baked rebuttal to his bowling opponent The Dude mutters, “Yeah, well, that’s just like your opinion, man” (*The Big Lebowski* 00:03:16-23).

**An idea or fact comes from two different sources**

When two or more sources are positing the same idea, give credit to each author by using their last name followed by the page number that the information is found on.

Example: While reading may be the core of literacy, literacy can be complete only when reading is accompanied by writing (Baron 194; Jacobs 55).

**Indirect Sources**

Use the original source whenever it is possible; however, sometimes only an indirect source is available. An indirect source is a quotation of a source within a source: for instance, a spoken remark quoted in an article.

Example: Samuel Johnson admitted that Edmund Burke was an “extraordinary man” (qtd. In Boswell 2: 450).
What is a Works Cited page?
A Works Cited page is simply a list that shows your reader more information on the sources you cited from in your own work.

Formatting a Works Cited page
Like the title implies, the works cited page gets its own separate page from the rest of your research. After creating a new page, center the title “Works Cited.” Remember that a works cited page is alphabetized and each entry requires a hanging indent.

This chart is a succinct way of making sure that each of your entries has the proper information required. Begin with the author and work your way down. “Container” refers to where the source is found. For example, a source could be found within a container such as a magazine, website, or anthology. Depending on the source, your location might range from page numbers to a URL address.

If you are unable to location information such as the version or publication date, skip to the next required component of the entry.
Examples of Entries on a Works Cited page

Academic journal article written by one author

In this instance, the location is broken into separate parts since the source is originally from an academic journal but is located in a database.


* When citing multiple pages, use “pp.” in the location.
* Period after name, title of source, page numbers. Period after URL.

Author’s last name, first name. “Title of the source,” Title of container, Volume number, Issue number, Date of Publication, page numbers. Database and stable URL (or DOI—DOI is preferred).

Book with one author


Author’s last name, first name. Title of the source, Publisher, Publication date.

Book collection edited by three or more authors

Order the authors as they are presented in the source and separate each name with “and.” If there are more than three authors, write out the first author and use et al.


Author’s last name, first name [and] second author’s first name and last name. Title of the source, Publisher, Publication date.

Chapter in a book


Author’s last name, first name. Title of source [chapter]. Title of container [book]. Publisher, Publication date, page numbers.
Video from a website

Author [institution]. “Title of the source.” Title of container, Other contributors, Publication date, Location.