

MLA General Citation Guide (9th Edition)

General Rules

- **Containers.** MLA format makes *containers* an integral part of citation. A container is just a larger source that “contains” the piece being referenced (e.g., the journal in which an article is published, or the website where a source was found). If needed, it can be listed immediately after the source’s title. Standalone books do not need to have a container listed.
- **Parenthetical citations.** Parenthetical citations should be placed as closely to the idea/point as possible, and they should not interrupt the sentence. The citation is usually placed at the end of the sentence.
- **Primary and secondary sources.** Primary sources are preferred. However, a secondary source can be quoted or paraphrased with the abbreviation *qtd. in* (“quoted in”) before the in-text citation. *Example:* (qtd. in Boswell 2: 450).
- **Book chapters.** Some publications may not label their content with page numbers. Change the label as needed to cite, i.e. (ch., chs.).
- **Repeated source use.** If a source is used multiple times in the same paragraph and no other source is used, then a single parenthetical citation can be used after the last quote or paraphrase.
- **In-text citations.** In-text citations are used throughout a paper when directly quoting, **paraphrasing**, or summarizing a source.
- **Paraphrasing.** Paraphrasing is when you take the meaning or information from another person’s ideas and express it in your own words. When you paraphrase, you must still include an in-text citation for your reader to find the original work.

	In-Text Citations	Parenthetical	In-text and Parenthetical Citations: Overarching Rules
One author	As Austen says...(33).	Elizabeth Bennet states... (Austen 33).	<p>In-text citation: MLA format follows the “author-page” method of in-text citation.</p> <p>Location of in-text citation. The in-text citation is usually listed at the end of the sentence after the quotation or paraphrase is given.</p> <p>Three or more authors: Give the last name of the first listed author, and then follow it with <i>et al.</i> (and others).</p> <p>Corporate author: Abbreviate common terms by the normal standard, and if all names are given for a title in the works cited, then give all the names in the in-text citation.</p> <p>No author: Listing the title of the source is sufficient. A page number should still be included if available.</p>
Two authors	Dorris and Erdrich state... (23).	According to researchers, ... (Dorris and Erdrich 23).	
Three or more authors	Burdick et al. state... (42).	According to the authors, ... (Burdick et al. 42).	
Corporate author	The United States Department of Labor authorizes... (147).	Data collected in 2019 suggests... (United States Dept. of Labor 147).	
No author	As told in <i>Beowulf</i> ... (55).	Grendel’s mother says... (<i>Beowulf</i> 55).	

Reference Citations: Overarching Rules

- **Location.** The city of publication should only be listed if the book was published before 1900, the publisher has multiple offices, or the publisher is located outside of North America. However, the standard practice is not to give the source’s city of publication.
- **Dates.** Dates should be listed in the works cited using the day-month-year style; months may also be abbreviated.
- **Multiple authors.** When a source has three or more authors, reverse the name for the first listed author, then follow it with a comma and *et al.* (“and others”).
Puchner, Martin, editor, et al. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*...
- **No author.** If no author can be found for the source, do not list the author as “Anonymous.” Instead, omit the author’s name and start the entry with the source’s title.
Beowulf. Translated by Alan Sullivan and Timothy Murphy, edited by Sarah Anderson, Pearson, 2004.
- **Titles.** The title of a periodical (journal, magazine, or newspaper) or a book is given in italics, while the title of an article or shorter piece (e.g., a poem or song) is given in quotation marks.
- **Edited volumes.** While the editor is not considered the author for an edited volume of essays, literature, or other collected works, the editor still played a key role. However, since the editor did not create the source, the person’s name is followed by the title of “editor(s).”

Reference Citations

Articles (Scholarly Journals)	Author(s). “Title of Article.” <i>Title of Journal</i> , Volume, Issue, Year, Pages. Goldman, Anne. “Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante.” <i>The Georgia Review</i> , vol. 64, no. 1, 2010, pp. 66-88.
Books	Author. <i>Title of Book</i> . Publisher, Publication Year. Jacobs, Alan. <i>The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction</i> . Oxford UP, 2011.
Books with Two Authors	Last Name, First Name (of first listed author) and First Name Last Name (of second listed author). <i>Title of book</i> . Publisher, Publication Year. Dorris, Michael and Louise Erdrich. <i>The Crown of Columbus</i> . Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.
Edited Volumes	Author(s). Title of editor. <i>Title of Book</i> . Publisher, Publication Year. Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, editors. <i>The Female Imagination</i> . Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1986.

Plays	Author(s). <i>Title</i> , editor(s), Publisher, Publication Year. Shakespeare, William. <i>Hamlet</i> , edited by Barbara M. Mowat & Paul Werstine, Washington Square Press, 1992.
Works from Anthologies & Collections	Author(s). "Title of Essay/Poem/ Story, etc." <i>Title of Collection</i> , edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, Year, Pages. Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Masque of the Red Death." <i>The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe</i> , edited by James A. Harrison, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1902, pp. 250-58.
Websites	Editor or author name (if available). <i>Name of Site</i> . Version Number, Name of Sponsor or Publisher, Date, URL, DOI or Permalink, Date of Access (if available). Hunn, Nicole. <i>Gluten Free on a Shoestring</i> . 2019, glutenfreeonashoestring.com .
YouTube Videos	Author or creator name (if available). "Name of Video." <i>YouTube</i> , Name of Uploader, Date of Upload, URL. Green, John. "Pride and Prejudice Part 1: Crash Course Literature 411." <i>YouTube</i> , uploaded by Crash Course, 6 Feb 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xTh44G6RYs .

MLA Headings, Tables, and Figures

Essay Formatting	Tables and Figures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title pages. Title pages are discouraged unless specifically requested by a professor. • Essay information. Essays in MLA format should begin on the upper left-hand side. On the first page, list your name, the professor's name, the course, and the date on different lines. <i>Example:</i> Marlene Schultz Professor Hahn English 1A 7 September 2022 • Double spacing. Each line should be double-spaced unless specified differently by the professor. • Paragraph indentation. The first line of a paragraph should be indented one-half inch from the left margin. MLA recommends using a computer's tab button. • Margins. All papers written in MLA format should have 1-inch margins on all sides of the paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each chart, table, or illustration embedded into a document should include a label, a number, a caption, and/or source information. • MLA format cites figures and tables in note form, so figures do not have to be included in the works cited; the source information listed with the figure provides the citation. • The label for the figure should be included in two places: the body of the document and near the figure itself. <i>Example:</i> Marc Chagall's use of color can be seen in one of his paintings, <i>Rain</i> (see fig. 1).  <p>The painting 'Rain' by Marc Chagall depicts a vibrant, abstract scene. In the foreground, a dark dog is visible. To the right, there is a wooden house with a yellow roof and a small figure on the porch. A large, colorful tree with red and orange blossoms stands in the center. The background features a dark sky with a white bird and a yellow sun or moon. The overall style is characteristic of Chagall's early work, with bold colors and expressive forms.</p>
<p>Fig. 1. An early painting from Marc Chagall currently in the Guggenheim Museum; <i>Rain</i>; Guggenheim; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 9 August 2019, www.guggenheim.org/artwork/790.</p>	

Suggested Heading Guide

<p>Multiple heading levels. MLA format does not have a specific heading system, but it offers some style suggestions. A system of multiple heading levels might require a key for the instructor or editor to reference.</p> <p>First level heading: (Bold, flush left)</p> <p>Second level heading: <i>(Italicized, flush left)</i></p> <p>Third level heading: (Centered, bold)</p> <p>Fourth level heading: <i>(Centered, italicized)</i></p> <p>Fifth level heading: <u>(Underlined, flush left)</u></p>	<p>Essay sections. Essays can be divided into sections; MLA recommends numbering each section with an Arabic number and a period, followed by a space and section title.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early Childhood and Education 2. The Elizabethan Comedies 3. The Jacobean Comedies 4. Death and Burial <p>Titles for sections. Titles should be grammatically similar to one another (parallel in structure); long titles should not be interspersed with short, quippy titles, etc.</p>
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This guide is based on the 9th edition of the MLA handbook.