



MLA Documentation Style

This unit presents information on MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style, 9th edition, a system used in the humanities to acknowledge the sources that you borrow from when you write a research paper.

WHY DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCES?

1. To give credit to the sources you have borrowed from to make your paper stronger.
2. To show your credibility: readers can trust you because you care enough about your subject to do research on it to support your own ideas and opinions with the ideas and opinions of expert sources.
3. To let readers know where they can get further information about your topic.
4. To let readers look for themselves at your sources so they can draw their own conclusions.
5. To avoid plagiarism (sometimes called “literary theft”), a serious academic offense in which writers borrow words or ideas from a source and present them as if they were their own.

WHAT IS A SOURCE?

A source is any person, place, or thing from which you borrow information for your paper. Most commonly, it is an article from a journal, magazine, website, or database. It might also be a book, a *YouTube* video, movie, a song, a personal interview. . . . The list goes on.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A SOURCE IS GOOD?

The *MLA Handbook* suggests that you ask the following questions to help you evaluate the quality of a source:

1. Who is the author of the source? What are the author’s credentials?
2. What is the source? Does it have a title? If it lacks a title, how would you describe it?
3. Who is the publisher of the source? Is it a publishing company? A reputable organization?
4. Where did you find the source? Is it in a book? In a journal? On the Web?
5. When was the source published? Is it possible that the source is out of date?

If you cannot find satisfactory answers to most of these questions, the source you are looking at is probably not good.



WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED ABOUT YOUR SOURCES TO DOCUMENT THEM PROPERLY?

The *MLA Handbook* suggests the following:

1. Name of author(s).
2. Title of source.
3. Title of “container” (book, website, magazine, newspaper, etc.),
4. Other contributors (editor, translator, etc.),
5. Version (9th ed., updated ed., etc.),
6. Number (vol. 1, no. 15, etc.),
7. Publisher (Harvard UP, Bedford/St. Martin’s, etc.),
8. Publication date,
9. Location (pages or URL).

Note: MLA no longer requires a date of access for online sources unless the source does not have a publication date.

PART 1: MLA WORKS CITED PAGE

- It appears at the end of your paper and provides publication information for all the sources you borrow from within your paper.
- Each of the sources cited in your paper must have an entry on the Works Cited page.
- The sources in the Works Cited should be double-spaced and in alphabetical order.

Here is the general formula to make an MLA Works Cited entry:

Author. Title. Title of Container (if there is one), Other Contributors (if there are any), version (if there is one), number (if there is one), Publisher, publication date, location (if there is one).

Here is an example of a Works Cited page:

Works Cited

- Auden, W.H. *Lectures on Shakespeare*. Edited by Arthur Kirsch, Princeton UP, 2000.
- Bachrach, Hailey. "The Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2017." *Shakespeare Newsletter*, vol. 67, no. 1, Fall-Winter 2017, pp. 14-21. *Literature Resource Center*, go.galegroup.com.
- Crystal, David, and Ben Crystal. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. Preface by Stanley Wells. Penguin Books, 2002.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. Anchor Books, 2008.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, et al., editors. *The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.
- Hamlet*. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Performances by Branagh, Julie Christie, Derek Jacobi, and Kate Winslet, Columbia Pictures, 1996.
- "*Hamlet*." *Rotten Tomatoes*, Fandango, <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1075422-hamlet>. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- Holland, Peter. "Shakespeare, William." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 12 Aug. 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25200>.
- Howes, Sophia. "Review: 'Hamlet' at Shakespeare Theatre Company's Free for All." *DC Theater Arts*, 18 July 2019, <https://dctheaterarts.org/2019/07/18/hamlet-free-for-all/>.
- "Ian McKellen: Understanding King Lear, the Character." *YouTube*, uploaded by Staging Shakespeare, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahFtoCq6CHw&t=35s>. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.
- MLA Handbook*. 9th ed., Modern Language Assn. of America, 2021.

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. *The Bedford Shakespeare*, edited by Russ McDonald and

Lena Cowen Orlin, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015, pp. 886-943.

“Sonnet.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/sonnet>. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

“William Shakespeare.” *Biography*, A&E Television Networks, 24 Apr. 2015, <https://www.biography.com/writer/william-shakespeare>.

FREE CITATION GENERATORS ONLINE

There are several free citation generators available online, which can be a big help in creating Works Cited entries for your sources. Here are some good citation generators:

ZoteroBib: <https://zbib.org/>

EasyBib: <https://www.easybib.com/>

CiteFast: <https://www.grafiati.com/en/blogs/citefast-alternative/>

However, be sure to check the accuracy of the results you get from these generators. See examples in this unit for proper Works Cited format.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED ENTRIES

Book

Basic Format

Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. *Title of Book*. Name of Publisher, Year of Publication.



Book with One Author

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. Anchor Books, 2008.

Book with Two Authors

Crystal, David, and Ben Crystal. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. Preface by Stanley Wells. Penguin Books, 2002.

Book with More Than Two Authors

Greenblatt, Stephen, et al., editors. *The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

[Note: Use the abbreviation "et al." (Latin for "and others") after the first author's name if the source has more than two authors.]

Book with No Author

MLA Handbook. 9th ed., Modern Language Assn. of America, 2021.

Book with an Author and an Editor

Auden, W.H. *Lectures on Shakespeare*. Edited by Arthur Kirsch, Princeton UP, 2000.

Work in an Anthology

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. *The Bedford Shakespeare*, edited by Russ McDonald and Lena Cowen Orlin, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015, pp. 886-943.



Article in a Print or Web Source

Basic Format

Print

Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal, Magazine, or Newspaper*, volume and issue number (if available), date of publication, page numbers.

Web

Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Article." *Name of Website*, Publisher or Sponsor of Website (if different from the name of the website), date of publication, URL or DOI.

Article in a Web Source

Howes, Sophia. "Review: 'Hamlet' at Shakespeare Theatre Company's Free for All." *DC Theater Arts*, 18 July 2019, <https://dctheaterarts.org/2019/07/18/hamlet-free-for-all/>.

Article with No Author

"William Shakespeare." *Biography*, A&E Television Networks, 24 Apr. 2015, <https://www.biography.com/writer/william-shakespeare>.

Journal Article from a Library Database

Bachrach, Hailey. "The Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2017." *Shakespeare Newsletter*, vol. 67, no. 1, Fall-Winter 2017, pp. 14-21. *Literature Resource Center*,



go.galegroup.com.

[Note: Most academic journals have volume and issue numbers.]

Article or Entry in an Encyclopedia or Dictionary

With an Author

Holland, Peter. "Shakespeare, William." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 12 Aug. 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25200>.

Without an Author

"Sonnet." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/sonnet>. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

[Note: Date of access is recommended for sources that have no date.]

Other Sources

Film

Hamlet. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Performances by Branagh, Julie Christie, Derek Jacobi, and Kate Winslet, Columbia Pictures, 1996.

YouTube Video

"Ian McKellen: Understanding King Lear, the Character." *YouTube*, uploaded by Staging Shakespeare, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahFtoCq6CHw&t=35s>. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

MORE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WORKS CITED PAGES

- It is alphabetized.
- Its entirety is double-spaced.



- “Hanging” indents are used to make the authors’ names more visible.
- Months are indicated as follows: Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.

For more information about the Works Cited, see the *MLA Handbook*, 9th ed.; the *Purdue OWL* website; or the free handouts in the Writing Center or on the Writing Center webpage.

PART 2: MLA QUOTING AND PARAPHRASING

The two main ways to borrow information from a source and include it in your paper are **quoting** and **paraphrasing**.

- A **quotation** is an exact borrowing of words from a source, and those borrowed words are put in quotation marks.
- A **paraphrase** is the borrowing of an idea from a source, and that borrowed idea is written in your own words. A paraphrase is not put in quotation marks.

[Note: A paraphrase is not a summary of an entire work; rather, it is the borrowing of an idea or two from a source.]

MLA IN-TEXT CITATION STYLE

MLA suggests an in-text citation style that uses a minimum of clutter to match the quotations and paraphrases in your paper with the publication information about the sources in your Works Cited.

HERE IS THE BASIC FORMULA:

Introductory word group/phrase of attribution that mentions
author’s name and perhaps some additional information
+
“Exact words borrowed enclosed in quotation marks” or
paraphrase
+
(page number of source, if available, where the borrowed
material appears).



QUOTATION AND PARAPHRASE EXAMPLES

Now, here are some examples of effective quoting and paraphrasing:

Quotation with Author in Phrase of Attribution

In a recent *Shakespeare Newsletter* article, Hailey Bachrach contends, “The big question in *Julius Caesar* in most cases is how to make all five acts seems necessary” (14).

Quotation with Author in Parentheses

A recent *Shakespeare Newsletter* article contends, “The big question in *Julius Caesar* in most cases is how to make all five acts seems necessary” (Bachrach 14).

Paraphrase with Author in Phrase of Attribution

W.H. Auden, in *Lectures on Shakespeare*, maintains that Hamlet’s soliloquies are not well integrated into the play (159).

Paraphrase with Author in Parentheses

At least one notable critic maintains that Hamlet’s soliloquies are not well integrated into the play (Auden 159).

Quotation with Author in Phrase of Attribution, Page Number Unknown

In a review of a recent performance of *Hamlet*, Sophia Howes repeats a familiar truism: “*Hamlet* is being performed somewhere every single minute of every single day.”

Quotation with Author in Parentheses, Page Number Unknown

A review of a recent performance of *Hamlet* repeats a familiar truism: “*Hamlet* is being performed somewhere every single minute of every single day” (Howes).

Paraphrase with Author in Phrase of Attribution, Page Number Unknown

In the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Peter Holland mentions that Shakespeare wrote the tragedies *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1605 and 1606.



Paraphrase with Author in Parentheses, Page Number Unknown

Shakespeare wrote the tragedies *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1605 and 1606 (Holland).

Quotation with Author Unknown, Article or Book Title in Phrase of Attribution

The article “William Shakespeare” on the *Biography* website explains that “Shakespeare’s early plays were written in the conventional style of the day, with elaborate metaphors and rhetorical phrases that didn’t always align naturally with the story’s plot or characters.”

Paraphrase with Author Unknown, Article or Book Title in Parentheses

The forward slash mark (/) is used to indicate line breaks when quoting three or fewer lines of poetry from as source (MLA 256).

[Note: Titles mentioned parenthetically, whether they are of books or of titles, may be shortened.]

Paraphrase with Two Authors

It has been suggested that the characters in *Hamlet* can be divided into seven circles: the Danish Court, the Soldiers, the Norwegian army, the Sailors, the English Ambassadors, the Players, and the Graveyard (Crystal and Crystal 529).

Paraphrase with More Than Two Authors

It is possible that Shakespeare did no acting during 1592-94, which were the plague years (Greenblatt et al. 1106).

[Note: For sources with more than 2 authors, the abbreviation “et al.” is used after the first author’s name.]

Indirect Source (Source Quoted in Another Source)

According to Irene Sharaff, the costume designer of *West Side Story*, “The T-shirt in the fifties was worn solely as underwear” (qtd. in Garber 49).

[Note: Sharaff is mentioned in the introductory phrase, and the parenthetical citation indicates that Sharaff’s words are quoted by Garber on page 49. Garber, and not Sharaff, should appear in the Works Cited as the source.]



Block Quotation (More Than Four Lines)

Marjorie Garber, in *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, comments on a well-known artistic strategy:

The play-within-the-play has strong roots in the early modern period. In Shakespeare’s time the device was constantly exploited, by revenge tragedies and comedies alike. The revenger in Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* contrives to kill his enemies during the plot of a play they are performing. Both *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* present the spectacle of onstage audiences watching plays that—although they do not realize it—tell versions of their own stories, to comic effect. (220)

[Note: Long quotations are indented, and quotation marks around them are unnecessary.]

HELPFUL VERBS FOR MLA QUOTING AND PARAPHRASING

according to	defines	observes
agrees	denies	points out
argues	describes	rejects
asks	disputes	relates
asserts	emphasizes	reports
believes	explains	responds
boasts	extols	reveals
claims	finds	says
comments	holds	sees
compares	illuminates	shows
concedes	illustrates	speculates
considers	implies	states
contends	infers	suggests
contrasts	insists	thinks
declares	maintains	warns
defends	notes	writes



More Examples of Quotations and Paraphrases

Quotation 1

In a review of a recent performance of *Hamlet*, Sophia Howes repeats a familiar truism: “*Hamlet* is being performed somewhere every single minute of every single day.”

Paraphrase 1

Indeed, as many have observed, pick a time of day, and a production of *Hamlet* is playing somewhere on the planet (Howes).

Quotation 2

In a recent *Shakespeare Newsletter* article, Hailey Bachrach contends, “The big question in *Julius Caesar* in most cases is how to make all five acts seems necessary” (14).

Paraphrase 2

Julius Caesar seems to lose so much energy toward the end that one wonders if the play should be shortened to three or four acts (Bachrach 14).

Quotation 3

The most recent *MLA Handbook* advises “using a forward slash with a space on each slide (/) to indicate to your reader where the line breaks fall” (256).

Paraphrase 3

The forward slash mark (/) is used to indicate line breaks when quoting poetry (MLA 256).



Exercise 1: MLA Documentation

"We usually think of inequalities as extending from bottom to top: I earn a little wealth over eight hours; Bill Gates earns much more." --p. 25

Author: Nathan Heller

Article title: "Share and Share Alike"

Pages: 44-53

Magazine title: *The New Yorker*

Date: August 1, 2022

1. Write an MLA works cited entry for this source.

2. Quote a portion of the passage above as an MLA in-text citation.



Exercise 2: MLA Documentation

“From the beginning, the WNBA—which was born of the NBA’s approval in the NBA’s cities with NBA teams’ colors and largely NBA-related names and which survived a challenge from the ABL by virtue of its NBA affiliation—has featured a more stringent age eligibility rule than the NBA.”
—p. 602

Author: N. Jeremi Duru

Article title: "Hoop Dreams Deferred: The WNBA, the NBA, and the Long-Standing Gender Inequity at the Game’s Highest Level"

Name of Journal: *Utah Law Review*

Volume Number: 2015

Issue Number: 3

Date of Publication: 2015

Pages 559-603

URL: <https://dc.law.utah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1096&context=ulr>

1. Write an MLA works cited entry for this source.

2. Paraphrase a portion of the passage above as an MLA in-text citation.