

# MLA Style Basics

To find out how to format or cite anything not covered in this handout, consult *MLA Handbook*. 8<sup>th</sup>ed. (LB 2369 .G53 2016) or the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). Or ask a librarian!

## Format

Papers should have 1" margins on all sides and all text should be double spaced, using 10 - 12 pt. font size. Each page should have a header with your last name and page number in the upper right hand corner. In the upper left of the first page, list your name, instructor's name, course, and date. Next, centered on the page, is the title of the paper.

At the end of the paper, on a separate page, is the **Works Cited** list. Put "Works Cited" as a title on the page (no quotation marks), centered. List all sources **cited** in the paper, alphabetized by authors' last names, double spaced, and using hanging indents.

If a work has two authors, invert only the first author's name, follow it with a comma, "and", and the second author's name. For three or more authors, list the first one inverted, followed by a comma and "et al." Editor, translator, or compiler names listed on the title page should be followed by a comma and the appropriate title. If an author has more than one entry on your list, the listing for the second entry should be replaced with three hyphens and a period. Items without an author are listed by title.

## In-Text (Parenthetical) Citations

The author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quote is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in the Works Cited list. If more than one author has the same last name, add author's initials (full name if authors share initials) in the citation. If you cite more than one work by an author, include a shortened title for the source from which you are quoting. Examples of in-text citations:

Freud states that "a dream is the fulfillment of a wish" (154). Some argue that "a dream is the fulfillment of a wish" (Freud 154).

Short quotations (less than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) are incorporated in the text, placed within double quotation marks. Place longer quotations in a free-standing block, on a new line, indented half an inch from the left margin and without quotation marks.

## Works Cited

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

MLA 9 uses the concept of Containers for the Works Cited list. A container is the publication or website where your source was found.

A source can stand on its own or have one or more containers. There are 9 core elements that are part of a citation. Using the list of elements you can create a citation for any source. Note that not all sources will have all 9 elements.

A book usually stands on its own as a source and container. If it has one author, the citation will be (the numbers in superscript refer to the element – don't include them in your actual citation):

Author last name, First name.<sup>1</sup> Title of the Book.<sup>2( and 3)</sup>  
Publisher,<sup>7</sup> Publication Date.<sup>8</sup>

Henley, Patricia. The Hummingbird House. MacMurray, 1999.

An essay in a book, a journal article, or a tv show, are found in a larger container – the book, journal, channel or website where the show was accessed. In this case you go through the list of elements twice. Let's take the example of a journal article. The

article is your source, published in a journal of which you have a print copy, which becomes the first container:

Author last name, First name.<sup>1</sup> "Title of the Article."<sup>2</sup> *Title of the Journal*,<sup>3</sup> volume,<sup>5</sup> issue,<sup>6</sup> year,<sup>8</sup> pages.<sup>9</sup>

Buhaug, Halvard. "Climate Change And Conflict: Taking Stock." *Peace Economics, Peace Science, & Public Policy*. vol. 22, no. 4, 2016, pp. 331- 38.

## MLA Template

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

From *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.), published by the Modern Language Association ([style.mla.org](http://style.mla.org)).

If the article was not accessed in print, but using one of the library databases, a second container comes into play:

Author last name, First name<sup>1</sup>. "Title of the Article."<sup>2</sup> *Title of the Journal*,<sup>3</sup> volume,<sup>5</sup> issue,<sup>6</sup> year,<sup>8</sup> pages.<sup>9</sup> *Title of the Database*<sup>3(second container)</sup>, DOI or permalink.<sup>9 (second container)</sup>

Buhaug, Halvard. "Climate Change And Conflict: Taking Stock." *Peace Economics, Peace Science, & Public Policy*. vol. 22, no. 4, 2016, pp. 331- 38. *Business Source Complete*. Doi: 10.1515/peps-2016-0034.

If you include a URL as location, do not include "http://" or "https://." And if the source was found on the open web, where there is a good chance the site may change, include the date you accessed the source. For example this is a citation for a tv series episode accessed on Hulu (again, you would not include the subscript referring to the elements):

"Under the Gun."<sup>2</sup> *Pretty Little Liars*,<sup>3</sup> season 4, episode 6<sup>6</sup>, ABC Family,<sup>7</sup> 16 July 2013.<sup>8</sup> *Hulu*,<sup>3(second container)</sup> [www.hulu.com/watch/511318](http://www.hulu.com/watch/511318).<sup>9</sup> Accessed 23 July 2013.

Revised for Ozuna Library, 8/10/21, T.O. Gonsalves

