MLA Citation Video Tutorial

Transcript

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In this video, we will cover the following topics:

- What MLA citations are and when and why you might use them
- How to format MLA citations for your reference list and for in-text citations
- What MLA citations look like for different source types
- Where to find more information when you have an unusual or tricky source

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- MLA stands for the Modern Language Association. This organization puts out a style manual that gives guidance on both writing and citing papers, and is popular in research and writing in the humanities disciplines, such as literature, philosophy, and history.

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- MLA citations can be divided into two main types: Reference list citations and in-text citations. The reference list goes at the end of the work and lists all the sources that you cited in text. The reference list sources are in alphabetical order by author.
- In-text citations are included in the body of the work when you quote, paraphrase, or otherwise refer to a source.
- Everything listed in the reference list should be cited in text, and everything cited in text should also be cited in the reference list.

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- Regardless of style, all citations include information that tells the reader who created the source, what it is called, and when and where it was created.
- The MLA style guide is currently on its 8th edition. This edition is made to be adaptable to a wide variety of sources, some of which we will cover here.

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All MLA citations can include the following elements, in this order:

- Author.
- Title of source.
• Title of container,
• Other contributors,
• Version,
• Number,
• Publisher,
• Publication date,
• Location.

Depending on the source you are using, you might only use some of these elements in your citation. Let’s go through each one to explain. Begin the citation with the author of the work, in the format of last name, comma, and then the rest of the name, and end it with a period. Following that, add the title of the source. This could be a book title, article title, web page title, or other type of source.

Next is the title of the container. The container refers to the larger whole in which the source is located. For example, when citing a journal article, the source would be the article, and the container would be the journal in which the article is published.

Other contributors can refer to editors, illustrators, translators, or anyone else who contributed to the source who should be credited. Following that, version is used when citing a specific edition or version of a work.

Number could refer to a volume number of a book, or a volume and issue number of a journal. It could also be the number of a report or episode, depending on the type of source being cited.

Next, list the publisher of the work, followed by the publication date, and finally the location. The location shows the reader where to go to find the work. It could be a specific page range, a physical location, or a URL or DOI. A DOI is a digital object identifier, which is a unique number assigned to a digital item, such as an eBook or journal article.

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This sounds complicated, but could be as simple as the following book citation. The author, Edward W. Said, is listed first, followed by the title of the source—because this is a book, there is no larger container to include—and then by the publisher and publication date. Notice that book titles are italicized and put in what is called title case, which means capitalizing all words except for articles, conjunctions, and prepositions.

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Here is an example of a citation that does include a container. In this example, the source is the short story “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid. The container is the book The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories. This book was edited by Tobias Wolff, who is listed here in the ‘other contributor’ field. Following the author, the title of the source, the title of the container, and the other contributor, are the publication date and location, which in this case is a page range, showing where the short story is located in the book.
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MLA citations can even have containers within containers. In this example, the source is the article “Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England” by Claire Langhamer. The container is the journal *Historical Journal*. The larger container is the database *ProQuest*. This citation contains the author, the title of the source, the title of the containers, the volume and issue numbers associated with the work, and the locations (the page range and digital object identifier). There is also a date of access. The MLA Handbook recommends using a date of access, meaning the date you accessed the material, for online works, as they might change or move at any time. Finally, remember to pay attention to things like where to put quotation marks, italics, and capitalization.

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The typical format for in-text citations in MLA style is a combination of the last name of the author (or authors, if there are more than one), followed by a page number or page number range. These can both be in parentheses after referencing a source in-text, or just the page number can be in parentheses if the author is named in the sentence.

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When using a source that does not have page numbers, use different types of ranges as they are applicable. For instance, for in-text citations for media, include the range of hours, minutes, and seconds you are referencing. For in-text citations of poems, use line numbers instead of page numbers – though remember to still refer to the page location of the poem itself in the works cited list.

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If you have questions about aspects of APA citations that we did not cover in this video, we recommend checking out the following APA resources:

- The MLA Formatting and Style Guide from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL)
  - This resource provides examples of citations for many different types of sources. It also provides information on formatting your paper in APA style.
- The Citing Sources guide from the WPI Library
  - This guide provides examples of MLA citations for a variety of sources, and links out to other helpful guides.

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If you have any questions about citations, you can also, of course, ask one of the librarians here at WPI, and we are happy to help.