

HOW TO CITE IN MLA STYLE

In this video, we are going to look at how to cite sources properly using MLA style. We'll cover where you need to cite, what information you need, and how to format your citations.

WHERE DO YOU NEED CITATIONS?

First, where do you need to put citations?

Citations come in two parts. The first part is in your paper, at the end of every sentence that uses ideas from a source. This lets readers know which source you used, and is called an in-text citation. Then, the second part is at the end of your paper where you give a list called Works Cited, which has all the sources you cited in-text in your paper. For each source, you need to give the information that you would need if you wanted to locate a copy of it.

The two parts work together. The in-text citations refer to the full information about the source listed in the list of references at the end. You need to have both parts to cite correctly and avoid plagiarism.

WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED?

Next, we'll look at what information you need to create a citation.

MLA requires specific pieces of information about each of your sources. These include the author, the title, the title of the item that the source is located in, the number, publisher, date, and location. These pieces of information look a bit different for different types of sources.

For a scholarly journal article, you'll need the author of the article and the title of the article. You'll also need the title of the journal the article is published in, the volume and issue, and the date. You'll also need the location of the article, or the pages. The same information is required for articles whether they are found in print or online. Don't list the database you found the article in, like Proquest.

For a book, you'll need the authors, the book title, the publisher, and the publication year.

Some books have chapters written by different people. If that's the case, you'll need to cite the individual chapter rather than the book. You'll need information on the chapter's author and title, the title of the book that the chapter is published in, the editors of the book, the publisher, year, and the chapter pages.

Web sites don't always have as much information available. Sometimes, for example, you might not find an author or a date. You'll need to provide all the information you can find, though, including the author, the title of the page, the title of the web site or the organization the site is published by, the date, and the page url. Just because you find a source online, it doesn't mean you should cite it as a web site. If you're using an online article or book, you'll need to cite it as an article or a book, not as a web site.

HOW DO YOU FORMAT THE INFORMATION?

Next, we'll look at how you format your citations.

In MLA style, you need to put information in brackets at the end of every sentence in your paper where you refer to a source. What you include in the brackets depends on how you refer to the source. If you mention an idea from a source, either in quotes or in your own words, include the author's last name, a space, then the page number. If you mention the author's name in your sentence, you only need to include the page number.

Then, at the end of your paper you give a list called Works Cited, which has all the sources with in-text citations in your paper. This list should be in alphabetical order by author last name.

MLA style has rules on how to arrange and format all this information into a citation. As we've seen, each type of source uses somewhat different information in the citation and is formatted somewhat differently. You need to follow the correct formatting for your type of source.

Here's how to cite a scholarly article. First, list the author, last name first, followed by their first name spelled out in full. Next, put the title of the article in quotation marks, giving each word a capital letter and ending with a period. After the article title, put the title of the journal that the article was published in. It should be in italics, with every word capitalized, and end with a comma. Next list the journal volume, then the issue of the journal, both followed by a comma. After that list the year the article was published, with a comma. Then list the pages of the article, followed by a period.

This is what a journal article citation in MLA style should look like in your Works Cited list. As you can see, small details like punctuation and italics make a difference, so pay attention to them.

You'll need to refer to a guide to MLA style that lists all the citation rules you need to follow for different types of sources, like books. You'll find links on this page.

CITATION TOOLS

Those are the basics of citing in MLA style, but let's take a quick look at some tools to make citing easier.

There are lots of automated tools out there to help make citing easier. Some are a lot more accurate than others. The Library supports two, Mendeley and Zotero. You can use these tools to insert citations as you write and automatically format both the in-text citations and list of references in MLA style.

None of these tools are perfect, though, so you'll still need to double check to be sure all your citations are properly formatted.

QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

If you have any questions, please ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus