

A Quick Guide to MLA Style (9th Edition)

Modern Language Association, or MLA style, is one of the most common ways of citing sources and is frequently seen in English and Writing classes, including WRT 120, 130, and 150 classes at Grand Valley State University. MLA focuses on writers and their works, which is why author(s) and titles are the first pieces of information in sources on the Work(s) Cited page.

Work(s) Cited Page

The handbook for MLA is currently in its 9th edition, but the container (order of items cited) has remained the same from the previous edition. A given source might not have each of these items (such as other contributors) but it is important to include as much information as possible for your source.

*Note: Location does not refer to physical location (except in some cases of citing art housed in a particular location), but rather to the location of your quoted material in the source. This is often page number for texts, and URL/DOIs for work accessed online.

Book (eBook, PDF, hard copy):

Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. The Viking Press, 1973.

Article in an online database:

Alim, Samy. "Street Conscious Copula Variation in Hip Hop Nation Language." *American Speech*, vol. 77, no. 3, *Project Muse*, Fall 2002, <https://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/article/2856>.

Work from a website:

Beaubien, Jason. "Why Healthy Teens are Taking a Daily Anti-Aids Pill." *NPR*, 21 Jul. 2016, www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/07/21/486599013/why-healthy-teens-are-taking-a-daily-anti-aids-pill.

*Note: Some websites do not have one specific author. In this case, list the corporation that runs the website as your author (both for Works Cited and in-text citations). For example, if this source above did not have Jason Beaubien listed as the author, you can use NPR as both the author and container.

Important Considerations

- For three or more authors, only write the first listed author's name followed by et al.
- When specifying volume and issue number, abbreviate these terms and write it as "vol. 41, no.3"
- When indicating page number in the location space, use "p." for a single page and "pp."
 - for multiple pages. (p. 25, or pp. 25-30). *Note: these markers are not used for in-text citations*
- When information is missing, do not use markers like "n.d." for "no date," but rather leave the information out and move on to the next available piece of information.
- Be sure to list sources in alphabetical order by author's last name. If an entry lacks an author, simply go by the first eligible word in the source title. *Note: when alphabetizing titles, ignore*



initial articles (A, An, The, or the equivalent in other languages.)

- When citing multiple sources by the same author, give the author's name in the first entry only. Any subsequent entries should replace the author's name with three em dashes (or, if using hyphens, three hyphens).

Boroff, Marie. *Language and the Poet: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore*. U of Chicago P, 1979.

———. "Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Robert Frost." *PMLA*, vol. 107, no.1, Jan. 1992, pp. 131-44. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/462806>.

In-Text Citations

The goal of MLA in-text citations is to quickly direct your reader to the corresponding entry in your Work(s) Cited list. Thus, in-text citations should match source material in your paper with the source information on your Work(s) Cited page. Readers will look for the first bit of information for each Work(s) Cited entry, and this is usually the author's name. Where applicable, include a page number, indicated only by the number.

One or Two Author(s)

- Alim and Smitherman state that "[insert quoted material]" (78).
- "[Insert quoted material]" (Alim and Smitherman 78).

3+ Authors

- *Referring to authors in prose:* You can either list all authors or write the first author's name followed by "and others" or "and colleagues." The second option is useful to shorten information in your essay, rather than write out a long list of authors.
 - Peter Brown and colleagues state that..."
- *Parenthetical citation:* List the last name of the first author followed by "et al."
 - "[Inserted quoted material]" (Brown et al. 103).

Note: If your cited material runs to more than one page, give the range of pages (123-24 or 33-34).

Note: When you have multiple authors with the same last name, include their first initials to distinguish. (A. Smitherman and B. Smitherman state, "[...])"

Note: For concision, when a title is needed in a parenthetical citation, you may use a shortened version of the title if it is longer than a noun phrase.

Style and Formatting

- Use Times New Roman 12 pt. font throughout your entire paper
- Everything should be double-spaced
- Dates will appear with the day first, followed by the month abbreviated to three letters,
 - and then the year (eg. 25 Jul. 2010)
- Put your name, your professor's name, your class, and the date in the top left corner. (Your title will follow this information.)
- Your paper title and the title of your Work(s) Cited page should be center aligned with no special formatting or quotation marks
- If using a header, include your last name and a page number separated by a space in the
 - upper righthand corner of the page
- All Work(s) Cited entries should feature the use of a hanging indent

