Easy MLA Documentation

It's not difficult to use the MLA Documentation System when quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing source information in a paper. Citation Generators such as RefWorks, EasyBib, and others will create Works Cited entries for you. So why learn to do it yourself?

Because Citation Generators don't always get it right. They may create an entry that doesn't include pertinent source information, or doesn't indent where necessary, or doesn't put your list in alphabetical order. Or your finger slips, and you inadvertently choose APA or Chicago and don't notice. Knowing what Works Cited entries and in-text citations look like will help you to spot, and fix, the citations that aren't quite right.

Since 2016, Works Cited entries are created based on a list of core elements, not on the source's publication format. Examples of how entries for various formats should look (such as for a book, magazine, scholarly journal, or Web page) are still available in the latest *MLA Handbook*, and on *The Purdue OWL* website (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/), but to write the entry, you just follow the format.

Creating a Works Cited Page

Here are the necessary core elements, in order, or a Works Cited entry. Not all elements will be found in every source.

1. **Author**
With one author, begin with the author's last name, followed by a comma, then the rest of the name, and a period. With two authors, replace the period with a comma, and add the second author's first, then last name. With three or more authors, use only the first author's last, then first name, followed by a comma, then et al, and period. When there's no author or editor listed, begin the entry with the source title.

2. **Title of source**
Depending on the type of source, the title is listed in italics or quotation marks, and followed by a period. Titles of books, periodicals, websites, films, podcasts, radio and TV programs are italicized. Put quotation marks around titles of chapters, stories, poems, and articles; works on websites; and episode titles on podcasts, radio and TV programs.

3. **Title of container**
"Containers" are the larger wholes that "contain" the source. So if the source is a chapter, story, or poem found in a book, the book is the container. If the source is an article in a magazine, journal, website, etc., the "container" is the periodical or website that contains the article. Podcasts, and radio and TV programs "contain" episodes, which may be sources you're using. After the container title, put a comma.

4. **Other contributors**
Include any editors, illustrators, translators, etc. listed on the source, followed by a comma.

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5.   Version

If a source is a particular version or edition, include that next, followed by a comma.

6.   Number

If a source has a volume or issue number, include those here, followed by a comma.

7.   Publisher

Next, list the publisher of the work, followed by a comma, with these exceptions, noted on *The Purdue OWL* site: "periodicals, works published by their author or editor, a website whose title is the same name as its publisher, a website that makes works available but does not actually publish them (such as YouTube, WordPress, or JSTOR)".

8.   Publication date

Next, list the publication date, followed by a comma. See *The Purdue OWL* site for a discussion of how to handle sources published on more than one date.

9.   Location

A source's location in a printed book or periodical is the pages where it is found, and should be listed as "pp." before the page numbers. An online source's location is the URL. A period follows either of these.

Works Cited entries are listed in alphabetical order, with the first line flush left to the page, and all following lines indented. For example:

Dolby, Nadine. "Research in Youth Culture and Policy: Current Conditions and Future Directions." *Social Work and Society: The International Online-Only Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2008, www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/60/362. Accessed 20 May 2009.

Creating In-Text Citations

In-text, or parenthetical, citations are brief references within a paper that indicate the sources used. They are keyed to the Works Cited list. Any ideas that have not come out of your head need to be properly attributed to their sources, whether presented as summaries, paraphrases, or direct quotations. Generally, a citation will be the author's last name, and the page number. If you've used the author's name in the sentence where the reference appears (a signal phrase), then only the page number is needed.

For a reference from a document with no listed author, use the source title (if short), or a shortened version, for the citation.

For a reference from an electronic or Internet source, use "the first item that appears in the Works Cited entry . . . (e.g. author name, article name, website name, film name)" (*The Purdue OWL*). No page numbers are necessary for internet sources in citations. URLs should not be included, except partial ones, when the name of a site includes a domain name, like *CNN.com* or *Forbes.com*.

*Compiled from the *MLA Handbook*, Eighth Edition; and *The Purdue OWL* website