How Library Stuff Works: MLA Style (9th edition) - Video Transcript

The Modern Language Association recently published a new edition of the *MLA Handbook* which includes guidelines for writing and citing in MLA style.

The MLA style of citation can be applied to any kind of work, whether print, online, or another format – like a live performance such as a concert or a play.

It is important to ensure that you cite ALL the sources that you consult for your assignments.

This includes sources that have been quoted, paraphrased, or summarized.

If you didn't come up with the idea, it needs a citation!

Citations are important because they ensure that you are properly attributing ideas to their creators.

Citing can also help elevate or amplify the work of the author you are citing.

Citations also allow other people to access and evaluate the sources that you have consulted in your assignment.

Likewise, you can use citations in works you read to help you find similar works on a particular topic – this process is called "citation chaining."

The MLA style of citation consists of two parts: In-Text Citations and Works Cited.

A short citation within the body of your paper is called an in-text citation. It is placed next to the text being cited and indicates that the information was derived from a cited source.

Every in-text citation should have a corresponding citation noted in the Works Cited, a list that starts on its own page at the end of your paper.

The citations in the Works Cited list include the complete details of the sources used.

First, let's focus on how to create a Works Cited list.

When thinking about how to cite sources in MLA style, the first thing to consider are the core elements of the source.

The MLA core elements are ...

1. Author.
2. Title of Source.
3. Title of Container,
4. Contributor,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication Date,
   and
9. Location.

Notice that after each core element there is either a period or a comma.

Different kinds of sources contain different kinds of information.

The goal of MLA citations is to provide the reader with the most complete citation possible.

It is okay if your source does not contain all the core elements.

For example, the core elements of this online journal article are displayed and highlighted.

MLA style makes it easy to include the information that is available and exclude the information that is not.

After identifying the core elements of a source, it is time to compile the core elements into a citation.

A complete citation for an online journal article may look like the following:

Author. Title of Source. Title of Container, Number, Publication Date, Location. Title of Second
    Container, and its Location.

Notice that each element is styled or formatted in a particular way.

For example, the author's name is inverted, and titles are enclosed in quotes or are italicized.

These and other MLA style conventions are described in the *MLA Handbook* and related guides.

If citing a web page, like in this example, the citation could consist of these core elements:

Author. Title of Source. Title of Container, Publication Date, and Location.

Once you have finished creating citations for all of your sources, they must be properly formatted in the Works Cited list.

First, make sure the list is presented in alphabetical order according to the first word in the citation.

Second, make sure that if the citation is more than one line, the second line has been indented by ½ an inch from the left.

Lastly, ensure that the entire list is double spaced.

In addition to Works Cited, your paper must also contain in-text citations.

In-text citations help the reader find the corresponding entry in the Works Cited list, and the passage in that source.

In MLA style, in-text citations include the first citation element in the Works Cited list, which is usually the author, and then a page number.

Depending on your sentence structure, you can create an in-text citation in a few different ways.

The author and page number may be at the end of the passage.

Or the author may be included in the sentence, and the page number listed at the end of the passage.

If the work you are citing does not have pages (like a website, for example), only use the author's name, or if there is no author's name, the title of the website is acceptable.

Ultimately, the goal is to be as consistent as possible to make it easier for readers to understand your assignment using the information available.

Need more help?

McMaster University Library has an MLA style guide that provides easy to understand, step-by-step directions to creating citations.

You can also go right to the source and visit the MLA Style Centre website or access a hard copy of the *MLA Handbook* at Mills Library.

Need a little more guidance? Ask a Librarian!