

Style Sheet for Philosophy Papers*

Front Range Community College Larimer Campus

MLA Citation

What this handout is about...

If you are using MLA format, you are most likely writing a paper in literature, arts or the humanities, including subjects like English, languages, art, history and philosophy. We've designed this handout to introduce you to the concepts and formats of MLA citation. For authoritative coverage of MLA style, see Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. This handout covers the MLA format, but we also have handouts on [APA](#) and [CBE](#) formats. You may also want to consult the libraries [tutorial on MLA citation](#).

Why do we cite sources?

One purpose of citations is to leave a trail of clues for interested readers. When you document papers correctly, you provide others with a way to find the sources you have used. Another purpose of citation is to promote ethical responsibility and academic consistency within a discipline. If you do not cite and document your sources carefully, you run the risk of plagiarism, described in the *MLA Handbook* as "intellectual theft" (Gibaldi 66).

See our handout on [plagiarism](#).

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What needs to be cited?

When you write a paper in the humanities, you often use and build on the work other people have researched and compiled. Whether you are writing an expository report or adding your own insights and opinions to existing research, it's important to give credit where credit is due. If you incorporate or refer to other people's work in your paper, you must give credit to those authors using parenthetical citation and a Works Cited list. In addition to facts and statistics, you must also acknowledge other people's ideas or theories.

You need to document:

1. Direct quotes, both entire sentences and phrases
2. Paraphrases (rephrased or summarized material)
3. Words specific or unique to the author's research, theories, or ideas
4. Use of an author's argument or line of thinking
5. Historical, statistical, or scientific facts
6. Articles or studies you refer to within your text

You do not need to document:

1. Proverbs, axioms, and sayings ("A stitch in time saves nine.")
2. Well-known quotations ("The personal is political.")
3. Common knowledge (Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, or oxygen has an atomic number of 8, or "The Starry Night" was painted by Vincent Van Gogh.)

Sometimes it's difficult to be sure what counts as common knowledge, especially when writing in an academic discipline that's new to you. Perhaps you aren't familiar with Van Gogh or an atomic number. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself if a knowledgeable reader would be familiar with the information. You may, in fact, need to consult with a reader within the discipline. If she'd have to look it up, you usually should document it. If you aren't sure if something counts as common knowledge, document it to be safe.

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How to Use Parenthetical Citation

MLA documentation uses parenthetical citation to reference sources within the text of your research paper, noting the author's last name and page number where the information used in your paper can be found (Gibaldi 238). (—Like that!)

When you use an author's ideas, quote material you've read, or paraphrase that material, you indicate the source in parentheses at the end of your sentence. For instance, I had to cite the first sentence above because it contains information I got from the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. A reader will look at the author's last name and then refer to the Works Cited list at the end of your paper to obtain bibliographic information (that is, the information she'll need to find the source in the library or online). You'll find my source's bibliographic information under "Gibaldi" in the Works Cited list at the end of this handout.

Citing a Direct Quote

Writers often include relevant source material word for word in their own papers.

Example:

"In speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature" (Smith 170).

NOTE: There is no comma between the author's last name and the page number unless you are citing an electronic source with an abbreviation such as (Smith, par. 3). Here, the citation would refer to the third paragraph of an electronic source. Also, the parentheses always come after the final quotation mark, but before the punctuation at the end of the sentence.

An interested reader will then go to "Smith" in your Works Cited list and find the bibliographic information for an article in an edited anthology. Since I've used Smith's work here, you'll find that information at the end of the handout.

Citing Attribution

Another use of source material is to attribute it to the author within the text of your paper. Incorporate the author's name into your use of the quotation or information you are using and put only the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

Example:

Barbara Smith reminds us in her well-known article, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," that when "speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature" (170).

Citing Paraphrasing

You can also paraphrase material by summarizing in your own words or using it to talk about your own material.

Examples:

The feminist movement had to occur before the establishment of feminist literature and criticism, as well as women's studies (Smith 170).

Feminist literature and criticism, and women's studies as well, originally centered on literature (Smith 170).

More Parenthetical Citation:

1. *Same Last Name*: When using two authors with the same last name, you must indicate the initial of their first name in the parentheses: (B. Smith 170).
2. *No Author*: If you are given no author at all, choose a word from the title of the source to use in the parentheses and underline or punctuate it appropriately: ("Toward" 170), for an article, for instance.
3. *Same Author, Multiple Works*: When using more than one work by the same author, the author's name must be followed by a comma and accompanied by a word from the title of the source you are referring to: (Smith, "Toward" 170).
4. *Web Sources*: If you use electronic sources, you must work with whatever information is provided at the online site. When possible, use this format: (Author page#) or (Title page#). If no page numbers are provided, use paragraph, section, or screen numbers instead and include the standard abbreviation, if there is one: (Author, sec. #) or (Title, screen #). Remember to include a comma when using abbreviations in parenthetical citations.

If your citation needs extend beyond these examples, it's best to consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. It provides citation variations for print and nonprint sources. For instance, you may want to cite an introduction, an afterword, lines of poetry, a song, a film, indirect sources, or a block quote.

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How to Use Works Cited Lists

The Works Cited list is your bibliography, but it includes only the sources that you cite parenthetically in your paper. It is alphabetized by author's last name and begins on a fresh sheet of paper at the end of your paper. The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and subsequent lines are indented half an inch. Double space the entire list with no extra spaces in between entries. The citations in your parenthetical references will lead readers to this list to find the sources that interest them. If there are relevant sources you have read but did not use in your paper, you may include them in a Works Consulted list following the Works Cited list and present bibliographic information in the same way.

Basic Citation Examples for Print Documents:

1. Book

Author's Last Name, First Name. Book Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date.

2. Journal Article

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Article Title: Subtitle." Periodical Title volume
(year): inclusive page numbers.

NOTE: Journals that paginate each issue separately will call for an issue number as well: ...volume.issue (year): inclusive page numbers.

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How to Cite Electronic Documents:

Citing electronic sources can be tricky: they may be print documents that are warehoused on the internet (for example, an article from a paper journal that can also be found online), or they may be purely electronic documents. Because online sources can be changed and updated frequently, it is important first and foremost that you include as much citation information as you can, so that, for instance, if the document is moved and now has a new web address, you can retrieve it again using the other information cited. For any electronic document, your citation must include three basic areas of information: print publication information, electronic publication information, and access information.

Print Publication Information:

Include any and all information about the original print source of your electronic document, if applicable. Use the MLA citation format as described above for this part of the citation.

Electronic Publication Information:

Place any and all electronic publication information after the print publication information in the citation. Include the Title of the Site, date of electronic publication or latest update, and name of any institution or organization that sponsors the site.

NOTE: Dates of publication or access for electronic documents are listed with the day of the month first, then the standard abbreviation for the month (include a period if necessary), and finally the year. Here is an example: 2 Nov. 1974.

Access Information:

Next, you need to include access information, which will be the date of access (the date you viewed document) and URL (website address). If the website address must be divided into two or more

lines, break it only after a slash (/) and do not add any other text (such as a hyphen). If the URL is too long to be reproduced accurately, give the URL of the search page or the main page. Put angle brackets (<>) around the URL and put a period after the closing bracket. You may need to undo Auto Format or otherwise remove hyperlink in your word processing program if the address turns into a hyperlink.

NOTE: There is no period between the date of access and the web address.

Basic Citation Examples for Electronic Documents:

1. Document from Print Source Published Electronically

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of the Document." Title of Journal or Book. Print publication information. Title of Site. Date of electronic publication or latest update. Name of organization or institution. Date of access <http://websiteaddresshere>.

2. Online Database, Project, or CD-ROM

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Document." Title of Journal or Book. Print publication information. Title of Project or Database. Publication medium. Name of Vendor, Sponsoring Institution, Organization, or Editor. Date of electronic publication, copyright, or date last updated. Date of access <http://websiteaddresshere>.

NOTE: Use publication medium (such as CD-ROM) if medium differs from an online database or project. Use main search page web address if document web address is too long.

3. Professional or Personal Website

Creator's Last Name, First Name. Title of the Site. Description of the page. Institution or organization associated with the site. Date of electronic publication, copyright, or date last updated. Date accessed <http://websiteaddresshere>.

NOTE: If there is no title of the site, use a description of the page, such as "Home page," "Dept. home page," or "Course home page." Do not underline the description or put it in italics or quotation marks.

In any bibliographic entry, include as much information as possible. If a piece of information is missing, move to the next element. So, if no author is given, alphabetize a work using the first word of its title (excluding "The," "A," and "An"). Or, if a website doesn't show an update, move on to the next element.

If your sources are different from or variations on the basics of print and electronic documentation citations listed above, they may require additional elements, including page numbers for journal articles and sections for newspaper articles. You may have a corporate author, multiple authors, authors with the same last names, an editor or editors, or a translator. The source may be a volume, edition, or part of a series. It may be a reprint, song, map, film, even a cartoon. If your Works Cited needs to extend beyond the examples above, it's best to consult Chapter 5 in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. It provides bibliographic variations for print and non-print sources.

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Works Cited

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th ed. New York:

Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Smith, Barbara. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." The New Feminist Criticism:

Essays on Women, Literature and Theory. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York:

Pantheon Books, 1985. 168-185.

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Additional MLA Documentation Resources

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. 6th ed. New

York: Modern Language Association, 1998.

Harnack, Andrew and Eugene Kleppinger. Online!: A Reference Guide to Using Internet

Sources. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.

"How Do I Document Sources from the Web in My Works Cited List?" 4 Dec. 2003.

Modern Language Association. 16 Feb. 2005

<http://www.mla.org/publications/style/style_faq/style_faq4>.

Purdue University Online Writing Lab. "Using Modern Language Association (MLA)

Format." 2004. Purdue University. 16 Feb. 2005

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html>.

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