MLA Style (6th) Quick Guide

References indicate the exact location for sources of information used in the text of the paper; the bibliography (or list of works cited) describes, as a whole, the works from which the citations are taken. PLEASE NOTE: The examples on the following pages are based on the style recommended in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th ed. 2003). MLA style is commonly used in research papers on topics in the humanities.

Note: In this handout, underlining is being used for titles of monographs and serials. In many documentation styles (including MLA) italics and underlining are used interchangeably. Some instructors prefer underlining because they feel italics can interfere with clarity and meaning. The important thing is consistency. Use one or the other, but not both within the same research paper.

IMPORTANT: Dalhousie University defines plagiarism as “the presentation of the work of another author in such a way as to give one’s reader reason to think it to be one’s own. Plagiarism is a form of academic fraud.” Find out what plagiarism is and how to avoid it at http://plagiarism.dal.ca.

Bibliography

There is no single correct format for a bibliography, but consistency must be observed in all entries. The bibliography, or list of works cited, is normally included at the end of the paper. Numbers in parentheses refer to the section in the MLA Handbook.

SAVE TIME: Use RefWorks to easily keep track of your references and quickly format them correctly for your bibliography. RefWorks is a personal bibliographic citation managing system that Dalhousie University subscribes to. For more information, go to http://www.library.dal.ca/libraries/RefWorks.htm.

Books

- one author (5.6.1):

- two authors (5.6.4):

- three authors (5.6.4):
• **more than three authors (5.6.4):**

• **no author given (5.6.11):**

• **an organization or institution as “author” (5.6.6):**

• **an editor or compiler as “author” (5.6.2):**

• **an edition of an author’s work (5.6.12):**

• **a translation (5.6.13):**

• **a work in a series (5.6.16):**

• **a work in several volumes (5.6.15):**

• **conference proceedings (5.6.22):**
Articles

- **periodical (5.7.1):**
  
  Issues paginated continuously throughout the volume:


  *Each issue starts with page 1:*


- **newspaper (5.7.5):**


- **magazine (5.7.6):**


- **a review (5.7.7):**


- **an article in a reference book or encyclopedia - signed and unsigned (5.6.8):**


- **a work in a collection or anthology (5.6.7):**


- **paper published as part of the proceedings of a conference (5.6.22):**

Dissertations

- **published (5.6.27):**

- **unpublished (5.6.26):**

- **a dissertation abstract (5.7.8):**
  Lydic, David Lynn. “Relational Mapping as a Measure of Writing Ability in College Freshmen.”

Electronic Texts

The practice of citing electronic texts, especially those only available at remote sites accessible through the Internet, is still evolving. The Internet tends to be changeable, and URLs are often not stable over time. A number of style sheets and style manuals contain sections on electronic sources and recommend formats for citations. However, as yet there are no universally recognized standards.

A citation to material published electronically should accomplish the same task as a citation to material published in print form: it should make it possible for a reader to follow the trail the writer provides in order to locate the item being cited. However, because of the fluid nature of the Internet, citations to electronic resources often require additional information, such as the date on which the electronic work was accessed or the name of a database. Section 5.9 of the 6th edition of the *MLA Handbook* discusses a variety of cases and provides examples of electronic citations.

**IMPORTANT:** In many cases, books and articles published in HTML format lack traditional markers, such as page numbers, that make it possible for scholars to direct readers to the precise location where a quotation or idea originated. Some online publishers (notably Johns Hopkins University in *Project Muse*) have attempted to provide a fix by inserting page break indicators directly within the HTML text, and other publishers will number a text’s paragraphs. The advent of page imaging in PDF and other formats alleviates the problem to the extent that readers have in hand an exact replica of the original document. However, despite the efforts of publishers to make citing their texts easier, there will be instances in which precise information is simply not available. MLA style acknowledges these difficulties by recommending that scholars make do with the information available to them and only include in citations information such as paragraph numbers and pagination when it is provided.

**IMPORTANT:** Many of the databases and Internet sites providing students with materials they use in their papers, and which they subsequently include in lists of works cited, are resources that are purchased by the library through which the student accesses them. If this is the case, MLA style suggests noting the fact by including the name of the library or library system, and, in cases where it would be useful, the city, state, or province, in the citation (see section 5.9.7). The information is inserted after the name of the database and before the date of access:


However, if you are doing all of your research using the electronic resources of a single library or library system, it is
possible that your professor will not consider these details to be necessary. Before deciding to include or omit this information, become familiar with your professor’s preferences and expectations.

The following are examples of some commonly cited types of electronic sources:

**Books**

- **an entire book converted to electronic form (5.9.3a):**


- **an article or chapter in an electronic book (5.9.3b):**

- **a work that has no print equivalent (5.9.3a):**

**Articles**

- **an article in a journal accessed through an online database (5.9.4a):**


- **an article in a journal accessed directly from the publisher (5.9.4a):**

- **a review or article in a newspaper accessed through an online database (5.9.4b):**

- **a review or article in a newspaper accessed directly from the publisher (5.9.4b):**

- **an article posted on an open-access or personal website:**


**Other Electronic Resources:**

- **an internet site (5.9.2):**


- **a single page from a larger internet site (5.9.1):**

- **a personal email message (5.9.9j):**
  Howard, Teresa. “Feedback on Electronic Writing.” E-mail to Lily Briscoe. 23 May 1999.

- **a posting to an online discussion group or listserv (5.9.9k):**

- **a personal homepage (5.9.2c):**

- **a cd-rom publication (5.9.5a):**
References & Documentation

In MLA style, you acknowledge your sources by including parenthetical citations within your text. These refer the reader to the alphabetical list of works cited, or bibliography, that appears at the end of the document. For example:

The close of the millennium was marked by a deep suspicion of the natural world and an increasing reliance “upon the pronouncements of soothsayers and visionaries, who caused hysteria with their doom-laden forecasts of the end of humanity” (Mulligan 234).

The citation “(Mulligan 234)” informs the reader that the quotation originates on page 234 of a document by an author named Mulligan. Consulting the bibliography, the reader would find the following information under the name Mulligan:


The bibliography might list a second work by this author, which, in accordance with MLA style, would appear in the list with three hyphens substituting for the author’s name (5.6.3):


In this case, the parenthetical reference above would include more information in order to make it clear which of the two books contains the quoted passage. Usually, a shortened form of the title is sufficient; (Mulligan, Religions 234). See section 6.4.6 for further examples.

Parenthetical references should be kept as brief as clarity will permit. If the context in which the quotation appears makes it clear which document in the bibliography the quoted text comes from, then no further identification is needed:

Reva Basch reports that the Georgetown Center for Text and Technology, which has been compiling a catalogue of electronic text projects, lists “over 300 such projects in almost 30 countries” (14).

The parenthetical reference “(14),” in combination with the mention of Reva Basch at the beginning of the passage, makes it clear to the reader that the quoted text comes from page 14 of the following document listed in the bibliography:


Endnotes & Footnotes

Some scholars prefer to use endnotes and footnotes to document sources. These are described in “Appendix B” of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th ed.). If you use this method of documentation you may not need a List of Works Cited at the end of your paper. Check your instructor’s preference.