

MLA CITATION SYSTEM: A BRIEF GUIDE

Condensed and adapted by Dr Elle Leane (School of English, Journalism and European Languages) from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Sixth Edition).

The examples and information provided here will not cover every citation scenario you come across. For more detailed information, consult the *MLA Handbook*, available in the Morris Miller Library at Ref LB 2369 .G53 1999, and in Launceston at Ref 808.027 G437m2003. Information in this guide is condensed from chapters 3, 5 and 6 of that book.

There are two main components of the MLA system that you need to be familiar with: how to **list your references at the end of your essay**, and how to **cite these references in the body of your essay**. Sections A and B of this guide deal with these two components respectively. Section C deals briefly with **quotations and punctuation**.

Section A: Listing your sources

In the MLA system, you provide a list of "Works Cited" at the end of your essay. The following are some basic dos and don'ts to remember when composing your list:

- Only include in this list works you have actually cited in the essay.
- Indent the second line of each entry, and every line after that.
- Do not dot point the entries.
- Pay attention to the placement of commas, periods, colons, etc.

Below are some examples of how to cite particular types of texts.

A book:

Hawkins, Harriet. *Poetic Freedom and Poetic Truth*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1976.

Note:

- you can usually leave out the generic term 'Press,' 'Books,' etc in the publisher's name; if it is a university publisher, than shorten 'University Press' to 'UP.'
- titles of independently published works (books, journals, etc) should be italicised. The MLA Handbook actually recommends underlining, as in the past italicized type was often difficult for individual writers to produce. Now that modern word-processing software can produce acceptable italics, the English staff at UTas (and many other universities) recommend italics, not underlining.
- the publication date, publisher and place of publication should be taken from the title page of the book. If any of this information is missing on the title page, look for it the copyright page (on the reverse side of the title page). The correct date will usually be the latest copyright date.

A work with two or more authors

Durant, John R., Geoffrey A. Evans and Geoffrey P. Thomas. "The Public Understanding of Science." *Nature* 340 (1989): 11-14.

Two or more books by the same author

Greenberg, Valerie D. "The Scientific Text as Literary Artefact: Reading Max Planck." *New Orleans Review* 18.1 (1991): 56-63.

---. *Transgressive Readings: The Texts of Franz Kafka and Max Planck*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1990.

A republished book

If you are citing an older book which has been republished in a modern edition (roughly, if there is fifty years or more between the original publication date and the date of the edition you are using), indicate this as follows:

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *A Study in Scarlet*. 1887. London: Penguin, 1981.

An edited collection:

Cole, Douglas, ed. *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Romeo and Juliet*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970.

Note here that a title within a title is not italicized.

Multi-volume work

For a multi-volume work, add the number of volumes after the title (and any editor's name) but before the publication information:

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes*. Ed. Owen Dudley Edwards. 9 Vols. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

If you are only using one volume, state this instead in the same place in the entry (then you do not need to cite the volume in your parenthetical references):

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes*. Ed. Owen Dudley Edwards. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

An article in an edited collection:

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Turbulence in Literature and Science." *American Literature and Science*. Ed. Robert J. Scholnick. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1992. 229-50.

Note: The title of a work published as part of another work (journal article, poem in collection) is indicated by the use of quotation marks.

An article in a journal:

Rose, Phyllis. "Huxley, Holmes, and the Scientist as Aesthete." *Victorian Newsletter* 38 (1970): 22-24.

This is an article in a journal that is continuously paginated (i.e. consecutive issues in the same year will have numbers that follow on continuously from one issue to the next). Some journals are not continuously paginated, in which case you will also need to include the issue number as well as the volume number. For example,

Smith, Johanna M. "Constructing the Nation: Eighteenth-Century Geographies for Children." *Mosaic* 34.2 (2001): 133-48.

An introduction:

Cave, Terence. Introduction. *Silas Marner*. By George Eliot. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. vii-xxxii.

The same pattern holds for a foreword, preface or afterword.

An unpublished dissertation:

Quick, Jonathan. "A Critical Edition of George Eliot's *Silas Marner*." Diss. Yale U, 1968.

A review:

Hayward, Rhodri. Rev. of *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, by Sally Shuttleworth. *British Journal for the History of Science* 31 (1998): 481-83.

A film:

Return of the Native. Dir. Jack Gold. Republic Pictures, 1994.

Give the title, the director, the distributor, and the year. Other data e.g. performers, writer, producer, can be added between the title and distributor.

A dictionary or encyclopedia entry

"Pumpkin." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

For well-known reference books, just give the edition and year of publication; for less familiar ones, give full publication details.

Cross-Referencing

If you are citing two or more entries from the same collection, it is a good idea to create an entry for this collection, and then cross-reference to that. For example:

Emerson, Sheila. "The Authorization of Form: Ruskin and the Science of Chaos." Hayles 149-66.

Hayles, N. Katherine, ed. *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

Paulson, William. "Literature, Complexity, Interdisciplinarity." Hayles 37-53.

Missing Information

Sometimes a book will not indicate publisher, place, date of publication or pagination. If you can discover this information, indicate in square brackets that it did not come from the book itself:

Jones, Peter. *Complete Guide to Mosses and Lichen*. London: U of Rummidge P, [2003].

If the date is only approximate, indicate this in the following way: [c. 2003]. The 'c' stands for 'circa.'

If you cannot supply information, use the following abbreviations:

n.p. = no place of publication given

n.p. = no publisher given

n.d. = no date given

n. pag. = no pagination given

For example, if you do not know the publisher and the book was not paginated, you would write: London: n.p., 2003. N. pag.

If you are citing a book published before 1900, you can omit the name of the publisher and use a comma after the place of publication: Dewey, John. *The School and Society*. Chicago, 1893.

Electronic Material

The scholarly community has not yet reached a consensus on the citation of online material; some entries can be quite complex. You need to consult the *MLA Handbook* if you feel your type of entry is not covered here.

The main aim of the citation is to allow the reader to locate the source if s/he wishes. You should provide as much information as you can, using the following examples as a guide.

The citation of an electronic text will have the following generic form:

Author's name. "Title of the document." Information about print publication (where available). Information about electronic publication. Access information (including date of your access and the URL).

A website

Everett, Glenn. "The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning." 1987. *Victorian Web*. Ed. George P. Landow. National University of Singapore. 12 April 2002 <65.107.211.206/victorian/ebb/ebbio.html>.

1987 is the date of creation of the site; 12 April 2002 indicates when the material was accessed. You also need to list any scholarly project or professional site of which this webpage is a part (e.g. the *Victorian Web*); the editor of the site (where this is indicated; here it is George P. Landow); and any affiliated institution. If there is no affiliated institution, you should think carefully about whether the material is a suitable source for a scholarly essay. Make sure you provide the URL as your last piece of information. If the URL is too long to fit on one line, break it after a forward slash.

Article in an online journal

There are two main types of these articles. Firstly, there are articles available as part of an archival database, such as *Project Muse*. These should be cited as follows.

Bailey, Suzanne. "Somatic Wisdom: Refiguring Bodies in *The Ring and the Book*." *Victorian Studies* 41 (1998): 567-591. *ProQuest*. 12 April 2002 <<http://proquest.umi.com/login>>.

Provide any information you know about the printed equivalent, and also provide the title of the database (here, *ProQuest*), the date of access, and the relevant URL within the database (as in the entry below) or, if this is too long and complicated, the URL for the database's search page (as in the entry above). If the service provides only the starting page number of the article, then indicate this as follows: 567-. For articles that have no print equivalent, there may be no page numbers. You should cite the number of paragraphs or sections, if these are numbered. For example:

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture* 10.3 (2000): 43 pars. *Project Muse*. 28 July 2004 <http://muse.uq.edu.au/journals/postmodern_culture/v010/10.3chan.html>.

The second type of online journal is one that is available independently. To cite an article from this source, follow this example:

Dane, Gabrielle. "Reading Ophelia's Madness." *Exemplaria* 10.2 (1998). 22 June 2002 <<http://web.english.ufl.edu/english/exemplaria/danefram.htm>>.

This journal has no page, paragraph or section numbers, so the entry ends with the date of publication.

Section B: In-text citation

The MLA uses parenthetical citations, not footnotes. When you quote or paraphrase someone else's work, you give the author's name followed by the page number/s in parentheses, generally at the end of the sentence. There is no punctuation between the name and the page number. If you mention the author in the sentence itself, you need only give the page number. You do not need to cite page numbers if you are referring to an entire work, or if the work is only one page long.

Basic Citation

Examples:

The lyric poem is not written to be sung to music but relies on the melodious sound and the rhythm of the language used (Ing 16).

"Money," writes Louis Auchincloss, " ... was the preoccupation of [Thackeray's] anxious lifetime and the principle source of his creative impulse" (171).

The ellipsis (...) here indicates that material has been omitted.

If the quotation is long (i.e. more than four of your typed lines) then you indent it, and the parentheses come after the punctuation.

Thackeray explains his logic as he continues his comment on Becky's musings:

If you take temptations into account, who is to say that he is better than his neighbour? A comfortable career of prosperity, if it does not make people honest, at least keeps them so. An alderman coming from a turtle feast will not step out of his carriage to steal a leg of mutton; but put him to starve, and see if he will not purloin a loaf. Becky consoled herself by so balancing the changes and equalizing the distribution of good and evil in the world. (532-33)

Citations when you are using more than one work by the same author

If you are referring to more than one of a particular person's works in your essay, then you will also need to give an abbreviated title in parentheses. A comma comes between the name of the person and the title of the work.

One critic argues that the references to "the stars" in the play do not automatically suggest a fatalistic approach to life (Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* 116).

Again, if you mention the critic's name in the sentence, you can leave it out of the parentheses.

James Calderwood argues that the references to "the stars" in the play do not automatically suggest a fatalistic approach to life (*Shakespearean Metadrama* 116).

If you mention the title of the work in your sentence, you can also leave that out of the parentheses.

James Calderwood, in his *Shakespearean Metadrama*, argues that the references to "the stars" in the play do not automatically suggest a fatalistic approach to life (116).

Citing more than one author or work

If you want to cite two separate authors in one parenthetical references, do as you would for a single author, but use semicolons to separate the citations: (Leane 54; Johnston 80-83).

Again, you may need to include an abbreviated title if you are using more than one work by the same author: (Leane, "Chromodynamics" 96; Johnston, *Missionary Writing* 80-83).

Citing a multi-volume work

If you are citing from a multi-volume work, give the volume number as well as the page number, separating these by a colon: (Frederick 2: 33-45).

Citing indirect sources

You should always strive to take quotations from their original sources. Where this is not possible, use the following example as a guide to citation:

Gould has accused Capra of following “the oldest of reductionist strategies” (qtd. in Wilber 28).

Citing online sources

Where there are no page, section or paragraph numbers in an electronic text, you need not provide a parenthetical reference. The following example refers to the article by Gabrielle Dane cited above:

Dane argues that “Ophelia's psychic identity appears externally defined, socially constructed.”

If you were citing more than one article by Dane in your essay, you would need to include the abbreviated title of the text you are referring to:

Dane argues that “Ophelia's psychic identity appears externally defined, socially constructed” (“Reading”).

If you are citing an electronic text which is divided into paragraphs, then indicate this by using the abbreviation ‘par.’ or ‘pars.’ before the relevant number/s:

According to Chan, Confucianism has recently “recaptured some of its lost lustre” (par. 6).

If you the name of the author is cited in the parenthetical reference, put a comma between it and the paragraph reference:

According to one critic, Confucianism has recently “recaptured some of its lost lustre” (Chan, par. 6).

If the text is broken up into other kinds of numbered sections, write out the word for the section in your parenthetical reference before giving the relevant number.

Section C: Punctuation and quotations

Note the following MLA conventions regarding punctuation and quotations:

- Double quotation marks are used for quotations from other texts
- Commas and periods that come directly after a quotation go inside, not outside the quotation marks:

“The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily,” notes Miss Prism about her novel in Oscar Wilde’s play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (23).

- However, if a parenthetical reference comes directly after the quotation, then the comma or period should be placed after the reference:

In Oscar Wilde’s play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Miss Prism summarizes her novel by noting “The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily” (23).

- If you are slightly altering a word or phrase in a quotation so that the quotation fits your grammatical context, use square brackets to indicate this:

According to Oscar Wilde’s Miss Prism, fiction can be summarized by the maxim, “The good [end] happily, and the bad unhappily” (23).